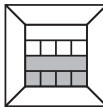
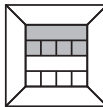
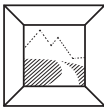
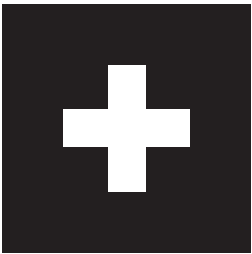
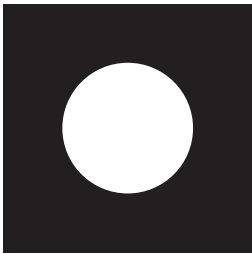


**PART THREE**

**Find Your Future**



## Chapter 7

# Vision That Advances

*The future is not the result of choices among alternative paths offered in the present. It is a place created—created first in the mind and will; created next in activity.*

—Animator and entrepreneur Walt Disney

While in seminary I met one of America's leading church architects and asked if I could shadow him for a day. I was impressed with his big pads filled with a myriad of 3-D sketches. One pad was particularly loaded with drawings; it was his largest project ever. When he told me how the design process began for this church, my jaw hit the floor.

The project started with a national tour of America's best facilities. That's right, the architect and three pastors from the church visited seven cities in one week, looking at the marvelous designs—including the breakthroughs and blunders of previous creative work so they could catch the design big idea for their facility. Their goal was not to copy the churches but to glean their favorite attributes.

The purpose of this chapter is to take you on a similar trip—a trip less extravagant but more important: to scan in one whirlwind tour how God's people of all times and places dream about the future. Throughout *God Dreams*, you've seen repeated statements that God "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or *imagine*" (Eph. 3:20 NIV, emphasis added) and wants each of us to prayerfully *imagine* the future of the churches we serve. So let's stretch our imaginations by seeing what God is up to!

This chapter, plus the three that follow, are designed as imagination catalysts; as we travel to different locations and times in history, the intent is that you travel ahead to *your* church's future. These chapters offer a series of fly-by templates designed to

jump-start your thinking. In total you'll encounter twelve vision templates, three per chapter, each as a potential doorway to your God Dreams. This chapter in particular will review three templates for advancing the gospel: geographic saturation, targeted transformation, and people-group penetration.

Each template is accompanied by a graphic taken from one of four simple images I call basic shapes: arrow (to depict advance), plus sign (to depict rescue), circle (to depict becoming) and wave (to depict overflow), each of which the previous chapter described in greater detail. They are some of the most basic forms found in human existence. They're universally recognized.

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Let's stretch our imaginations by seeing what God is up to!

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## Which Quadrant and Template Best Represent Your Church?

As you read, I'm asking you to identify which specific template best represents your church's beyond-the-horizon vision. Remember, *the beyond-the-horizon vision is the future picture of your church and a declaration of your congregation's ultimate contribution. It is a destination in time more than five years into the future.*

Using the twelve total templates, the goal is for you and then your team to prayerfully pick two at most. Once you select two, you will relate them together to create a single "picture idea" from which to develop further a vivid description of your church's future. Here are some questions that might help you:

- Which of the vision templates is most meaningful to me personally?
- Which of the vision templates best represents our church's most current conversations about vision?
- Which of the vision templates best represents what our church together *should* be pursuing?

## Overview of What's Coming

In presenting the vision templates, I'll use the following pattern for each:

- **Quick Definition:** Each template will have a clear and concise definition.
- **Personal Snapshots:** For each template I will reflect on experiences from my "field of vision."
- **Biblical Reflections:** Scriptural teachings, patterns, or illustrations are briefly explored.

- **Metaphors for Communication:** In future chapters I encourage you to “paint a picture” with words. An initial sampling of metaphors is provided to help you envision for communication purposes.
- **Historical Examples:** An illustration from church history is provided for each template.
- **Contemporary Examples:** A sampling of real-time stories is included.
- **Personal Exercise:** As you move from template to template, rate how each one applies to your church with first-impression questions.

Please do take time to fill in the exercise as you finish your review of each vision template. All twelve exercises ask the same set of questions. Then after the final template, we’ll guide you to look over your ratings to discern which might be a primary template for your church and which might be a secondary template.

