

THE VISIONARY LEADER THE FIRST FOUNDATION OF LEADERSHIP

Terry Calkin and Paul Beasley-Murray



VISION	PASSION	CHARACTER	GIFTING
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“Where there is no vision, the people perish”

(Proverbs 29.18 AV)

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PREFACE

Terry Calkin is the founding pastor of Green Lane Christian Centre, Auckland, today one of New Zealand's 'mega' churches. Terry has lived and breathed church growth! In 2012 Terry relinquished the role of senior pastor of Green Lane Christian Centre to spend more time exercising a wider ministry amongst churches in Africa and Asia. Before assuming church leadership Terry's background was in business – he was a senior lecturer in management and cost accounting.

Ordained as a missionary in 1970, Paul Beasley Murray began his ministry by teaching New Testament and Greek in the National University of Congo/Zaire; later he was Principal of Spurgeon's College, London. However, for most of his ministry Paul has been as pastor – first in Altrincham, Cheshire, and then in Chelmsford, Essex, where under Paul's leadership significant church growth was the feature. In 2014 Paul retired from pastoral ministry and is now chairman of both Ministry Today UK and the College of Baptist Ministers. He also has a world-wide ministry both as a theological teacher and as a prolific author.

In some ways Terry and Paul are very different people. They come from different ends of the evangelical spectrum: Terry's roots are in the Pentecostal 'Apostolic' churches, while Paul as a Baptist minister comes from a 'mainline' denomination. But when Terry and Paul collaborate, their differences become not a weakness, but a strength. In the words of Prov 27.17: "Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens the wits of another". Both Terry and Paul have learnt from one another's approach to leadership – but as the reader will discover, there are still times when they disagree with one another. We believe that this book is the richer for the differences of approach.

In recent years, Terry and Paul have become the firmest of friends, sharing a common passion to see churches grow. It is this passion which has brought them together to write a series of books on the four principles of leadership: viz. vision, passion, character and gifting. Or to use the metaphor Terry has developed over the years, there are four 'foundations' or 'corner stones' of 'the house of leadership'. Each is vital: to keep the subsequent building stable, they must all play an equal role in the life of the leader. Only where these four foundational principles of vision, passion, character, and gifting, are in place, will Jesus be able to build his church.

Their first book, *The Passionate Leader*, published in 2015 by the Joshua Press in Arusha, Tanzania, was an over-view of the four foundations with a particular emphasis on passion. In this book we look at vision as another of the key four foundations.

Finally, please note that unless otherwise indicated, the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV) of the Bible is used. Other versions used are the *Good News Bible* (GNB), the *New International Version* of the Bible (NIV) *Revised English Bible* (REB). We also quote from *The Message*, a paraphrase of the Bible by Eugene Peterson.

CHAPTER 1: DEFINING VISION

Vision is essential to leadership

Vision, it has been said, is ‘the ability to think about or plan the future with imagination or wisdom’. Or, to put it another way, “Vision provides a description of where you want to get to. It pictures a scenery that is different from what you see, hear, smell, taste, or feel today. Because it is different, it is all about change. So you say, ‘Today we are here; tomorrow we want to be there’. If today is your Sinai Desert, tomorrow will be your Promised Land”.¹ Or in the more prosaic definition we gave in *The Passionate Leader*: vision is “the ability to know and define the common objective.... Vision is essentially an ultimate destination that the leader wants his church to reach.”

Vision is absolutely crucial to leadership. Indeed Warren Bennis, an American pioneer in leadership studies, defined leadership as “the capacity to create a compelling vision and translate it into action and sustain it”. He went on to say that “with a vision, the leader provides the all-important bridge from the present to the future of the organization”.²

Leaders are those who are imbued with the spirit enshrined in the words of George Bernard Shaw: "You see things as they are and ask 'why?'. But I dream things that never were, and ask 'why not?'"³ Or in the words of the former American Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger: “The great man understands the essence of a problem, the ordinary man sees only the symptoms... The great man has a vision of the future which enables him to place obstacles into perspective; the ordinary leader turns pebbles in the road into boulders.”⁴

Leaders who make a difference to the world are leaders with vision. In the words of Karl Marx, engraved on a huge granite pillar by his grave in London’s Highgate Cemetery: “The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it”.

According to Paul Harvey, the noted American radio broadcaster, “A blind man’s world is bounded by the limits of his touch, an ignorant man’s world by the limits of his knowledge, and a great man’s world by the limits of his vision”. Helen Keller, the American deaf-blind political activist, would, however, taken issue with this down-playing of the blind, for she said: “The most pathetic person in the world is someone who has sight but no vision”. On another occasion she said: “It is for us to pray not for tasks equal to our powers, but for powers equal to our tasks; to go forward with a great desire forever beating at the door of our hearts as we travel toward our distant goal.”

Vision is essential to Christian leadership

Vision is one of the four indispensable foundations of leadership, whether that leadership be secular or spiritual. The main differentiator between the secular and the sacred is the objective or vision of leadership. Secular leadership all too often has a vision of either

¹ John Truscott, What do you mean by ‘vision’?, *On-Line Training Notes* 32, first published in 2006.

² Quoted by Richard Higginson, *Transforming Leadership* (SPCK, London 1966) 84.

³ See George Bernard Shaw, *Back to Methuselah* (1921) Part I: Act 1 where these words are spoken by the serpent to Eve.

⁴ Quoted by John Adair, *Effective Leadership* (Pan Books, London 1983) 185.

creating money or advancing a philosophy. By contrast Christian leadership's objective can be reduced to one thing: 'Building the Kingdom of God'.

