

MAKE IT **COUNT**

A 10-week study for leadership teams by *Influence* magazine

Becoming a Spirit-Led Visionary

By STEPHEN BLANDINO

A person's silhouette is shown from the side, looking through a pair of binoculars. The background is a solid teal color. The person's face and hands are dark, contrasting with the lighter background.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

MAKE IT **COUNT**

A 10-Week Study For Leadership Teams

What Is Make It Count?

Make It Count is a leadership development resource for use individually or with staff, volunteers, or board members.

Each installment is also available online as a downloadable PDF, along with interactive pages for group member use. The underlined words and phrases in the following text correspond to fill-in-the-blank sections on team member pages. Access these free resources at influencemagazine.com/Downloads.

These lessons are written by **STEPHEN BLANDINO**, lead pastor of 7 City Church in Fort Worth, Texas, and the author of several books.



Becoming a Spirit-Led Visionary

By **STEPHEN BLANDINO**

Visionary leaders move things forward. They have the ability to see possibility, cast inspiring vision, and mobilize people to pursue the vision. But there's a difference between visionary leaders and Spirit-led visionaries.

Spirit-led visionaries aren't simply chasing a vision. They listen *first* to the voice of the Spirit, and then they allow the Spirit to birth His vision for the future.

This installment of Make It Count examines 10 qualities Spirit-led visionaries cultivate. As you envision the future, lead team members toward it, and walk in step with God, consider how you are doing in each of the following roles:

1. **Spirit-Led Leader.** Spirit-led visionaries are more concerned about being Spirit-led than vision-led. This posture keeps them from imposing



personal preferences, past traditions, or human visions onto the future of the church.

2. **Faith-Filled Thinker.** Spirit-led visionaries believe God is able to do immeasurably more than they can ask or imagine. Like the faith-filled leaders of Hebrews 11, their mindset is predisposed toward faith rather than fear, and abundance rather than scarcity.
3. **Growth-Focused Learner.** Spirit-led visionaries have a lifelong learning posture. They possess a growth mindset, embrace growth systems, and exhibit a willingness to make changes so the Church can fulfill its redemptive potential in the world.

4. **Future-Oriented Architect.** In addition to celebrating what God has done in the past, Spirit-led visionaries look ahead to what God wants to do next. Rather than simply *repeating the past*, they become *architects of the future*.

5. **Careful Vision Creator.** Unclear visions only create confusion and frustration. After dreaming of the possibilities, Spirit-led visionaries translate those dreams into something specific, measurable, inspirational, and time-bound that people can understand.

6. **Inspiring Vision Caster.** God-inspired dreams are usually bigger than the talent and resources of a single individual. That's why Spirit-led visionaries master the art of vision casting to inspire people toward a better and brighter future.

7. **Practical Strategic Planner.** Spirit-led visionaries recognize every vision requires a plan, people, provision and way to measure progress. They're daring dreamers, as well as practical planners.

8. **Courageous Risk Taker.** Some Spirit-led visionaries are adventurous, while others are cautious. Either way, they have the courage to step into the unknown and boldly pursue God's vision for the future.

9. **Innovative Problem Solver.** Every leader faces opposition. Spirit-led visionaries are innovative and creative, always looking to enlarge their growth inputs and engage their teams to solve tough problems.

10. **Resilient Hard Worker.** Leaders often encounter setbacks that cause their visions to stall or even retreat a few steps. Spirit-led visionaries cultivate Spirit-inspired grit so they can persevere to the end and see God's vision fully realized.

As you read and discuss each lesson, cultivate the qualities to help you become a Spirit-led visionary who leads the church toward the future God has prepared.

1 | BECOMING A SPIRIT-LED VISIONARY

Spirit-Led Leader

Assess

What kind of qualities does a Spirit-led leader exhibit?

Insights and Ideas

Visionaries help make the world a better place. They envision possibilities and picture a preferred future. But the greatest visionaries don't rest solely on their bold ideas or intuitive sense about the future. They are Spirit-led.