## Overview of Advance

In this chapter all the shapes are built from the basic arrow shape to symbolize the idea of advancing (see figure 7.1). Vision that advances is strong, forceful, determined, and moving. Advancing vision says, “Take it!”

### Arrow Basic Shape for the Advance Templates



Figure 7.1

As I unfold a total of twelve vision templates, I will present three templates for each quadrant. The three Advance templates are represented as figure 7.2, with the basic shape in the lower left.

Three Advance Templates  
with Basic Shape

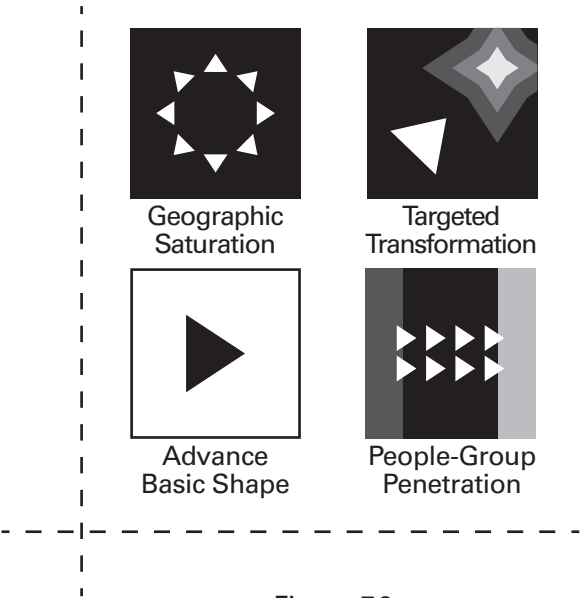


Figure 7.2

Geographic Saturation Vision Template

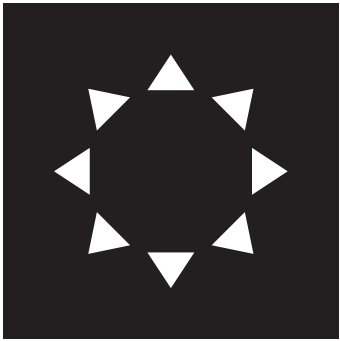


Figure 7.3

## Advancing through Geographic Saturation

### **Quick Definition**

Your church's vision is to bring the gospel to as many people as possible in your surrounding geography. You might state it as, "We will define a geographic area around us and take responsibility to personally communicate and demonstrate the gospel to everyone in that area."

### **Personal Snapshot**

I am not sure exactly why I did what I did. No one told me to do it. It wasn't for anyone else but me. Shortly after I learned how to share my faith as a sophomore in college, I found a floor map of my dorm floor—the third floor of Geary Hall at Penn State's East Halls. Not a very glamorous place but my home for my first two years of college. I placed the map on those built-in corkboards they often put in college dorms. On mine you could find mountain biking pictures, snowboarding snapshots, and a diagram of my dorm floor with three of the twenty rooms highlighted in bright yellow. The highlighted rooms marked those with believers: my room, a fellow member of Campus Crusade for Christ (now known as Cru) three doors down, and Chris Urban on the corner. The map was a visual tool for my gospel saturation vision. I had one year to share the gospel personally with forty students living in high proximity to me.

In those days I had cut my teeth on evangelism and Bible study. By God's grace and through strong modeling of a campus ministry, I was passionate about representing Jesus. The map just came naturally. I wanted to pray for my floor. I wanted to strategize relationally. I wanted to see progress. I was vision casting to myself. And several guys came to Christ that year.

The following year I was given responsibility over West Halls by the Campus Crusade leadership. Between 1989 and 1990, my map increased to include more than fourteen hundred students. This time I gathered a small team of guys to blitz West Halls with me. My geographic vision expanded and so did the highlighted rooms on a much larger map as we shared the gospel every week.

Geographic gospel saturation is as special to me as it was most intuitive to me as a younger leader. In fact, if I were to choose a vision to recommend to any group of believers, without knowing their situation, gifts, and passion, I would recommend starting here. That's why it's listed first in this chapter.