First and foremost a leader must be a visionary. So Bill Hybels, the founding pastor of Chicago's Willow Creek Community Church, wrote "Vision is at the very core of leadership. Take vision away from a leader and you cut out his or her heart. Vision is the fuel that leaders run on. It's the energy that creates action. It's the fire that ignites the passion of followers. It's the clear call that sustains focused effort year after year, decade after decade, as people offer consistent and sacrificial service to God."⁵

A recent National Church Life Survey of Australia revealed that "having a clear and owned vision, inspiring and empowering leadership, and imaginative and empowering leaders" are the hallmarks of growing churches.⁶

In words quoted in most Christian books on leadership. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" declares Prov 29.18 (AV). Unfortunately the precise translation of this verse is disputed and is translated in a variety of different ways in modern English versions: e.g. "A nation without God's guidance is a nation without order" (GNB); "Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint" (NIV); "With no one in authority, the people throw off restraint" (REB). J.G. Janzen has pointed out "the conviction in Prov 29.18a semantically parallels that in Prov 11.14a, 'Where there is no guidance, a nation falls'. However, the guidance in question relates more to God's revelation for the people of Israel as expressed in the Law (the Torah) as distinct from the vision of a leader for a church!⁷ Nonetheless, it seems to us that the general principle remains true: without vision a church has no future. For a church to grow and develop it must have a sense of purpose and direction. Such purpose and direction is spearheaded by the leader. The church may be likened to an army on the move, and what an army needs is a leader with a sense of strategy.

Leaders are called to give people a vision of what God intends for the life of their church. Pastors are not in the business of maintaining the status quo, but of leading God's people onwards to the new pattern God intends for his children. It is the task of leaders to encourage their churches to be 'sunrise people' dreaming of the future, rather than 'sunset people' dreaming of the past.

Leaders in the language of Robert Schuller, the former pastor of California's Crystal Cathedral, are called to be 'possibility thinkers', men and women who refused to limit their God:

"God has unlimited financial resources and unlimited intelligence to achieve his goals. Possibility thinking is simply opening your mind for God to unfold the ways in which His will can be accomplished. Thus God performs miracles in the people who, unafraid of failure and public embarrassment, move boldly and bravely forward attempting big things for God and expecting great things from God."⁸

⁵ Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids 2002) 31. The chapter in which this quotation is found is headed 'A leader's most potent weapon – the power of vision'

⁶ Quoted by Bob Jackson, *What Makes Churches Grow?* (Church House Publishing, London 2015) 14.

⁷ See Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2005) 445-447.

⁸ Robert Schuller, *Your Church Has Real Possibilities* (Regal, Glendale, California 1974) 87.

Leaders are great optimists, but optimists in the best sense of the word: for suffering neither from false optimism, which ignores or dismisses problems nor from pessimism, which allows people to be crippled by the problems that are around them, visionary leaders are those who see the problems in the light of God's word that he "by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine" (Eph 3.20). Or as Eugene Peterson writes in *The Message*: "God can do anything - far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it by working within us".

Vision in a church context is God-inspired

When on the Day of Pentecost visitors to Jerusalem were puzzled by hearing the disciples "speaking about God's deeds of power" in their own languages, Peter drew upon as passage from Joel 2 to explain what was happening:

"In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2.17).

Although Peter's emphasis is on 'prophesying', it is noteworthy that 'seeing visions' and 'dreaming dreams' are viewed as Spirit-inspired. In the Old Testament as indeed in the ancient world in general visions and dreams were recognized as a means of divine guidance. When today we speak of 'visions' and 'dreams' we are not first and foremost speaking of thoughts and images occurring during the night, although that can still be the case, but rather of thoughts and images which come to us when we are awake as God stirs our imagination and helps us 'see' new possibilities before us.

In seeking God's direction for our churches, we open our minds as well as our spirits to God. It has been said that 'visions come from heaven but must be earthed'. As Psalm 32.8,9 clearly indicates, God expects us to use our minds in his service: we are not to be like horses and mules which have no understanding, and must be curbed with bit and bridle. God's guidance involves the use of our God-given mind.

This 'seeing' can happen listening to a sermon or reading a book. It can happen when we are on our own or with others. There is no one way in which God speaks to us. Vision can come as a flash of insight as we are driving along a road. However, as a general rule, we are more likely to hear from God when we take time out to discover his direction for our lives and for the people he has entrusted to us.

For Terry vision was initially about how to create an entirely new church, while for Paul vision was how to stir an existing church. However, whatever the setting, vision cannot be a one-off experience. We must constantly be open to what God would say to us. In this regard Paul remembers listening to the American church leader John Wimber, who told of how every Friday morning he used to lie down by his swimming pool, with a glass of Coke in one hand and a Bible in another, and dream dreams! We may not all have our own swimming pool, but this is no reason why we cannot make time to dream dreams and discover God's vision for our church. A weekly dreaming session may seem a luxury, but the principle of taking time out for prayerfully thinking and planning is vital. One reason why many churches do not prosper is that their pastors are so busy chasing their tails in their pastoral duties that they never make time to find the 'vision'

Dreaming dreams and seeing visions are not optional to leadership, but part of leadership. In the words David Pitches, an Anglican vicar and later bishop, much involved in charismatic renewal:

“Vision creates faith and inspires hope. Vision provides the energy for every effort, the power that will penetrate the problems and the will that overcomes the obstacles. Vision is usually accompanied by a proud dissatisfaction with the way things are and a compelling perception of the way things could be. Vision starts with frustration over what is and develops with determination to press towards what could be. Vision originates with the indignation of hindsight, the illumination of insight, and the imagination of foresight.”⁹

Dreaming, of course, is not the monopoly of the pastor. The pastor has no exclusive rights on the Holy Spirit. Leadership within any given church is always called to be a corporate affair: the leadership is to be shared with other suitably gifted people, be they deacons, elders, or whatever. I for one have benefitted greatly from the insights and ideas of my leaders. However, at the end of the day it is the pastor who has the task - and the privilege - to share the vision with the congregation and then lead the church in implementing the vision.

Vision is specific to each church

All churches have the same mission, which is to fulfil the Great Commission of the Risen Lord Jesus. The form of the Great Commission varies from Gospel to Gospel, but in essence it is the same. The Good News of the Gospel is to be shared with people's everywhere:

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Matt 28.19, 20a).

“Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation” (Mark 16.15: the so-called ‘longer ending’ which does not appear in all manuscripts).

“You are witnesses of these things”: viz. “that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations” (Luke 24.46-48)

“As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20.21)

However, although we share in a common mission, the way in which we as churches engage in mission will vary. Vision is the interpretation and application of the mission of Jesus into a specific context. In the church vision sees, with an eye of faith, the ways that we can turn the Great Commission into a reality

A church's vision must be rooted in the mission of Jesus. It cannot be the product of a leader's personal agenda or fantasy. Vision within the context of a church is our response to God's love for his world.