Spirit-led leaders don't view the Holy Spirit as an addition to their leadership but the Source of everything they do. They operate from a posture of dependence on the Spirit's leadership. Consider the following distinguishing characteristics:

1. ***Filled with the Spirit.*** The Early Church arose from a prayer meeting as the first leaders experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:4 says, "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." Later, the apostle Paul told Christians in Ephesus to "be filled with the Spirit" — or, as the International Standard Version puts it, to "keep on being filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). The infilling of the Spirit was meant to be an ongoing part of the believer's life.
2. ***Shaped by the Spirit.*** To be shaped by the Spirit is to model His fruit. Spirit-led leadership demonstrates love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). These qualities develop as leaders cooperate with the Spirit's life-shaping process.
3. ***Gifted by the Spirit.*** The Bible teaches there are different spiritual gifts within the Church. Some believers have a gift of healing, teaching, administration, or showing mercy. Others have a gift of discernment, encouraging, giving, prophecy, or wisdom. Still others have the gift of leadership (Romans 12:8). Leaders use their Spirit-endowed gifts not only to serve the body of Christ but also to fulfill Spirit-inspired vision.
4. ***Submitted to the Spirit.*** Spirit-led leaders understand it's not enough to be filled, shaped and gifted by the Holy Spirit. They recognize a constant need to walk in step with the Spirit. Daily reliance on the Holy Spirit is what keeps leaders from imposing personal preferences and human visions. A posture of submission creates the environment for the Spirit to birth His vision for the future.

These four ingredients separate worldly visionaries from Spirit-led visionaries. These markers put us in a position to receive Spirit-inspired visions rather than creating visions we simply ask God to bless.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Why is being Spirit-led critical to visionary leadership?
2. What steps are you taking to become a Spirit-led leader?
3. Which of the four qualities most challenges you? Why?

Apply

If we're not careful, we can separate our leadership from the Holy Spirit's influence. Carve out some time to welcome the Spirit's work into your leadership. Invite God's Spirit to fill, shape and gift you as He chooses. Then submit your plans to Him. Ask the Spirit to inspire in you His vision for the ministry He has called you to lead.

1 | BECOMING A SPIRIT-LED VISIONARY

Spirit-Led Leader

Visionaries help make the world a better place. They envision possibilities and picture a preferred future. But the greatest visionaries don't rest solely on their bold ideas or intuitive sense about the future. They are Spirit-led.

Distinguishing characteristics of Spirit-led leaders:

1. _____ *with the Spirit.*

"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:4).

"Be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

2. _____ *by the Spirit.*

Spirit-led leadership demonstrates love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23).

3. _____ *by the Spirit.*

The Bible teaches there are different spiritual gifts within the Church.

4. _____ *to the Spirit.*

Daily reliance on the Holy Spirit is what keeps leaders from imposing personal preferences and human visions. A posture of submission creates the environment for the Spirit to birth His vision for the future.

Apply

If we're not careful, we can separate our leadership from the Holy Spirit's influence. Carve out some time to welcome the Spirit's work into your leadership. Invite God's Spirit to fill, shape and gift you as He chooses. Then submit your plans to Him. Ask the Spirit to inspire in you His vision for the ministry He has called you to lead.

2 | BECOMING A SPIRIT-LED VISIONARY

Faith-Filled Thinker

Team Review

How has the Holy Spirit been working in your life as you've submitted your leadership to Him?

Assess

Who is the most faith-filled thinker you know, and how does that person's faith inspire you?

Insights and Ideas

God's Spirit "does not make us timid" (2 Timothy 1:7). He leads people out of fear and into a life of faith. That's why Spirit-led visionaries are faith-filled thinkers. They know God is able to do immeasurably more than all they ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

A.W. Tozer saw a low view of God as the cause of a hundred lesser evils but a high view of God as the solution to 10,000 temporal problems. Simply put, what's holding us back isn't the issues we face but the attitude we embrace. Our biggest problem is our small view of God.

There are three steps to becoming a faith-filled thinker:

1. *Study the lives of faith-filled thinkers.* Hebrews 11 contains a list of leaders who believed God to do the impossible. Before pointing to the faith of individuals such as Noah, Abraham, Sarah and Joseph, the chapter opens with these words: "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for" (Hebrews 11:1–2).

Studying the lives of leaders commended by God strengthens our faith.

2. *Adopt faith as a mindset, not a moment.* It's easy to view faith as a specific point in time when we believed for a favorable outcome or took a step that required trust. But faith isn't just a moment; it's a mindset. The apostle Paul said, "We live by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Living by faith is a continual process — an ongoing mindset. When we adopt this perspective, it shapes how we live and lead.

