

7 Signs of Lifeless Church Vision

Every church has vision.

But not every church vision has life.

Most of today's "vision statements" found on church websites are insufferably generic. These statements trap effective disciple-making in cages of lofty language or purposeless planning. Worse yet, pastors and leadership teams meet around the same tables, year after year, wondering why people are still barely responding to their latest program or marketing campaign.

These leaders fail to see that their safe, boring statements of God's identity and direction for the church are actually the issue at hand. Nobody inside the church is excited, and nobody outside of the church is impressed.

Self-diagnosing lifeless church vision can be a challenge. It can be as hard as self-diagnosing a terminal illness. The examination itself, is predicated on courageous self-awareness and healthy self-confidence.

Unfortunately, there exists no webMD page to discern external symptoms of an internal congregational sickness. But, for those willing to accept the challenge, here are seven signs of lifeless church vision to look for in your church, and a two-question meter to check your visionary heartbeat.

Buck-Shot Bulletins

Do you feel compelled, or cajoled, into putting as many program and event advertisements as possible into your weekly worship handout? Or do you focus on just the one or two most important activities from a defined disciple-making pathway?

Lame-Duck Leadership

Do you think about new ministry initiatives in terms of what the next leader could do after you land at the next-larger church or finally retire? Or do you lead a team of leaders who follow God closely, and hold everything loosely, in order to be fully effective?

Self-Contained Sermons

Do you prepare your messages each week in isolation, intending to involve other leaders and ministries, but consistently miss out on any collaborative impact? Or do you seek God's heart in order to align the sermon each week with key next steps and offer ministry opportunities to engage in community or serving?

Wonder-Free Words

Do you have a ten page word document on your hard drive that you wrote three Christmas-breaks ago, just in case someone asks you about your vision? Or does everyone in leadership speak from a consistent palette of God-breathed visionary language that took time and a team to develop?

Auto-Pilot Announcements

Do you stand up and wing the welcome each Sunday, just “reading three” announcements off the bulletin or occasionally show a funny video? Or is every second of every announcement segment prepared and prayerfully scripted to engage each people group in the service with a single next-step?

Mind-Less Meetings

Do your leadership gatherings end up highly relational, with the only real outcome being that you will spend two hours talking about the same issues again next meeting? Or does every leader contribute to an agenda that is set before each meeting begins, and that produces distinct outcomes with ownership and a deadline, before each meeting concludes?

Hero-Complex Hubris

Do you and your team view bringing outside eyes, or coaching, as a threat to your leadership credibility, maintaining a prideful attitude toward not needing help? Or do you regularly ask “who can help us see what we cannot see” and recognize that what God used to get you “here” today, will not be what He uses to get you “there” tomorrow?

[Read more from Bryan.](#)

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