⁹ David Pitches, *Leadership For New Life* (Hodder & Stoughton, London 1998) 57.

Vision not only begins with God – it also continues with God. Vision is not about what we can do for God, but rather about what God can do through us. Vision goes hand in hand with faith in the God who “is able to accomplish far more than all we can ask or imagine” (Eph 3.20). Vision is what we have faith to believe that God will bring about if we fulfil our mission faithfully.

The relationship between mission, faith and vision is brought out well in the following list of ‘ten characteristics of a good vision’:¹⁰

1. A vision is related to mission but different. All congregations have the same mission, which is to fulfil our Lord’s Great Commission. Vision is insight into how a particular congregation will carry out its mission in its context in the next five to ten years.
2. A vision is unique. Each vision, like a fingerprint, fits the individual congregation that has adopted a vision of how God will work in its situation. The vision not only reflects the contextual surroundings of the congregation but the personality and giftedness of the congregation.
3. A vision focuses on the future. While visions honour the past and what God has done to bring a congregation to the present, they focus on a preferred future for each congregation. It is the view of the future that changes the present life of the congregation in order to achieve the preferred future stated in the vision.
4. A vision is for others. The focus of a vision is what it will do for others who are not a part of the group stating the vision. A good vision is quite unselfish in its intent. It places as primary the needs of people not currently being served by the congregation.
5. A vision is realistic. All good visions stretch the imaginations of people, yet they are realistic enough to be achieved if God intervenes. Good visions are not statements of presumption; instead they are statements of faith.
6. A vision is lofty. Good visions inspire people to high standards and targets not easily achieved. The lofty statements force congregations to be clear about their values while forcing them to choose which values they will honour and implement and which ones they will ignore.
7. A vision is inviting. Passive ‘ho-hum’ visions do not produce passion, commitment to service and the giving of resources. Visions helps people see how the future can be better and how they can, with God’s help, make that happen. Good leaders have the ability to help people see what their good deeds will produce and how corporately the group can achieve so much more than what individuals alone can make happen.
8. Vision is a group vision. All visions are shared by the group. They ring true for a majority of the people.
9. A vision is good news and bad news. It is good news in that it is a promise of a better future. It is bad news because it provides judgment on the past and the present. Therefore a vision always gets mixed reviews.
10. A vision is a sign of hope. Faith, hope, and love are crucial to God’s congregations. It is vision that provides a congregation with hope. Vision gives the leader hope and it gives followers hope of what God will do through them.

¹⁰ This is a slight adaptation of a list produced by Paul Borden, which in turn was an adaptation of a list produced by Lovett Weems, *Church Leadership* (Abingdon Press, Nashville 1993).

CHAPTER 2: GETTING A VISION

William Carey dared to dream

It was reading the accounts of Captain James Cook's voyages to Australasia and the South Seas that caused William Carey to become convinced that something must be done about those who never heard the name of Jesus. He began to research the subject, and in 1792 published the fruit of his research in *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*. He talked to fellow ministers about his concern for the lost, but initially made little impact: indeed at one ministers' meeting John Rylands, the chairman, said "Sit down, young man, you're an enthusiast! If God wishes to convert the heathen he'll do so without your aid or mine!" But Carey refused to be put off. The flash-point came on 30 May 1792 when Carey was preaching at an association meeting of Baptist churches. He took as his text Isaiah 54.2,3: "Enlarge the site of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes". In the plight of exiled Judah, apparently forgotten by God her husband, Carey saw a picture of the barren and desolate church of his own day, and in the promise of a new and wider destiny for Judah lay the prospect of countless new children in the Christian family to be drawn from all the earth. He ended his sermon with the rallying cry: "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God". And the very next day at the association's business meeting it was agreed to form "a Baptist society for propagating the Gospel among the Heathen".¹¹

This story of this birth of a vision is highly instructive. The vision was sparked by Carey's reading Captain Cook's journals – as Carey began to read of a new world that was opening, the thought of taking the Gospel to the South Seas flashed through his mind. This was then followed by study and research, accompanied by discussions with church leaders. The modern movement, however, was birthed in an exposition of Scripture that was so powerful that even John Rylands, the former sceptic, was convicted of "the criminality of our supineness in the cause of God" and said that he would not have been surprised "if all the people had lifted up their voice and wept".

Paul was inspired by Carey's vision

Carey dared to dream – and as a result of Carey many others have dared to dream too. Indeed, for Paul Carey was the inspiration for a 'visionary' sermon he preached within a matter of a few months after he had become the senior minister of Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford. On the morning of 19 September 1993 Paul took the same text as Carey, and began his sermon with these words: "Just as in 1792, so in 1993, God wishes to do a new thing amongst us - but he will only do so as we venture out in faith with him". He went on: "Break the shackles of the past and of past expectations, and open up yourselves to the new possibilities which are in God. Get ready for a new period of expansion: "Make the tent you live in larger; lengthen its ropes and strengthen the pegs! (Isaiah 54.2 GNB)"

That morning, after expounding the text in its context, Paul developed three main points. In summary they were as follows:

¹¹ See Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1992* (T & T Clark, Edinburgh 1992).

1. *We need to go for growth.* We are already a sizeable church - but God is calling us grow yet more. God is not in the business of maintenance - he is in the business of mission. God is concerned not just for you and for me, but for those 100s/1000s of people in Chelmsford who never darken the door of a church. The other day I did some calculations: on the basis of Chelmsford having a pop. of 150,000 - and of 10% being churchgoers and a further 10% being on fringe of some church - I worked out that there are probably some 120,000 people who have no meaningful link with any church in Chelmsford. What a mission field.
2. *We need to revamp our church premises* I believe that God would have us do something with our buildings. And when I say something, I don't mean simply give them a lick of paint or line the pews with cushions. Something more radical is called for. God would have us go for "great things". What was a super building in the early 1900s = totally inadequate for the 1990s, let alone the new millennium that will soon be upon us. Of course it will cost money. At the moment I have no idea how much this would cost, but even £1,000,000 is in our reach.
3. *We need to believe God.* Before we begin to "enlarge the site of our tent", some of us may need to enlarge the size of our minds - or rather, allow a larger vision of God to dominate our minds. Read again the closing chapters of Isaiah: remind yourself that the God whom we worship is one to whom "even the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as dust on the scales" (Isaiah 40.15). As a church we need to begin to dream dreams, believing that with God all things are possible. For as Paul said, God "is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think" (Eph 3.20). Note the words: "is able" - Paul does not say: "God will do more" - it all depends on us. God does not guarantee to come to our aid, whatever. God's power is released when we open our hearts to him and trust him.