### ***Biblical Reflections***

In Acts 1:8 Jesus promised that through the power of the Holy Spirit, His disciples would be His “witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (NIV). Jesus calls for intentionality in spreading the gospel geographically from their present location (Jerusalem) to nearby areas (Judea, Samaria)—even if ethnically different—and ultimately to anywhere people reside.

This was also the pattern of Jesus’ ministry, according to missionary Steve Addison. In his book *What Jesus Started: Joining the Movement, Changing the World*, Steve maps the ministry of how Jesus went from village to village, spreading the gospel across Israel. Addison writes: “Matthew records that Jesus’ ministry touched ‘all’ 175 towns and villages of Galilee. To reach them all Jesus could rarely have stayed in one place for more than a few days; he would have been constantly on the move. By the end of his ministry, most of Galilee’s 200,000 people would either have met Jesus or have known someone who had.”<sup>1</sup>

### ***Metaphors for Communication***

Figure 7.3 shows the arrows of advancement moving outward in all areas and directions, taking the gospel outward to saturate everywhere possible.

One of the most useful tools available for this template is a map. What does your community look like as you zoom in and out with Google Earth? What is the shape of your congregation’s geographic footprint? (That’s the geographic area defined by the people who attend your church.) To see this footprint, create a Google map pin drop of your membership with this free tool: <https://mapalist.com>.

All churches have a unique shape based on natural boundaries or local demographics. One congregation is at an intersection of two interstates making a “crosshairs” while another is tucked away in a suburban neighborhood. One church is wedged between a mountain range and an Indian reservation while another borders an uptown center for the arts. What picture do you see when you map your geography?

In addition to the geographic shape, use demographic information to determine the number of people defined by your footprint. Do you have seventy-five hundred people close by or 750,000? For years missiologists and denominational leaders have used the benchmark of one church per one thousand people as an indication that an area has been “reached” or “saturated.”

Other images that convey geographic gospel saturation are a world map with a cloud moving to overtake it just as the Holy Spirit can travel like the wind and go anywhere. Consider also ink spilling across a desk, a flood or flowing water, a tide coming in, a ground-cover plant (like ivy filling a bordered flower bed), a dandelion puffball or

“magic grow capsules” children drop into a bathtub and watch them expand to cover the surface of the water.

Think of the images that come from words like *permeate*, *drench*, *deluge*, and *douse*. Imagine someone handing an invitation, sharing, singing, proclaiming, speaking, inviting, or telling. Build on phrases like “Go tell it on the mountain!”

### **Historical Examples**

John Wesley, the great eighteenth-century preacher and founder of Methodism, was famous for saying, “The world is my parish.” As he explained in his journal, he felt it was his “duty to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation.”<sup>2</sup>

This attitude challenged the current thinking in his time where church leaders were assigned a geographic area (parish) as their world to care for. Instead, Wesley sent one of his circuit-riding preachers to wherever people were present. Again the image of “advance” captures the circuit-riding strategy. As a result, the conversion rate and the spread of Methodism was the fastest-growing faith of that century, becoming for a season the largest denomination in the United States, as well as in other countries.

### **Contemporary Examples**

Many churches identify a geographic area or geographic concentric circle they take responsibility for, including the church I’m part of, Clear Creek Community Church in greater Houston. As I’ll explain more in Appendix A, our gospel saturation vision involves adopting a 500,000-population area we refer to as the “4B” area. The 4Bs run from the interstate beltway to the Gulf of Mexico beach, from Brazoria County to Galveston Bay. We’re advancing the gospel by taking it to the people around us.

Other large-scale examples are McLean Bible Church in metro Washington, DC, and Eagle Brook Church in greater Minneapolis, both of whom are purposely planting campuses all over their respective metroplexes as a way of creating a ring around their cities so hearing the gospel is accessible within an easy commute to all.

