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Ministry**TOOLBOX**[™]Issue #88
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You've got to speak your vision

by Rick Warren

A lot of people have dreams and great vision. But you'll never see your vision become a reality unless you can communicate it to others.

As a leader, you need to answer these questions:

1. Who are we? What is our ministry about? What is our small group about? Why do we exist? What is our identity?

For Saddleback, our answer is - we are here to implement the five purposes of the church within our geographic region and to model how to do it for churches worldwide. We want to worship, fellowship, outreach, minister and educate.

2. Where are we going? Leadership is influence, and the quickest way to tell if you're a leader is to look over your shoulder. If somebody's following you, you're a leader. If nobody's following you, you're not the leader!

It's that simple.

Leadership is knowing where you're going and being able to persuade people to come along with you.

That's influence. If you don't know where you're going, nobody's going to follow you. .

3. Why are we going there? Why do we do what we do? That's very important. We cover some of those things in CLASS 101 for all new Saddleback members. We let them know that we want them to move around the baseball diamond model, and in the process, grow deeper in their faith and commitment.

4. What it feels like to be going there. People want to be in on fun. When fun is going on, people want to be in on it. They don't want to be left out. So you communicate the great feeling of being involved in a significant ministry. People are looking for significance. When you can communicate to them that what they're doing is a great way to invest their life, then you'll have people coming to be involved.

5. What they can do. In a symphony, everybody plays his or her part. It may be different notes but when it's all blended together, it's beautiful. That's what your small group or ministry need to be like where everybody - the Magnification Champion or Membership Champion - everybody does their part.

A great leader has the knack of helping people see how their individual part fits into the whole, how their individual part helps in the overall umbrella of the particular ministry of the church. It gives a sense of value to individual effort. Affirm people, believe in them, put faith and trust in them.

"Symbolism reaches people on an emotional level rather than on an intellectual level."

6. How we're going to do it. That's the specific strategy. One of the most important things there is communicating cooperation. We've all got to go together, do this thing together. We can't be heading off into different directions.

7. What the rewards will be. Whenever you're trying to recruit somebody for some kind of ministry, it's always important to explain to them the benefit - particularly the emotional benefit.

How will they feel by getting involved?

What is the reward for achieving the goal?

As Christians we've got the ultimate reward. Someday I just want to stand before the Lord and hear Him say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant." That will make up for everything that I've done and given. When people understand that, they get an eternal vision, and it's much easier to stay motivated.

Those are some things you should communicate in the vision to your people.

Now, here are some ways to share that vision with your team:

By personal example

Jesus was the supreme example of this. You must be vulnerable. You've got to let people see you. People need to be able to see your own commitment and see you as a role model.

In many ways, you must personify your ministry. The values you're trying to say through the ministry ought to be seen in your life.

Lee Iacocca is an example of this. He personified the vision of Chrysler. Chrysler was dying until Lee Iacocca took the helm and started putting himself in the ads. All of a sudden you say, "Lee Iacocca is a man of commitment, integrity, and vision. I think I'll go buy a Chrysler."

He basically personified the turn-around. It's like the guy who said about the razor, "I liked it so much, I bought the company." You think, "If that guy believed in it that much, it must be a pretty good razor."

We must model it. When we did "Possess Our Land," and I got up on Sunday morning and talked about what we were going to do to sacrifice and give, a few of the children in our congregation sold some of their toys and things like that.

By verbal slogans

Let me suggest that you develop particular slogans that apply to your ministry.

Every great leader knows the power of a slogan.

Martin Luther King - Once you ever heard his "I have a dream" speech, you can't forget it. He talks about little children, black and white, playing together in a world where character is more important than color. "I have a dream" is repeated over and over, and it hits home.

The power of a slogan is very important. People do not remember speeches, and they do not remember sermons. They remember phrases. You need to have phrases that sum up in just a few words what you're trying to do, so people can grab onto it.

"Give me liberty or give me death." (Patrick Henry)

Franklin D. Roosevelt turned the country from a Depression mentality to a growth mentality when he said, "There's nothing to fear but fear itself."

John Kennedy said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

Nobody will remember their speeches, but you'll remember those phrases. They're short, sweet and simple. The biggest mistake that people make in ministry is over-verbalizing and telling people too much. Over-verbalizing the purpose of what you want to accomplish.

Here at Saddleback we have dozens of these slogans: "Every member's a minister." – that's a little four-word statement that summarizes what we believe about lay ministry. "Pastors are the administrators, the people are the ministers ... You can't out give God." Those are effective slogans. The Saddleback statement: "The great commitment to the commandment and the great commission will produce a great church."

Succinctly say what you want to state. Even our five purposes... We talk about our five purposes being to communicate God's message, fellowship with other believers, demonstrate God's love, educate God's people and celebrate God's presence. Five sentences share what Saddleback is all about. When somebody comes and asks, "Why does your church exist?" I can say it in little sentences.

Analogy or metaphor. If you want to communicate the vision for your ministry or the vision of Saddleback, you need to compare it to something that everybody already relates to. How many times did Jesus say in the New Testament, "The kingdom of heaven is like..."? And then He'd give an analogy, a parable or a metaphor. Reagan was called "The Great Communicator." There's really nothing fancy about the way he communicated. He is simply a master at illustration. He has the ability to take big complex things – talking about the budget deficit so he has a pile of bills on his desk – and he says, "One trillion dollars is a pile as tall as the Empire State building." He used that illustration in his very first budget address. People could relate to that. It was a tangible thing you could tie into.

Here at our church the whole Saddleback strategy is based on the baseball diamond like we teach in the Membership Class. It's something people can grasp onto. What's first base? What's second base? What's third base? That's an analogy that communicates a vision in something they can identify with.

Symbolism. Symbolism reaches people on an emotional level rather than on an intellectual level. Phrases and logos and things like that are very important. We used symbolism in the Possess Our Land campaign a lot.

Personal contact. Get one-on-one with key people, the people who give legitimacy to your ministry. Get alone with them. Share the vision with them. Let them catch it from you at a breakfast or a lunch or a dinner or something like that. Then they'll be your key supporters. People are usually down on what they're not up on.

Until next week,

Rick