

12. Developing Vision as a Ministry Skill

As Christ chose disciples to follow Him, Christ helped develop and expand their vision. Christ wanted to help the disciples begin to see the world as He saw the world. In the same way, we want to help developing leaders begin to see the world as Christ sees it. We will see how Christ, and later the disciples, developed vision in the lives of those they were developing.

We have mentioned in previous topics that the disciples already had a limited vision for others, as soon as they met Christ. New Christians usually have this same limited vision when they first trust Christ. If not, we begin by helping them develop a vision for the spiritual needs of:

- relatives – John 1:39-42
- friends – John 1:43-46
- coworkers – Matthew 9:9-10
- neighbors and other acquaintances – Mark 1:30-33

These are the four groups of people that people usually know when they first become Christians. New Christians nearly always have a concern for the salvation of people in these four groups. However, that vision will only continue if they begin to immediately pray for the salvation of people in these four groups. I usually give new Christians the two-page outline “Driven by Fear or Led by Love” (available at www.sveq.org) soon after they become Christians. It has a place for new Christians to list when they begin praying for the salvation of individuals in each of these four groups and a place to write the date when God answers their prayer by drawing each person to Himself.

In addition, I tell the new Christian that I will go with him to share the Gospel with the individuals he is praying for as each one becomes interested. This does several things in the development of the vision of a new Christian. The new Christian:

- ◆ focuses on people in his network of contacts who are not Christians
- ◆ begins to pray for people in that network
- ◆ learns how to share the Gospel (what to say and do) as he observes how someone else shares the Gospel with his relatives, friends, coworkers, neighbors, and other acquaintances
- ◆ sees God answer prayer as some of those in his network become Christians
- ◆ now has other Christians within his network
- ◆ can be encouraged to go with these new Christians to share the Gospel with their networks

This approach to helping new Christians develop a vision for their network of acquaintances also has some benefits for you. You will be able to:

- visit these new contacts as a friend of their relative or friend
- be introduced as someone who has good news to share
- expand your own network of contacts with those who are not yet Christians
- understand and be able to more effectively help the new Christian as you become acquainted with his network

Once Christ had the opportunity to help the disciples develop a vision for their networks of

relatives, friends, coworkers, neighbors, and other acquaintances, Christ began to expand their vision to people that they did not know. In Mark 1:38-39, we read, “But He said to them, ‘Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.’ And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.” Christ began to develop the vision of the disciples for the next towns as He took them with Him and shared the Gospel in those towns. In these verses, we see that Christ:

- developed the vision of the disciples for the next towns
- let them know what He would be doing in the next towns
- helped them begin to understand the purpose for His coming
- showed them how to share the Gospel with people of their own culture

Since they traveled throughout Galilee, the disciples heard Christ share the Gospel many times. In this way, they were learning what to say and learning how to make contacts with strangers of their own culture. In addition, their vision was being expanded to everyone of their culture. Matthew 9:35 says, “Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.”

Throughout this time, Christ was helping the disciples begin to see people as He saw people. We see how Christ saw people in Matthew 9:36. That verse says, “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” The disciples were with Christ. They both heard and saw His concern for the multitudes. In the same way, developing leaders will begin to develop our vision as they hear and see our concern for others.

Christ also expanded the prayer life of the disciples. Matthew 9:37-38 says, “Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers *are* few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’” In this verse, Christ points out that the harvest is much greater than the laborers available to gather in the harvest. However, instead of telling us to become recruiters working in our own strength, Christ calls us to pray that He will send forth laborers into the harvest. There is a total difference between recruiting through human effort and asking the Lord to recruit people for the harvest. By the way, those who prayed also became those who were sent out in the next verses. Part of our ministry is to get more people to pray that the Lord of the harvest will send forth laborers.

We also see that Christ took time to expand the vision of the disciples to other nearby cultures. In John 4:4, we read, “But He needed to go through Samaria.” One of the reasons Christ needed to go through Samaria is given in John 4:35. That verse says, “‘Do you not say, “There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest”? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!’” Here, we see that one reason Christ needed to go through Samaria was to expand the vision of the disciples, so they could see that the Lord also saw a harvest among the Samaritans. Christ knew the only way to help the disciples see the harvest was to take them to Samaria and then get them to really look around them.

Christ also expanded the vision of the disciples to the Greeks. Christ took the disciples with Him when He went to Tyre. Mark 7:26 tells us about the woman Christ and the disciples met there. That verse says, “The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.” Christ healed the daughter, but He also showed the disciples the importance of reaching out to the Greeks.

As Christ prepared to return to heaven, He again helped the disciples focus on expanding their vision. In Matthew 28:18-20, Christ gave the disciples what we know as the Great Commission. Those verses say, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.’ Amen.” The word that is translated “nations” is the same word from which we get our word “ethnic”. Here, we see that the Lord wants us to help developing leaders expand their vision to every ethnic group in the world.

In His final words to the disciples, before He left this earth and returned to heaven, Christ focused one more time on vision. His final words, on this earth, are recorded for us in Acts 1:8. Acts 1:8-9 says, “‘But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’ Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.” The focus of His final words to the disciples was a vision for the world.

As you probably noticed, Christ expanded the vision of the disciples to a larger and larger group. He began by helping them develop a vision for their own relatives, friends, coworkers, neighbors, and other acquaintances. Then, He expanded their vision to the next towns. Later, He expanded their vision to Jews throughout Israel. Christ then began expanding their vision to people of other ethnic groups, cultures, and religions. Finally, Christ expanded their vision to every ethnic group in the world.

The way Christ expanded their vision was equally important. He expanded their vision by taking the disciples with Him as He reached out to those other cultures. In the same way, we will develop vision as a ministry skill in the lives of developing leaders as we take them with us as we reach out to people of other ethnic groups, cultures, and religions. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders develop vision as a ministry skill.