Paul presented the vision. Perhaps not surprisingly, initially there was a good deal of opposition from a small but vocal group. However, eventually the church agreed to back the vision: the church building was gutted, and in 2001 a new mission facility was opened at a cost of £2 million! The church members believed God; they revamped their premises; and as a result the church began to experience significant growth.

Terry too was inspired by Carey's vision

Terry too preached a sermon entitled 'Stretch the curtains of your tent' (Isaiah 54.2). Drawing upon a number of Scriptures, his sermon had four points:

1. *We must be at risk:* Begin to see the vision in terms of Eph 3.20. This is where the whole concept of faith comes in. If there is no risk, there is no faith. Being a Christian is all about faith. Always keep in mind that it is faith that takes hold of your hope and brings it into the now. That's what living by faith really is - it's living with such a trust in God that the risk is no longer yours - it's God's!"
2. *We must be prepared to change:* Your vision is going to move you out of your comfort zone. Charles Kettering, the American industrialist said, "The world hates changes, yet it's the only thing that brings progress".

3. *We must plan for growth:* When you have got your God-given vision, don't rush off suddenly and think that whatever you will do will be automatically blessed by God. Continue to listen to God and get wise counsel: "Plans are established by taking advice" (Prov 20.18); "in the abundance of counsellors, there is victory" (Prov 24.6).
4. *We must be dedicated to the vision:* "Remember the young lad who only had five loaves and two fish in his lunchbox? He brought all he had and gave to Jesus who multiplied the gift to feed five thousand. We too bring only what we have and give it all to him, and he takes our offering and multiplies it.

So dream your dream and pray like Michelangelo: "Lord, grant that I may always desire more than I can accomplish".

Habakkuk presents a template for receiving vision

But how do we dream the dream? How do we get a vision? A passage which has meant much to Terry is Habb 2.1-3. The prophecy of Habakkuk comes from near the end of the seventh century BC, at a time when the Babylonians were in power. Habakkuk longed to see God take action and deliver his people, but God's answer was that he would take action in his own time, and meanwhile "the righteous live by their faith" (2.4) – or in the words of the GNB, "those who are righteous will live because they are faithful to God". This is the context in which the prophet says:

"I will stand at my watch-post, and station myself on the rampart. I will keep watch to see what he will say to me.... Then the Lord answered me and said, 'Write the vision; make it plain on tablets so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay'" (Habb 2.1-3).

Or in the words of the GNB:

"I will climb my watchtower and wait to see what the Lord will tell me... The Lord gave me this answer: 'Write down clearly on clay tablets what I reveal to you, so that it can be read at a glance. Put it in writing, because it is not yet time for it to come true. But the time is coming quickly, and what I show you will come true. It may seem slow in coming but wait for it; it will certainly take place, and it will not be delayed.'"

From these verses Terry has derived four principles for developing a God-given vision. Although Paul has difficulty with some of Terry's exegesis, in the sense that he is not convinced that the prophet himself had in mind the process of developing a God-given vision, nonetheless Paul is not unhappy to accept the general principles involved! So let us look at these four principles – or four 'steps' as Terry calls them:

1. *'Watch'* – just as Habakkuk had been "keeping watch to see what he [the Lord] will say" (2.1), so leaders need to spend time asking God for direction.

2. ‘*Write*’ – just as God told Habakkuk to “write the vision and make it plain on tablets” (2.2a), so leaders today need to write down the vision God has given them, and thereby begin to communicate the vision clearly to everybody.
3. ‘*Work*’ – just as God spoke to Habakkuk of “a herald running with it [the vision]” (2.2b NIV), so leaders today need to ‘run with vision’ by working at it. The fact is that it takes a good deal of effort to implement vision.
4. ‘*Wait*’- God says to leaders today, as he said to Habakkuk, “If it seems to tarry wait for it; it will surely come” (2.3b). Leaders need to be patient for the outcome of their vision.

Step One – Watch: As we have already seen, vision begins with God. Therefore the first step for a leader wanting to gain vision from God is to seek to listen to God. In Terry’s words, “the first step as a leader in developing a vision is to set aside a couple of days from the noise and distraction of the world and seek God. The most important thing in prayer is to spend as much time listening as you do praying. Don’t make it a monologue”. In the words of Jeremiah, “When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart” (Jer 29.13).

Step Two – Write. It is helpful for leaders to write down what they believe God has said to them, for the following five reasons: it helps us to remember – in the busyness of life we can begin to forget what God has called us to do; it aids consistency – it keeps us focussed on achieving what God wants to do in and through us; it serves as a signpost – and keeps us travelling forward to our destination; it brings vitality – every time we read what we have written, we gain new impetus; and finally, it serves to imprint the vision on our soul – and as a result we become consumed and orientated by the vision. Terry adds that a recent study has shown that the 1% of people who write their vision down and continuously review it, achieve much more than the 99% who do not.

Just as important, however, is that writing down the vision also communicates the vision to others. In the time of Habakkuk, it was customary to erect tablets in public places on which notices of public interest could be fixed. “Make it plain” – use large letters and legible handwriting. There must be no room for confusion, error, or inaccuracy. David Prior commented: “We are all accustomed to advertising hoardings... we can imagine, for example a succession of large notices along the main road into Jerusalem or round the marketplace, each carrying a key phrase from Habakkuk’s vision”.¹²

Step Three - Work. Nothing in this world happens without effort to sustain it. Vision does not become a reality without work. Some think that having a God-given vision means that it will automatically come to pass without effort. It won’t. ... It’s like building a house. You start with a set of plans and then you work to construct the house to match the plans. You cannot live in a set of plans. You can only live in the result of your effort to construct the house. So it is with vision.