3. *Replace scarcity with abundance.* When we have a scarcity mindset, we worry about not having enough — whether it's finances, volunteers or ability. While learning to trust God in supplying what we need, we can adopt an abundance mindset.

Spirit-led visionaries lean in the direction of abundance as they rely on God to provide for the vision He inspired.

Faith-filled thinkers don't live each day with their heads in the clouds. Instead, they lift their heads to see that with God all things are possible.

Reflect and Discuss

1. In which direction do you most naturally lean in your leadership: faith or fear?
2. How can you make faith your mindset?
3. What are the differences between scarcity and abundance thinking in leadership?

Apply

Read Hebrews 11. Identify which Bible hero's faith most inspires you, and pinpoint the areas in which a scarcity mindset is currently impacting your life and leadership. Finally, submit your fears and doubts to God, asking Him to fill your heart with faith.

2

BECOMING A SPIRIT-LED VISIONARY

Faith-Filled Thinker

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How to become a faith-filled thinker:

1. Study the _____ of faith-filled thinkers.

"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for" (Hebrews 11:1–2).

2. Adopt faith as a _____, not a _____.

The apostle Paul said, "We live by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). Living by faith is a continual process — an ongoing mindset. When we adopt this perspective, it shapes how we live and lead.

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Apply

Read Hebrews 11. Identify which Bible hero's faith most inspires you, and pinpoint the areas in which a scarcity mindset is currently impacting your life and leadership. Finally, submit your fears and doubts to God, asking Him to fill your heart with faith.

3

BECOMING A SPIRIT-LED VISIONARY

Growth-Focused Learner

Team Review

What scarcity mindset have you begun replacing with an abundance mindset?

Assess

What roles do learning and growth play in a visionary's life?

Insights and Ideas

One of the biggest impediments to vision for the future is the tradition of the past. This is evident in the Gospel of Mark when Jesus' disciples ate with unwashed hands. The Pharisees and teachers of the law were quick to point it out, asking Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?" (Mark 7:5).

Jesus' response was direct, getting to the real root of the issue: "You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions" (Mark 7:8).

I wonder how often we do the same thing in ministry today. How many times have yesterday's traditions become today's idols? How many times have past practices become present-day inhibitors to experiencing what God wants to do next?

Spirit-led visionaries anchor their hearts in the Word of God and the work of the Spirit without losing the ability to embrace new ways of doing ministry. This approach keeps human traditions from stifling better ways of reaching and discipling people.

Vision implies change. Spirit-led visionaries are listening to the Spirit's voice for what He wants to do next. What's *next* will look different from what's *now*. But if we are unwilling to learn new things, we might miss what God wants to do.

Rate yourself on a scale from 1 to 10 (with 10 representing the strongest agreement) in the following areas:

- I'm not afraid of growth and change.
- My first response to new ministry ideas is curiosity rather than suspicion or mistrust.
- I have a clear and specific growth plan to help me improve as a leader.
- I have developed a regular practice of exposing my mind to new ministry ideas, strategies and resources.
- I pay careful attention to the shelf life of our current ministry strategies and have a way to evaluate their level of effectiveness.
- I have a track record of changing ministry strategies that have stopped working or are in decline.

Your answers to the first two questions reveal your growth mindset. Your answers to the second two questions reveal your growth system. And your answers to the final two questions reveal your willingness to make changes.

Reflect and Discuss

1. In your experience, when has a tradition gotten in the way of effective ministry?
2. Which of the six statements above most challenged you?
3. In which area do you most need to grow: developing a growth mindset, embracing a growth system, or having a willingness to make changes?

Apply

Take some time to reflect on the six statements above. Then put together a clear and specific plan to improve your growth mindset, growth systems, and willingness to make changes.

3

BECOMING A SPIRIT-LED VISIONARY

Growth-Focused Learner

“Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?” (Mark 7:5).

“You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions” (Mark 7:8).

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Rate yourself on a scale from 1 to 10 (with 10 representing the strongest agreement) in the following areas:

- *I’m not afraid of growth and _____.*
- *My first response to new ministry ideas is _____ rather than _____ or mistrust.*
- *I have a clear and specific growth _____ to help me improve as a leader.*
- *I have developed a regular _____ of exposing my mind to new ministry ideas, strategies and resources.*
- *I pay careful attention to the shelf life of our current ministry strategies and have a way to _____ their level of effectiveness.*
- *I have a _____ of changing ministry strategies that have stopped working or are in decline.*

Your answers to the first two questions reveal your growth _____.