Smaller churches have likewise followed an adopt-a-block strategy to take the gospel and the tangible love of Christ to certain blocks they’ve designated near their church facility. Some churches, like the Dream Center of Los Angeles’s Angelus Temple, started with a handful of people and the idea of “instead of reaching the entire city, let’s adopt the two blocks right in front of us.” Today the congregation is nicknamed the “church that never sleeps” because it has adopted more than fifty blocks representing over two thousand homes.



Jeff Vanderstelt wrote a book entitled *Saturate* encouraging Christ followers and churches to join the vision to see one missional community per 1,000 people in every key population center.<sup>3</sup> Another influential leader for geographic gospel saturation is Dwight Smith, of Saturation Church Planting. He has popularized the language of reaching “every man, woman and child” with the question he poses: What would it look like if the “church” gave every man, woman and child the opportunity to hear and understand the gospel and be reconciled to God through Christ without their coming or going anywhere?<sup>4</sup>

### Exercise: Should This Vision Be Your Church’s Focus?

1. How closely does this template match **your own vision** for your congregation as a gospel-centered, disciple-making church over the next ten years? Use a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high):

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

2. How would you rate your **key opinion leaders’ buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

3. How would you rate the **entire congregation’s buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

4. How would you rate the level of **momentum and progress to date** your church has made on this particular vision template? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Now add up these four scores: \_\_\_\_ (You’ll compare the tallies after you’ve reviewed all twelve templates.)

## Advancing through Targeted Transformation

### Quick Definition

Your church’s vision is to identify a specific people, place, or thing you want to see changed dramatically by the gospel. You might state it as, “We will direct our energy toward a specific people, place, or thing in order to see a specific kind of dramatic transformation.”

## Targeted Transformation Vision Template



Figure 7.4

### ***Personal Snapshot***

I arrived late in Manhattan the day before my meeting with Redeemer Church's City to City leaders. I enjoy the city, and I couldn't wait to spend time with these thoughtful leaders who really *love* their city. What impresses me most about this team: their laser focus! Their vision is guided by one thing: church planting in the "great global cities." It's a glowing example of targeted transformation because it targets four specific dimensions: (1) the city as a unique expression of humanity, (2) a specific number of strategically identified global cities, (3) a methodology of church planting, and (4) helping other local churches transform their "missions" investment by helping them engage in City to City's unique strategy. In addition, the intellectually robust nature of the ministry led by Tim Keller brings wonderful nuance to their church's ultimate contribution.

Just in case the scope of fifty global cities seems a little overwhelming, let me offer a different example. I was sitting with about ten leaders under Rick Duncan's leadership at Cuyahoga Valley Church outside of Cleveland. I asked a question to the team and marveled at an idea that would weave its way through our day conversation like a golden thread. It was a moment where a targeted transformation vision would precipitate. The question was, What do you secretly believe you would be great at but never told anyone? One pastor talked about his desire to see an entire street block renovated spiritually and physically for the sake of the gospel. This would eventually lead to the targeting of a specific neighborhood for radical renewal.

### ***Biblical Reflections***

Transformation is a powerful and familiar biblical theme. From Jesus' first miracle of turning water into wine to the larger-than-life description of a new heaven and new earth, the Bible is filled with stories and images of transformation. Jesus transforms the disciples' vocation from fishing for fish to fishers of men. Every believer is commanded to "be transformed" as a human being through the "renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:1–3 NIV).

With the theme of change filling the pages of Scripture, noteworthy glimpses of vision are characterized by transformation.

Jesus wept over only one city: Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). His ministry took Him many places, but He kept circling back to Jerusalem. Could it be that He wanted Jerusalem, more than any other city, to be changed dramatically by the gospel? Even in His most angry moments—using a whip and turning over the tables in the temple—we see Jesus' passion for this city to be different.

Jonah is another stunning biblical illustration of targeted transformation. God called Jonah to be an agent of change to the great ancient city of Nineveh, a town that spanned a three-day walk with a population of at least 120,000 people. As a result of Jonah's preaching, the town repented starting with the king who issued a decree: "Let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish" (Jon. 3:8–9). And relent God did.