Step Four – Wait. Terry loves the old Moffatt translation: “The vision has its own appointed hour. It ripens, it will flower; if it be long, then wait, for it is sure, and it will not be late”. Waiting is not always easy – especially when you are burning with the passion of the vision.

¹² David Prior, *The Message of Joel, Micah and Habakkuk* (IVP, Leicester 1998) 234.

But it often takes time to and we need to be patient. In this regard Terry remembers how it took seven years before the church he founded had a building of its own. “I began to get very frustrated. But God had to do some things in me and in the congregation to get us into the building. And as I look back, I’m just amazed at God’s grace and what he did. So trust God. Your vision will be tested. Unless your vision has undergone testing, it will be worth nothing. We need to trust God, and he will see the vision comes to pass as we work at it.”

CHAPTER 3: COMMUNICATING THE VISION

Pictures communicate

According to Bill Hybels, “Vision is a picture of the future that produces passion”.¹³ So when it comes to communicating a vision, it seems to me that there is a lot to be said for painting pictures of the future.

Yes, there is a place for ‘vision statements’, but such statements are simply a memorable way of summarising the vision so that everyone can own it. We might for instance say that the five word phrase “a land flowing with milk and honey” (see Exodus 3.8, 17; 13.5 etc.) became Moses’ mission statement as he led the children out of Egypt into the Promised Land. Willow Creek’s mission statement is nine words in length “Turning irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Jesus”. According to the American management guru, Peter Drucker, such mission statements should be able to fit on the front of a T-shirt. Bill Hybels comments, “That means it better be crisp. It better be repeatable.”¹⁴

On reflection perhaps Paul vision ‘mantra’ at Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford, was too long (33 words) and too complex:

“We want to be a strong and vibrant city-centre church where everyone is:

- Passionate for God
- Passionate for others
- Passionate for one another
- Passionate to grow in faith
- Passionate to serve church”

But one thing is certain, not even a 33 word vision statement is long enough to communicate a vision – as distinct from reminding people of a vision previously shared. Pictures are what are called for.

Martin Luther King had a dream

On 28 August 1963 Martin Luther King, Jr. organised a now historic march to Washington to show the importance of solving the United States racial problems. In the presence of some 250,000 people he said:

“I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.’ I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.

¹³ *Courageous Leadership* 32.

¹⁴ *Courageous Leadership* 45.

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification; one day right there in Alabama, little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers. I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning, 'My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring.' And if America is to be a great nation this must become true.

So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania! Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado! Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California! But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia! Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee! Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God am free at last!'"

Martin Luther King painted a picture – and as a result he gave one of the most memorable speeches in history.

Rick Warren had a vision

Rick Warren, the founding pastor of California's Saddleback Community Church, shared his dream with a congregation of just 60 people in his first sermon on 30 March 1980

“It is the dream of a place where the hurting, the depressed, the frustrated, and the confused can find love, acceptance, help hope, forgiveness, guidance and encouragement.

It is the dream of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with the hundreds of thousands of residents in south Orange County.

It is the dream of welcoming 20,000 members into the fellowship of our church family – loving, learning, laughing, and living in harmony together.

It is the dream of developing people to spiritual maturity through Bible studies, small groups, seminars, retreats, and a Bible school for our members.

It is the dream of equipping every believer for a significant ministry by helping them discover the gifts and talents God gave them.

It is the dream of sending our hundreds of career missionaries and church workers all around the world, and empowering every member of r a personal life mission in the world, It is the dream of sending our members by the thousands on short-term mission projects to every continent. It is the dream of starting at least one new duahgter church every uyear.

It is the dream of at least 50 acres of land on which will be built a regional church for south Orange County – with beautiful, yet simnple facilities including a worship centre seating thousands, a counseling and prayer centre, classrooms for Bible studies and training lay ministries, and a recreation area. All of this will be desinged to minister to the total person – spiritually, emotionally, physically and socially – and set in a peaceful inspirling garden landscape.

I stand before you today and state in confident assurance that these dreams will become reality. Why? Because they are inspired by God!”¹⁵

This was an audacious dream. Indeed, one might say that only in California could a pastor express such a vision. And yet, by God's grace, the dream was realised, and Saddleback has become a model to churches the world over, both small and large.

Paul had a vision

Over the years Paul has sought to express vision in various ways. After a visit to New Zealand (including visiting Terry!) and Australia he elaborated on the church's mission statement, 'Going Christ's way and making disciples' by adopting Martin Luther King's approach to dreaming:

¹⁵ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids 1995) 43

1. I have a dream of a worshipping church
Where God is at the centre of our life together
Where Sunday is a day not to be missed
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples
2. I have a dream of a multi-congregational church
Where God is praised in a variety of forms
Where everybody belongs to one congregation
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples
3. I have a dream of a multi-cultural church
Where people from many nations come to worship God
Where internationals find special welcome
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples
4. I have a dream of a non-sexist church
Where women play their full part
Where men can truly be men
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples
5. I have a dream of a community church
Where family life is strengthened, but also
Where singles are valued and find friendship
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples
6. I have a dream of a praying church
Where the needs of our town and of the world are remembered
Where the church and its leaders are prayed for too
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples
7. I have a dream of a multi-age church
Where there is a place for young and old
Where people of all ages feel at home
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples
8. I have a dream of a church full of children
Where every month there is a children's special
Where children come to know the Saviour
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples
9. I have a dream of a church reaching out to young adults
Where the evening service is contemporary in style
Where the needs of students and the new city-dwellers are met
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples
10. I have a dream of a church growing with seniors
Where a growing number of seniors find the Saviour
Where seniors grow in grace and in understanding of their Lord
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