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And your answers to the final two questions reveal your willingness to make _____.

Apply

Take some time to reflect on the six statements above. Then put together a clear and specific plan to improve your growth mindset, growth systems, and willingness to make changes.

4 | BECOMING A SPIRIT-LED VISIONARY

Future-Oriented Architect

Team Review

What additional discoveries have you made as you've evaluated your growth mindset, growth systems, and willingness to make changes?

Assess

When was a time you not only envisioned a better future, but also actively pursued it?

Insights and Ideas

There is nothing wrong with reflecting on the past. In fact, it's good to celebrate the things God has done and express gratitude for His faithfulness through the years. There are also valuable lessons to learn from looking back.

But when leaders are Spirit-led, faith-filled and growth-focused, they also learn to think about the future. They celebrate what God did, and then they look ahead to what God wants to do next. Rather than simply repeating the past, they become architects of the future.

A great example is the apostle Paul. As Acts 20:22–24 shows, four qualities of a future-oriented architect were evident in Paul's life and ministry.

1. *Future-oriented architects are compelled by the Spirit.* Paul said, "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem" (verse 22). The vision came from the Spirit, not Paul's wants and whims.

The word "compelled" suggests this was not a slight nudge. The Spirit urgently guided Paul into his next mission field.

2. *Future-oriented architects step into the unknown.* Paul went on to say he did not know what would happen to him in Jerusalem (verse 22). We often want the future to be clear before we take our first step. However, Paul stepped into the unknown. In a sense, he was building the plane while in the air.

3. *Future-oriented architects don't expect an easy path.* A Spirit-inspired dream is rarely easy. Paul said, "I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me" (verse 23). Paul didn't sign up for the easy path. He knew the mission was bigger than him.

Future-oriented architects are willing to pay the price to build a dream according to God's design, even when it's hard.

4. *Future-oriented architects don't give up.* Paul concluded with these words: "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me — the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace" (verse 24). Despite the uncertainty and uneasiness of the mission, Paul refused to quit.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Have you ever allowed the past to undermine what God wanted to do in the future?
2. How do Paul's words about his journey to Jerusalem challenge you?
3. Future-oriented architects pay a price. What does that price usually entail today, and how do we maintain faith when the price is high?

Apply

What can you do now to start building for the future? Let Paul's words challenge you, and then ask the Holy Spirit to inspire a fresh vision for the future in your heart.

4

BECOMING A SPIRIT-LED VISIONARY

Future-Oriented Architect

There is nothing wrong with reflecting on the past. In fact, it's good to celebrate the things God has done and express gratitude for His faithfulness through the years. There are also valuable lessons to learn from looking back.

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“And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem” (verse 22).

2. *Future-oriented architects step into the _____.*

Paul went on to say he did not know what would happen to him in Jerusalem (verse 22).

3. *Future-oriented architects don't expect an _____ path.*

“I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me” (verse 23).

4. *Future-oriented architects don't _____.*

“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me — the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace” (verse 24).

Apply

What can you do now to start building for the future? Let Paul's words challenge you, and then ask the Holy Spirit to inspire a fresh vision for the future in your heart.

5 | BECOMING A SPIRIT-LED VISIONARY

Careful Vision Creator

Team Review

What vision has the Holy Spirit placed in your heart?

Assess

How do unclear visions frustrate the people we lead?

Insights and Ideas

Spirit-led visionaries recognize the importance of making vision extremely clear. After they've envisioned the possibilities, they translate those dreams into specifics that people can understand and process.

Creating vision doesn't mean we invent it. Instead, we take what God has revealed to us and make it clear to others. Habakkuk 2:2 says, "Write down the revelation and *make it plain* on tablets so that a herald may run with it" (emphasis added).

People can't run with an idea unless it's plain. The greater the clarity, the greater the speed a vision can move toward fulfillment.