### ***Metaphors for Communication***

Figure 7.4 imagines a directional force aiming for and acting on some object in its sights for the purposes of transformation. The change is depicted by a starburst image with a gradient inside to indicate energy release. Targeted transformation is also like an arrow aiming at a bull's-eye, with the target representing a hub of community vitality being impacted by the gospel.

Biblical images of transformation include high-contrast ones: cleansing from crimson stained to white as snow (Isa. 1:18), transferring from the domain of darkness to the saints of light (Col. 1:12–13), and exchanging a heart of stone with a heart of flesh (Ezek. 11:19). Those who would follow Jesus are to be salt of the earth and a city set on a hill; they should go the extra mile and love their enemies, all symbols of dramatic transformation from a "normal way" of life (Matt. 5:13–48).

Other images that convey the idea of transformation include a change in a stem cell that changes the entire body that grows from it, a renewed farmer's field or garden

that feeds a surrounding community, a heart transplant that brings new life, and a bonsai tree whose changed roots change the tree itself.

We use all kinds of everyday phrases to signal a transformation:

- Turning over a new leaf
- New Year's resolution
- Extreme makeover
- Night-and-day difference
- Revolutionize
- Reform
- Sing a different tune
- Shifting gears

### ***Historical Examples***

Many churches and denominations have prayerfully adopted a town, city, region, or even country, seeking to pour energy and resources into it. One of the Southern Baptist Convention's most celebrated missionaries, Charlotte Digges "Lottie" Moon, went as a thirty-three-year-old single missionary to China. She focused on a certain unreached region in the country's interior both through personal outreach and through a vigorous campaign of letters and articles back home that rallied hundreds of US churches to raise prayers, money, and personnel to support the advance of the gospel in her region. When she died at age seventy-two, thousands of converts and hundreds of churches existed in that area.

### ***Contemporary Examples***

Kingsland Baptist in Katy, Texas, envisions the transformation of homes in a city where people obsess over having the best for their kids. The big idea is to reinterpret what true fulfillment looks like in order to restore the image of God in the home.

Good Shepherd United Methodist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, embeds "radical impact projects" into their disciple-making strategy that focus on specific transformation themes like sex trafficking. In 2013 they evaluated their multisite options that deviated from the typical "start a worship service" pattern of campusing to envision "radical impact sites" to bring local community transformation initiatives before starting worship services. For example, one location focuses on recovery ministry, food distribution, transitional housing, and personal retreating and prayer.

The Bridge Bible Church, Bakersfield, California, embraces a targeted transformation vision that is mobilized significantly through its small-group strategy. Each group

is given money from the church's operating budget to unleash on a specific need in the community.

The key to distinguishing the targeted transformation template is the motivation to see a completed change on a person, place, or thing at a level where the entire mind's eye of a congregation is "zeroed in" on that type of transformation.

### Exercise: Should This Vision Be Your Church's Focus?

1. How closely does this template match **your own vision** for your congregation as a gospel-centered, disciple-making church over the next ten years? Use a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high):

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

2. How would you rate your **key opinion leaders' buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

3. How would you rate the **entire congregation's buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

4. How would you rate the level of **momentum and progress to date** your church has made on this particular vision template? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Now add up these four scores: \_\_\_\_ (You'll compare the tallies after you've reviewed all twelve templates.)

## Advancing through People-Group Penetration

### Quick Definition

Your church's vision is taking the gospel to a group of people who don't have it yet. You might state it as, "We will engage a specific group of people, usually different from our own congregational makeup, through service and gospel proclamation."