11. I have a dream of an empowering church
Where the focus is on the world, and not just the church
Where those in mid-life are resourced for their life in the world of work
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples
12. I have a dream of a stress-free church
Where diaries are freed up from unnecessary meetings
Where people have time to make friends with their neighbours
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples
13. I have a dream of a ministry-led church
Where the ministry teams get on with their tasks
Where the leaders are free to lead
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples
14. I have a dream of a vibrant town-centre church
Where the strong and powerful are challenged
Where the needs of the weak and vulnerable are met
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples
15. I have a dream of a welcoming church
Where the welcome is such that newcomers want to return
Where a smile is accompanied with the offer of a meal
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples
16. I have a dream of an evangelising church
Where people want to bring their friends
Where baptisms are a frequent event
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples
17. I have a dream of a growing church
Where the crowds necessitate yet another congregation
Where growth dictates yet further building
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples
18. I have a dream of a church made up of small groups
Where everybody feels they belong
Where everybody feels free to share and not to feel ashamed
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples
19. I have a dream of a church served by an ever-expanding staff
Where young and old volunteer to be interns
Where part-time as well as full-time staff serve their Lord
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples
20. I have a dream of a generous church
Where people are eager to give to vision
Where finance is a servant of the church's mission
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

21. I have a dream of a visionary church
Where faith dreams
Where faith dares
Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

Later, inspired by *Looking for Love*, a programme developed by Terry at Green Lane Centre, Auckland, he expressed the vision behind Chelmsford's strapline – 'Central Baptist Church – a place to belong' in the following manner:

"In a world where many are lonely, we offer friendship. In a world where many long for community, we offer fellowship. In a world where many feel without worth, we offer affirmation. We want to be a church where love is real – tangible – and all-inclusive. Here all are welcome – children and young people, young singles and young couples, people in mid-life and seniors too. We want to be a genuinely multicultural church – where internationals find a special welcome. We want to be a church where people, looking for love, wanting love, needing love, find love. We want people to discover God's amazing love for each one of us as a result of experiencing God's love amongst us."

Vision needs to be communicated regularly

'Vision leaks, even out of the best of people' says Hybels – and how right he is.¹⁶ However fantastic the vision, the vision will fade unless it is renewed constantly. People have short-term memories. People need to be constantly reminded of the direction that has been sight. As John Truscott put it, "People lose sight of visions very quickly because the detail of the immediate is so much more pressing than the long-term journey to the final destination".¹⁷ Vision needs to be communicated regularly. In this regard Rick Warren found the story of Nehemiah's rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem instructive. He wrote:

"We learn that halfway through the project the people got discouraged and wanted to give up. Like many churches, they lost their sense of purpose and, as a result became overwhelmed with fatigue, frustration, and fear. Nehemiah rallied the people back to work by reorganizing the project and recasting the vision. He reminded them of the importance of their work and reassured them that God would help them fulfil his purpose (Neh 4.6-15)."¹⁸

From this story Warren developed what he called the 'Nehemiah Principle':

"Vision and purpose must be restated every 26 days to keep the church moving in the right direction".¹⁹ He went on: "Don't assume that a single sermon on the church's purposes will permanently set the direction of our church. Don't suppose that by printing your purposes in the bulletin everyone has learned them, or even read them."²⁰

¹⁶ Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* 44

¹⁷ Truscott, *What do you mean by 'vision'?* 2

¹⁸ Rick Warren, *Purpose Driven Church* 111.

¹⁹ Rick Warren, *Purpose-Driven Church* 111.

²⁰ Rick Warren, *Purpose-Driven Church* 117.

Communication is vital. Terry, for instance, his church at Green Lane, used to aim to have a vision slot every Sunday! In addition to brief 'excited spots' Paul used to have a 'Vision Sunday' three times a year, when morning and evening he would seek to earth the church's vision in the opportunities facing the church in the coming few months.

Ten key principles in communicating the vision

Brian Harris, the Principal of Vose College in Western Australia has helpfully drawn up a list of ten key principles in communicating vision.²¹ In summary, they are as follows:

1. Keep it simple. Try to encapsulate the vision within one memorable statement
2. Know your audience. Communicate differently with people at different ages and stages.
3. Use stories. Tell stories of what happened to other groups who adopted a similar vision.
4. Be vulnerable. Tell why the vision matters and how it matters to you.
5. Use multiple communication methods. Some respond to visual material, other need visual input. Others are influenced by knowing that key people support the idea.
6. Have multiple entry points for involvement. Give people clear opportunities to sign up for aspects of the vision that they will help to champion.
7. Affirm the vision over and over. Many people have had experiences of a vision being presented with great enthusiasm and then being quietly swept aside when it proved too difficult
8. Update regularly on progress
9. Be candid about problems and difficulties while maintaining a positive and optimistic tone. When people know what problems are being faced, they are often willing to help, especially if they sense the leaders remain optimistic about the long-term outcome
10. Show that you are committed to the vision and make it clear you are doing all you can to make it come about.

²¹ Brian Harris, *The Tortoise Usually Wins: Biblical Reflections on Quiet Leadership for Reluctant Leaders* (Paternoster, Milton Keynes 2013) 112-113.

CHAPTER 4: OWNING THE VISION

Vision involves change

It is not enough for the leader – or the leadership team – to own the vision. If the vision is to gain root, then it needs to be owned by the church as a whole. Vision cannot be imposed – but it can be caught! Whatever the governance structures of a church, there needs to come a point when, as at the Council of Jerusalem, the church as a whole can say “it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Acts 15.28).

However, as we have already noted, vision involves change – and change is not always welcome. For all too easily we become creatures of habit. In the words of James Lawrence, an Anglican leadership consultant: “Churches and organizations have a natural tendency to move from being a mission to a movement to a monument to a mausoleum. The pressure of day-to-day concerns, the constant battle with resources and the ease with which we opt for the comfortable option all work against forward-thinking change.”²² It is all too easy for a church to settle down into a rut and be complacent with the status quo and fail to see the need for radical change. Hence the need for leadership, which understands that change is always costly, for it involves doing church differently. To quote Leith Anderson, a pastor of an American mega-church:

“There is a basic principle of church growth: ‘For a church to grow, it must want to grow and be willing to pay the price’. The price is least counted in dollars. It comes in the more costly currency of change. It is doing church in new ways, incorporating new people, moving out of comfort zones, and existing for others rather than for self.”²³

And yet, if churches do not change, death awaits them. For as Charles Darwin discovered, “It is not the strongest species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but those most responsive to change”. Change, in other words, is not an option!