If you don't understand the vision, you'll have trouble getting anyone else on board with it. So, be sure each of the following descriptors apply:

1. **Specific**. Avoid nebulous language, opting instead for clear, specific communication. A vision of giving to missions and helping the poor is vague. But a vision to invest \$250,000 in missions and sponsor 100 children through a feeding program in Africa is unambiguous.
2. **Measurable**. When a vision is not measurable, it's easy to let ourselves off the hook when the path becomes difficult. The vision above is measurable because it has specific numbers attached to it. Sometimes a vision won't be numerical in nature. Instead, it might be a vision to create or launch a new ministry, program or initiative.
3. **Inspirational**. Carefully crafted visions should introduce a future beyond where the church is now. A vision to repeat what we've always done lacks inspiration. Vision inspires people toward a goal they can only attain with God's help.
4. **Time-bound**. Great visions have clear deadlines. Using the example above, we could say our vision is to invest \$250,000 in missions and sponsor 100 children through a feeding program in Africa within the next 12 months. Now we're working against a deadline, believing God to do something extraordinary.

A vision that is specific, measurable, inspirational and time-bound is highly actionable. It provides clear direction and offers people something to rally around.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What is the current vision of our church or area of ministry?
2. Which of the four characteristics above does our current vision lack?
3. How can we clearly state our vision?

Apply

Do you have a clear vision for your area of ministry? If not, seek the Lord for a Spirit-inspired vision. Then make it as clear as possible. Without clarity, you'll struggle to motivate others to action.

5

BECOMING A SPIRIT-LED VISIONARY

Careful Vision Creator

Spirit-led visionaries recognize the importance of making vision extremely clear. After they've envisioned the possibilities, they translate those dreams into specifics that people can understand and process.

Habakkuk 2:2 says, "Write down the revelation and *make it plain* on tablets so that a herald may run with it" (emphasis added).

People can't run with an idea unless it's plain. The greater the clarity, the greater the speed a vision can move toward fulfillment.

Four characteristics of vision:

1. _____.

A vision of giving to missions and helping the poor is vague. But a vision to invest \$250,000 in missions and sponsor 100 children through a feeding program in Africa is unambiguous.

2. _____.

When a vision is not measurable, it's easy to let ourselves off the hook when the path becomes difficult.

3. _____.

Carefully crafted visions should introduce a future beyond where the church is now.

4. _____.

Great visions have clear deadlines. Using the example above, we could say our vision is to invest \$250,000 in missions and sponsor 100 children through a feeding program in Africa within the next 12 months.

Apply

Do you have a clear vision for your area of ministry? If not, seek the Lord for a Spirit-inspired vision. Then make it as clear as possible. Without clarity, you'll struggle to motivate others to action.

6

BECOMING A SPIRIT-LED VISIONARY

Inspiring Vision Caster

Team Review

What vision statement did you craft for your church, ministry, or department, and is it specific, measurable, inspirational, and time-bound?

Assess

What is your biggest challenge when it comes to casting vision?

Insights and Ideas

God-inspired dreams are usually bigger than the talent and resources of a single individual. That's why Spirit-led visionaries master the art of vision casting. The story of Nehemiah provides a great example.

Nehemiah had a dream to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. He cast the vision with these inspiring words: "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace" (Nehemiah 2:17).

Nehemiah told the people about how God had guided him and prepared the way. "They replied, 'Let us start rebuilding.' So they began this good work" (verse 18).

Notice five steps of Nehemiah's vision casting:

1. *Define the problem.* Vision casting doesn't start with the vision but with the problem you're trying to solve. If you don't define the problem, people will see no need for the vision.
Nehemiah defined the problem by describing Jerusalem's tragic condition.
2. *Share the solution.* Nehemiah proposed rebuilding the wall. This was the solution needed to start getting the city back in order.
3. *Explain the benefit.* Once the problem and solution were clear, Nehemiah appealed to the people's hearts, saying, "We will no longer be in disgrace." The people would benefit from the restoration of dignity and respect.
4. *Point to God's fingerprints.* Nehemiah's vision wasn't simply a good idea. It was a God idea. Nehemiah shared his testimony of how God had led him and given him favor with the king.
When people see the fingerprints of God on a vision, they will feel inspired to get involved.
5. *Invite participation.* Nehemiah didn't just cast an inspiring vision. He gave the people an opportunity to make it *their* vision. And together, they went to work.

When people can give and serve the vision, it becomes personal and profound to them.

Reflect and Discuss

1. How does Nehemiah's approach challenge you?
2. Which part of the vision-casting process do you tend to skip?
3. Using Nehemiah's approach, how should you cast your vision to others?