### Personal Snapshot

I was meeting with Austin Stone Church's Kevin Peck and his team in the Texas capital city of Austin for a Church Unique certification experience. At a break, in

## People-Group Penetration Vision Template

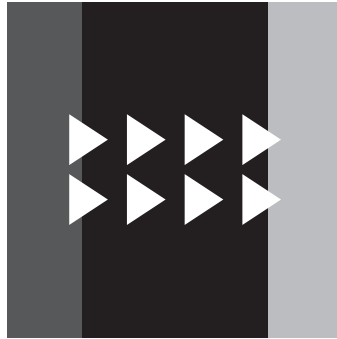


Figure 7.5

Austin Stone's For the City Center, I was blown away by a fascinating billboard in the foyer. It was a visual progress chart for their 100 People Network, a long-range vision initiative the church launched in 2009. The vision is to send one hundred people from their local church to an unreached people group for at least two years. Every person in the church is challenged to play one of three roles: to be a goer, a sender, or a mobilizer. My visit was May 2014, five years after the initiative was launched, and the billboard showed that they had identified more than seventy-five of the one hundred people. Their billboard showed it in a creative way: the faces of those who were signed up. (Check out [100peoplenetwork.org](http://100peoplenetwork.org) for more information.)

Matt Carter, the lead pastor, says that from the beginning they had asked, "What does God want from us as a church with our limited time and resources?" Their primary answer is sending their people into the six thousand unreached people groups of the world.

Another amazing story of people-group penetration comes from the community of Northwest Bible Church. Approximately three miles from their location off the North Tollway and Highway 12 north of Dallas is Vickery Meadows, the most densely populated area in Dallas and a leading area for refugee resettlement. Technically refugees are persons who have been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster. The people group, in this case, includes political refugees of more than fifty nationalities and thirty-two spoken languages all living in one square mile, making it one of the leading areas of refugee resettlement in the country. Within two years of clarifying their vision and focusing on reaching this group, Neil

Tomba reported a tremendous surge of increased energy, focus, and resources like he had not seen in his prior decade as senior pastor. You can learn more at [Northwestbible.org/vickery](http://Northwestbible.org/vickery).

### ***Biblical Reflections***

The apostle Paul said he had “become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some” (1 Cor. 9:22). At the same time, he was clear that he was uniquely called as Apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7; Rom. 11:13). In particular, Paul sensed a call to take the gospel to Rome (Acts 19:21; 23:11; Rom. 1:15; 15:22).

Others such as Peter served as apostle to the Jews (Gal. 2:8) and sought to penetrate that group with the gospel. In fact the entire book of Acts can be outlined around the biographical emphasis of Peter as the apostle to the Jews transitioning to Paul as apostle to the Gentiles with a pivot point at Acts 13:1. Peter’s name is mentioned more than sixty times in the first thirteen chapters and only once during the second half of the book, as the emphasis shifts.

Notice also how the writers of the four Gospels each tried to penetrate a different group. Matthew’s heavy emphasis on how Jesus fulfilled various Old Testament prophecies spoke especially to Jewish readers. Mark’s fast-moving account appealed to another group. Luke wrote with special emphasis on Gentiles and women. John’s angle spoke specifically to the unbeliever, calling for a decision to believe and follow Jesus.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of people-group penetration is the incarnation itself. God became a man as Jesus “though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:6–7). Ultimately God, by sending Jesus the Son, walked across an infinite divide that humanity could not. He penetrated the time-space world as we know it to show us what God looks like in the flesh.

### ***Metaphors for Communication***

Figure 7.5 imagines an army of people moving from one sphere to another sphere, penetrating it with the gospel, and carrying the gospel from one people group to another.

Imagine pictures and scenes of people trying to “get into” another group of people. The army image sometimes creates a forceful tone, which might not work for you. Perhaps consider more tender pictures like kids playfully jumping the fence to find new friends or ambassadors skillfully and sensitively negotiating in a foreign country or a business trying to take their strategy international. Imagine ideas of long-term and

quiet infiltration like a police officer going into deep undercover or a spy going “dark” for a long time in enemy territory. Envision your own images for “how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” (Rom. 10:15).

Consider these related terms:

- Fit in, relate to, or walk in another’s shoes
- Enter, insert, breeze in, or barge in
- Tunnel, burrow, mine, drill, or sink
- Infiltrate, perforate, or invade
- Impregnate, implant, or fertilize

Other images that depict people-group penetration include a swimming pool full of people with a slide that enables outsiders to be conveyed and perhaps even thrust into the heart of that gathering, a doctor’s shot with life-giving medicine in the point of the needle, or a funnel that concentrates the flow into one specific opening.