Change involves consultation, persuasion and acceptance.

Change takes time. ‘Churches’, it has been said, ‘are a lot like horses. They don’t like to be startled or surprised. It causes deviant behaviour’. Changes cannot suddenly be sprung on people. Or, if they are, then they will not work and will not be accepted. The wise leader needs to recognize that change in church life needs time and patience. In the words of Michael Saward: “General can act like God; pastors have to act like God incarnate. Creation takes more than six days for them”.²⁴ Change often needs months of careful preparation and persuasion. Good ideas can often be wrecked and churches split if a pastor forces a church to take a decision before it is ready to take that decision

²² James Lawrence, *Growing Leaders: Reflections on Leadership, Life and Jesus* (Bible Reading Fellowship, Oxford 2004) 195.

²³ Leith Anderson, *A Church for the 21st Century* (Bethany House, Minneapolis 1992) 17.

²⁴ Michael Saward, *All Change* (Hodder & Stoughton, London 1983) 40.

Change always involves opposition

God's work done in God's way always involves opposition. If we are not conscious of any opposition, then we may well question whether we are in fact doing God's work in God's way. Terry in his down-to earth manner says that dreams attract critics like dead sheep; attract flies. Critics generally feed on carrion, and you become what you eat!

One Old Testament leader who encountered opposition was Nehemiah, who in 445 BC came back from exile in Persia to Jerusalem to lead the people in rebuilding the city walls. Although he had the backing of Artaxerxes I, the king of Persia he was bitterly opposed by the leaders of three territories surrounding Judah: Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arab. So we read that Nehemiah said to the Jews of Jerusalem:

“You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burnt. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so that we may no longer suffer disgrace.’ I told them that the hand of my God had been gracious upon me, and also the words that the king had spoken to me. Then they said, ‘Let us start building!’ So they committed themselves to the common good. But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they mocked and ridiculed us, saying, ‘What is this that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?’ Then I replied to them, ‘The God of heaven is the one who will give us success, and we his servants are going to start building; but you have no share or claim’.” (Neh 2.17-20)

On the one hand we see here godly leadership. Even although Nehemiah must have been a stranger to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, he was able to motivate his fellow Jews to work with him. They were prepared to own the vision of this new leader. But on the other hand we see her devilish opposition. To quote John White:

“Anytime we are engaged in a work for God, we are likely to encounter the poison-tipped arrows of ridicule. A barrage of truth mingled with lies, innuendo, malicious gossip and implied threats is the normal experience of leaders. Malice arises from fear. And fear is a common response to someone else’s success. So expect to have your faults thrown in your face, your folly mocked, and your real progress belittled. When this happens, by all means allow yourself to be cut down to size, but do not let yourself be dismayed or intimidated. Remember that the chorus of contempt has a diabolical conductor whose aim is to make your knees buckle. He likes tongue-tied, ineffective Christians and plays on your secret fears and inferiorities to make you one of them.”²⁵

Throughout the process of the rebuilding of the walls there was one plot after another. Indeed, at one point Tobiah and Sanballat even hired a prophet to speak in God's name against the project (Neh 6.10-13). According to Nehemiah, "He was hired...to intimidate me and make me sin" (6.13). A reminder that the Devil can seek to disguise himself as an agent of light!

Nehemiah’s dream was to re-build the walls of Jerusalem, and in that respect is very different from the dreams of church leaders today. But the underlying principle is that every God-

²⁵ John White, *Excellence in Leadership* (IVP, Leicester) 66.

given dream will have its Sanballats and Tobiahs. The Enemy never gives up.

Terry likes to point out when criticism came, Nehemiah ignored it and concentrated on the dream. Terry says, “Our natural reaction is to defend the dream, but realise this, it’s not our dream – it’s God’s dream, so let him defend it. Remember the prayer of the Psalmist: ‘Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering’ (Psalm 26.1). But although Nehemiah refused to be personally drawn into confrontation, he knew his task could be open to attack. So he took precautions and gave his team weapons to defend the dream (see Neh 4.13-14)”. Interestingly the great Victorian preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, entitled his church magazine *The Sword and the Trowel*. Vision-building always provokes opposition!

This was certainly true in Paul’s experience. To mark the beginning of his ministry, the deacons encouraged the church to adopt as its motto Neh 2.20: “The God of Heaven will give us success. We are his servants, and we are going to start building”. Mindful of the promise of Jesus to “build” his church (Matt 16.16) the church wanted to be part of that grandest of building projects. The church at that stage was in marked decline and needed to grow again. But to grow it needed to change, and some of the members were against change of any kind. Every change Paul proposed was resisted – and when, with the support of his leadership team, he proposed redeveloping the church premises, all hell seemed to break loose. Significantly the opposition came from a small group of mostly older people who had been loyal workers in their time, but now found the proposed changes too much. Many of them were what have been called the AAEOs – the Angry Alienated Ex Old Leaders. As a leadership team we bent over backwards in seeking to gain a consensus for moving forward with the building. Although almost 80% of the leaders voted to move forward with the redevelopment of the premises, we were concerned for the 20% who did not vote in favour and we went to great lengths to win them over to the project. Finally we felt we had no choice but to go ahead, and at that point a good number of the ‘dissenters’, having been outvoted again, left the church. It was a sad business. As the pastor I found it very difficult seeing people leaving the church. However, in church life, sometimes a period of ‘pruning’ is necessary for further growth to take place. Or to use another metaphor, a period of ‘refining’ is sometimes necessary before a church is ready to move out in effective mission. Thank God, ultimately the pain resulted in much ‘gain’. To use yet another metaphor, it was like the pain of childbirth; and what eventually emerged was amazing new life.

CHAPTER 5: MAINTAINING THE VISION

The Apostle Paul was possessed by a missionary vision

From the very beginning of his Christian life the Apostle Paul was a man of vision. For him conversion and calling went hand-in-hand. According to his account of his conversion to Agrippa, the Lord told him in a vision that he was being sent to the Gentiles “to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts 26.17,18: see also 9.15; 22.14). Over the years this calling was confirmed and developed, not least when Paul had a vision of “a man of Macedonia, pleading with him and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us’” (Acts 16.9,10) – and as a result the Gospel spread to the continent of Europe.