Apply

Take the vision God has given you, and start crafting a vision message using the five steps in Nehemiah's model. You might even share your vision message with a few trusted advisors who can help you make it even better.

6

BECOMING A SPIRIT-LED VISIONARY

Inspiring Vision Caster

“You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace” (Nehemiah 2:17).

Five steps of Nehemiah’s vision casting:

1. *Define the* _____.

Vision casting doesn’t start with the vision but with the problem you’re trying to solve.

2. *Share the* _____.

Nehemiah proposed rebuilding the wall.

3. *Explain the* _____.

Nehemiah appealed to the people’s hearts, saying, “We will no longer be in disgrace.”

4. *Point to God’s* _____.

Nehemiah shared his testimony of how God had led him and given him favor with the king.

5. *Invite* _____.

Nehemiah didn’t just cast an inspiring vision. He gave the people an opportunity to make it *their* vision.

Apply

Take the vision God has given you, and start crafting a vision message using the five steps in Nehemiah’s model. You might even share your vision message with a few trusted advisors who can help you make it even better.

7

BECOMING A SPIRIT-LED VISIONARY

Practical Strategic Planner

Team Review

How did Nehemiah's example help you create a vision-casting talk?

Assess

Are you more spontaneous by nature or more of a planner? What are the pros and cons of each approach when it comes to pursuing a vision?

Insights and Ideas

Every vision requires strategy. Spirit-led visionaries leverage the gifts and abilities of others to collaborate, plan, prepare and work toward a preferred future.

In addition to being an effective vision caster, Nehemiah was a strategic planner. He requested the king's help in getting timber to rebuild the walls (Nehemiah 2). Nehemiah also gave the people assignments so they could complete the project in an efficient manner (Nehemiah 3).

To develop a strategic plan for fulfilling a vision, we need to answer four important questions:

1. **Plan:** *How will we get from here to there?* Author Bob Briner said, "A plan puts you in charge of your energies and activities." Without a plan, whatever problem or crisis screams the loudest may thwart your efforts.

Craft a plan that includes long-range objectives (covering a period of 12–24 months) and short-range goals (three to six months).

2. **People:** *Who will help us, and what roles will they fill?* Every vision requires a team to carry it out. When forming your team, answer this question: Who will do what by when? Connect the *people* to the *plan*, and set a deadline to make sure things are getting done in a timely manner.
3. **Provision:** *What resources do we need, and how will we acquire them?* Visions require money, time and energy. The bigger the vision, the longer the runway you need to get it airborne. If the vision requires extensive financial resources, you may need to launch a vision campaign to fund it.
4. **Progress:** *How will we track progress?* Ron Blue said, "You can't manage what you can't measure." That's why you need a systematic way to track progress toward the vision. Otherwise, you'll be in a constant state of distraction. A great way to handle this is by creating a dashboard that shows progress on a weekly or monthly basis.

A plan, people, provision and progress are all part of a strategic system.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What does Bob Briner's quote mean to you: "A plan puts you in charge of your energies and activities"?
2. Which of the four parts in strategic planning most needs your attention?
3. How do we track progress toward our vision, and how can our tracking improve?

Apply

Put together a strategic plan that includes the four elements above — a plan, people, provision and progress. You might even include some key leaders from your ministry or department in this planning process. Then monitor your strategic plan regularly, making any necessary adjustments to help you reach your vision.

7

BECOMING A SPIRIT-LED VISIONARY

Practical Strategic Planner

Every vision requires strategy. Spirit-led visionaries leverage the gifts and abilities of others to collaborate, plan, prepare and work toward a preferred future.

In addition to being an effective vision caster, Nehemiah was a strategic planner. He requested the king's help in getting timber to rebuild the walls (Nehemiah 2). Nehemiah also gave the people assignments so they could complete the project in an efficient manner (Nehemiah 3).

Four strategic planning questions:

1. _____: *How will we get from here to there?*

“A plan puts you in charge of your energies and activities.” — Bob Briner

2. _____: *Who will help us, and what roles will they fill?*

When forming your team, answer this question: Who will do what by when?

3. _____: *What resources do we need, and how will we acquire them?*

Visions require money, time and energy. The bigger the vision, the longer the runway you need to get it airborne.