The Apostle’s letters are full of visionary statements. Toward the beginning of his letter to the church at Rome he declared: “I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who has faith” (Rom 1.16). What an amazing statement this is. To proud Rome, which regarded itself as the hub of the universe, nothing could have appeared more insignificant than the Gospel centring around a carpenter’s son, executed by a minor civil servant in a troublesome little country right on the very edge of the civilised world. To powerful Rome, capital of the mightiest empire the world had ever seen, nothing could have been weaker than to talk of the power of God’s love; for Rome had conquered the world by the sword and the strength of her legions – force, not love, was the key. To sophisticated Rome nothing could have been more ludicrous than to talk of a man rising from the dead - why Festus, the Roman procurator of Judea, when he heard Paul preach, had remarked that Paul had become mad by his learning.

Another amazing statement is found in one of his letters to the church at Corinth: “In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us” (2 Cor 5.19). For the Apostle not only were there no limits to God’s power, there were no limits to God’s salvation. When the church was still in its infancy, when it was still just a small struggling group of people, he had the world in view. God’s salvation is for all who have faith, for all who believe. What an incredibly large vision! The Apostle Paul was a great universalist: he looked for the salvation of everyone. True, for the Gospel to be effective, it has to be met with faith. But in principle he was quite clear: Christ died for every man, woman and child.

It was this vision which drove the Apostle Paul to be the greatest missionary of the early church. He travelled thousands of miles to fulfil his calling to “be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles” (Rom 15.16). It was this vision which underlay his ambition to take the Good News as far away as Spain (Rom 15.20, 23-24).

The Apostle Paul developed appropriate strategies

As a result of his vision, the Apostle developed a strategy for effective mission. In his desire to win the world for Jesus, he seems to have identified key vital centres from which the Gospel could filter out to other towns and villages. For instance, he chose Philippi to reach

out to eastern Macedonia, Thessalonica for western Macedonia, Corinth for Achaia and Ephesus for Asia Minor. So writing to the church at Corinth, he says “Our hope is that, as your faith increases, our sphere of action among you may be greatly enlarged, so that we may proclaim the good news in lands beyond you” (2 Cor 10.15,16.). The Apostle Paul has often been likened to an army general: “He looked at a country and saw the bridgeheads he must win. He saw the strategic cities which would give him a whole territory and hinterland”.²⁶

His strategic approach to mission is also illustrated in the way in which he mentored and trained individuals with leadership potential. Paul was no lone ranger, but rather always took others with him on his missionary journeys. Furthermore, he didn’t engage in ‘hit and run’ evangelism, but founded churches, where his converts might grow and develop. Before he left a church, he ensured that there were appropriate leadership structures in place (see, for instance, Acts 14.13). He also continued to nurture and encourage these new churches through return visits – as also through letters.

As we said in *The Passionate Leader*, vision is not enough. A more detailed strategy is called for to implement a strategy.

The Apostle Paul lived out the vision

In this age of ‘instance everything’, it is sometimes assumed that God will allow us to short-circuit the process. If we have sufficient faith, then God will bring about whatever we seek to achieve. But although it is God who gives the growth, we have to “plant” and “water” (1 Cor 3.6). The secret of the Apostle Paul’s greatness is to be found from one perspective in the grace of God, but from another equally valid perspective it is to be found in the fact that Paul worked harder than all the other apostles (1 Cor 15.10). Long before Winston Churchill’s speech to the House of Commons on 13 May 1940, the Apostle Paul knew what it was to experience “blood, toil, tears and sweat” (see 2 Cor 11.23-28). The temptation today is to ‘leave it to the Spirit’, as if leaving it to the Spirit effectively discharges us from all responsibility. But this is far from the truth. As one experienced pastor said: “Most church success stories have as much perspiration as inspiration behind them in the sense that members have worked hard to establish structure and strategies that will fulfil the prompting and vision of the Spirit”.²⁷

Closely allied to hard work, is perseverance. In the words of Samuel Johnson, “Great works are performed not by strength, but by perseverance”. It is the will to persevere that is often the difference between failure and success. The vision may be right, but the vision may not be easily realised. The Apostle Paul could so easily have given up when difficulties abounded: but “through great endurance, in afflictions, hardship-, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger” (2 Cor 6.4-5) he kept going. As he later wrote to Timothy: “I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 1.9). The same spirit of persevering was shown by William Carey, when initially there was so little fruit to be seen for his work. He

²⁶ William Barclay, *Ambassador for Christ* (Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, revised edition 1973) 90. See also ‘Paul’s Mission Strategy’ 41-61 in Geoffrey Harris, *Paul* (SCM, London 2009) 41-61.

²⁷ Bob Roxburgh, *Renewal Down to Earth* (Kingsway, Eastbourne 1987) 10

once wrote to his nephew Eustace: “I can plod, I can persevere in any definite pursuit. To this I owe everything”. What a lot the world owes to Carey because of his persevering plodding!

The Apostle Paul was caught up by an even greater vision – a vision of a new world coming when God would be “all in all” (1 Cor 15.28). He was able to cope with the suffering of his missionary calling, because his “hope of sharing the glory of God” (Rom 5.4). It was this greater vision which kept him going in fulfilling his missionary vision. Terry teaches often in China and has always been fascinated Mao’s Cultural Revolution when China was turned into a great concentration camp. Terry would ask people, “What was it like?” They replied: “It was terrible. Our hope was taken from us. People were reduced to the lowest common denominator – existence. Religion was banned, the Bible was banned, churches shut down and buildings confiscated by the state”. Yet during this decade Christianity in China exploded. In 1966 it was estimated that there were just under one million Christians in China: ten years later in 1976 the number exploded to about 30 million. What caused this great explosion in growth? The answer, says Terry, unquestionably is that during this time of hopelessness Christians were transformed by their hope and were able to share it with others. What was true for them, can be true for us. It’s hope in the dream, in the vision, that takes us out of the mundane, out of the rut, and transforms our world.

The Apostle Paul maintained the vision to the end. As he wrote to Timothy, “The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed his appearing” (2 Tim 4.6b-8). What an example he sets us!