4. _____: *How will we track progress?*

“You can't manage what you can't measure.” — Ron Blue

Apply

Put together a strategic plan that includes the four elements above — a plan, people, provision and progress. You might even include some key leaders from your ministry or department in this planning process. Then monitor your strategic plan regularly, making any necessary adjustments to help you reach your vision.

8

BECOMING A SPIRIT-LED VISIONARY

Courageous Risk Taker

Team Review

What progress have you made toward creating and implementing your strategic plan?

Assess

Which do you prefer: making plans or taking action?

Insights and Ideas

Planning isn't enough to see a vision fulfilled. Spirit-led visionaries take those plans and put them into action. This requires courage and a willingness to step into the unknown.

God entrusted Joshua with a huge vision — leading the Israelites into the Promised Land. But with that vision came an equally important command: “Be strong and courageous” (Joshua 1:9). Without strength and courage, Joshua and the Israelites would not have experienced all God had for them.

With carefully crafted plans and thoughtfully developed teams, leaders will be equipped to move. No one can accomplish the plan without movement. If there is no forward progress, the vision will become bogged down, and team members will feel underutilized.

Some leaders are adventurous, and others are more cautious. Adventurous risk takers are quick to jump into action. Cautious risk takers are careful not to proceed until they have well-developed plans to help them maximize the opportunity.

Both types of leaders are courageous enough to take steps of faith in the face of uncertainty. And both types have potential weaknesses.

Following are three ways to mitigate the potential weaknesses of adventurous leaders:

1. **Focus**. You may become bored once a vision launches. Place people in your inner circle who can help you maintain focus.
2. **Explanation**. You may become impatient with team members who are not as quick to move. Communication is key. Answering questions and providing explanations will help get everyone on the same page.
3. **Followthrough**. Carry the project through to completion before taking on new opportunities.

Below are three ways to mitigate the potential weaknesses of cautious leaders:

1. **Dream**. Don't be afraid to dream big. If everything must fit neatly in your detailed calculations, you might calculate God's infinite ability out of your equation.
2. **Action**. Once you gather 70% of the information, you probably have what you need to make a decision. Don't get trapped in paralysis by analysis.
3. **Empowerment**. You can't control everything when you take a risk. Be willing to release power to others so they can help carry the load.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Are you adventurous or cautious when it comes to risk taking?
2. Which of the tips to mitigate your weaknesses is most challenging to you?
3. How can adventurous and cautious people work together for the good of the church?

Apply

Acknowledge which kind of risk taker you are. Then reflect on the tips to mitigate potential weaknesses, and make a plan for heading off problems.

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BECOMING A SPIRIT-LED VISIONARY

Courageous Risk Taker

“Be strong and courageous” (Joshua 1:9).

Some leaders are adventurous, and others are more cautious. Adventurous risk takers are quick to jump into action. Cautious risk takers are careful not to proceed until they have well-developed plans to help them maximize the opportunity.

Tips for the adventurous:

1. _____. You may become bored once a vision launches. Place people in your inner circle who can help you maintain focus.
2. _____. You may become impatient with team members who are not as quick to move. Communication is key. Answering questions and providing explanations will help get everyone on the same page.
3. _____. Carry the project through to completion before taking on new opportunities.

Tips for the cautious:

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Apply

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Innovative Problem Solver

Team Review

How have you implemented the tips to mitigate potential weaknesses in risk taking?

Assess

How do you typically go about creatively solving problems?

Insights and Ideas

R.T. Kendall once said, “The greatest opposition to what God is doing today comes from those who were on the cutting edge of what God was doing yesterday.” Opposition and vision go hand in hand, and when opposition comes, Spirit-led visionaries must remain focused on their visions but flexible with their methods.

Jesus said, “No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins” (Mark 2:21–22).

The new wine of your vision probably won’t work inside the old wineskin of your methods. This is why innovative problem solving is so important. Adaptability and flexibility allow us to innovate solutions to our toughest problems.

As Albert Einstein observed, “We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.” Therefore, to increase your innovative problem-solving capacity, you’ll need to do two things:

1. *Enlarge your inputs.* Leaders sometimes struggle with “mindless mingling.” Because they always mingle with the same people, they lack fresh perspective. As a result, they don’t have the innovative capacity to solve new, unfamiliar problems.

The solution is enlarging growth inputs for learning. Attend new conferences, visit other churches, read different authors, and access new coaches. Each person’s reservoir is only so deep, and sometimes you need to start drinking from additional wells to think more creatively.

2. *Engage your team.* Don’t tackle problems alone. As John Maxwell says, “Some of my best thinking is done by others.” Discover the strengths of your team members and utilize them to help you innovate solutions to tough problems.

When people share new ideas, don’t shoot down everything they suggest. Your job is to listen, learn, discuss and then decide.

Reflect and Discuss

1. When you encounter problems, do you usually try to solve them yourself, or do you seek input from others?
2. Think of a problem you’re facing right now. How can you enlarge your growth inputs to solve that problem?
3. As a team, brainstorm a solution to the problem.

Apply

Consider a problem you’re experiencing in your department or ministry area. What are three inputs (such as books, resources or tools) you could access that are outside of your normal inputs for problem solving? Which team members could help you tackle this problem? Access the inputs, and then invite the team members to help you innovate a new solution.

Innovative Problem Solver

“The greatest opposition to what God is doing today comes from those who were on the cutting edge of what God was doing yesterday.” — R.T. Kendall

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“We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.” — Albert Einstein

Two ways to increase innovative problem-solving capacity:

1. *Enlarge your* _____.

Each person’s reservoir is only so deep, and sometimes you need to start drinking from additional wells to think more creatively.

2. *Engage your* _____.

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BECOMING A SPIRIT-LED VISIONARY

Resilient Hard Worker

Team Review

What progress have you made toward solving a problem in your area of ministry?

Assess

What is the biggest challenge for you when you experience setbacks?

Insights and Ideas

The path to a vision is rarely a straight line. You'll encounter setbacks that cause the vision to stall. In these moments, it's easy to lose focus or even call it quits.

Pursuing a vision is seldom easy. Before telling the church in Ephesus that God could do "immeasurably more" than they could ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20), Paul said, "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being" (verse 16).

The "immeasurably more" requires "power through his Spirit." Spirit-led visionaries need Spirit-inspired strength. The good news is the Holy Spirit has access to unlimited resources.

When you feel like throwing in the towel, keep three truths in front of you. Remembering these truths will build your resilience so you can bounce back from your setbacks.

1. *If you walk away, you will abandon more than a problem.* Difficulties and opposition are all we see when we feel like quitting. However, quitting means walking away from more than just a problem. It's also walking away from the vision. We're saying goodbye to everything God intends to do, including the blessings we haven't yet experienced.

Don't quit. There's a reward on the other side of resilience.

2. *Your problems are the pathway to growth.* Author Sam Chand says, "You'll only grow to the threshold of your pain." Simply put, your pain can be the *cap* or the *catalyst* to your growth. You get to choose.

Growth always requires change, but change always produces pain. Therefore, between the changes you need to make and the growth you want to see, you're going to encounter some degree of pain. Push through the pain because growth is waiting on the other side of it.

3. *Seasons aren't permanent cycles.* Difficult seasons are just that — seasons with a beginning and an end. Winter doesn't last forever. Spring will eventually come. Be careful not to view the difficulty of a season as a permanent cycle that will never end. "Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

Pursuing a God-inspired vision involves facing resistance. But these three truths will help you remain resilient as you work to see the vision fulfilled.

Reflect and Discuss

1. If you quit right now, from what vision would you be walking away?
2. What kind of pain or opposition have you faced in the past when pursuing a vision, and how did you get through it?
3. Which of the three truths above most speaks to you?

Apply

When we encounter resistance to our vision, prayers and words of encouragement are life giving. Take some time to pray for and encourage one another.

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BECOMING A SPIRIT-LED VISIONARY

Resilient Hard Worker

Pursuing a vision is seldom easy. Before telling the church in Ephesus that God could do “immeasurably more” than they could ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20), Paul said, “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being” (verse 16).

The “immeasurably more” requires “power through his Spirit.” Spirit-led visionaries need Spirit-inspired strength.

Three truths to remember when building resilience:

1. *If you walk away, you will abandon more than a _____.*

Don’t quit. There’s a reward on the other side of resilience.

2. *Your problems are the pathway to _____.*

“You’ll only grow to the threshold of your pain.” — Sam Chand

3 *Seasons aren’t _____ cycles.*

“Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning” (Psalm 30:5).

Apply

When we encounter resistance to our vision, prayers and words of encouragement are life giving. Take some time to pray for and encourage one another.