### ***Historical Example***

Americans celebrate Saint Patrick’s Day each March, but what many don’t realize is that Patrick was a missionary. He was kidnapped as a youth, taken to Ireland as a slave, but he eventually escaped, came to faith in Christ, and then returned to Ireland because he had a burden and calling to share the gospel with the people who represented his former captors.

### ***Contemporary Examples***

Just outside Wichita, Kansas, Joe Boyd planted a church to reach a surprisingly unique people group: folks in the aviation community. Started in 2008, Aviator Church has seen more than one thousand people profess new faith in Christ and take the step of baptism. Aviator Church sent people and resources to start seven church plants before their seventh anniversary. Joe Boyd often says, “We are not a church with a mission. We are a mission that has churches.”

Russell Cravens planted a church in Houston’s midtown to reach busy young dads moving back to the city. He was burdened to bring the whole gospel to this under-reached segment of people in the flux of Houston’s urban renewal.

Recently Jim Randall, who helped me start Auxano in 2004, started working with The Cowboy Church of Ellis County. It was founded in January 2000 as an outreach to team ropers, barrel racers, working cowboys, and others who love Western culture and enjoy rural life. More than three hundred attended the first service, many of whom rarely or never attended church.



While these groups represent an entire church reaching a specific people group, Jeff Vanderstelt, formerly of Soma Church in Tacoma, Washington, challenges missional communities to develop their own people-group penetration strategy. He writes in his book *Saturate*:

We remind one another that we are commanded by Jesus to make disciples of all people groups. So we ask: “What people and place do we believe God is collectively sending us to this year? Who do we hope to see become followers of Jesus Christ?”

Our missional community has identified the faculty and families of Grant Elementary School, as well as the neighborhoods around it. Some groups focus on a neighborhood or region. Some focus on a particular group of people with common interests, experiences or needs. The missional community in which Greg and Mary participate has identified families transitioning out of homelessness. Some of our artists are on mission to the artistic community, which is much more nomadic in nature. We have missional communities reaching out to college campuses, others that partner with Young Life to reach high school students, and some that see the local military base as their missional focus.<sup>5</sup>

A helpful resource to look at people groups from a global perspective is [peoplegroups.org](http://peoplegroups.org). By their analysis the world’s 7.2 billion population is made up of 11,511 people groups. Of this wider group, 6,823 people groups or 4.1 billion are technically “unreached” people groups (UPGs) meaning that the evangelical population is less than 2 percent without the capability of an indigenous group to sustain church planting. In addition, 3,213 groups or 210 million people are described as “unengaged and unreached” (UUPGs). This status means there is no “church planting strategy, consistent with evangelical faith and practice underway.” Their website enables you to explore UPGs and UUPGs on a map of the world.

### **Exercise: Should This Vision Be Your Church’s Focus?**

1. How closely does this template match **your own vision** for your congregation as a gospel-centered, disciple-making church over the next ten years? Use a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high):

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

2. How would you rate your **key opinion leaders' buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

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3. How would you rate the **entire congregation's buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

4. How would you rate the level of **momentum and progress to date** your church has made on this particular vision template? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Now add up these four scores: \_\_\_\_ (You'll compare the tallies after you've reviewed all twelve templates.)

### How Do You Rate on Vision That Advances?

The three vision templates in this chapter each explored some aspect of vision that advances. At the conclusion of each template, you rated how this model applies to your church. You'll do likewise for all twelve templates, and then I'll ask you to look back and see which one or two you scored as highest.



## Chapter 8

# Vision That Rescues

*And they said to me, “The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.” As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.*

—Nehemiah 1:3–4

The previous chapter looked at vision that advances. This chapter will look at three templates all characterized by vision that rescues. The basic shape for rescuing is the image of a cross—like a medic’s cross (see figure 8.1). Vision that rescues is responsive, resourceful, preparing, and caring. Rescuing vision says, “Save it!”

All three overflow templates are represented as figure 8.2, with the basic shape in the upper left.

### Rescuing through Institutional Renovation

#### Definition

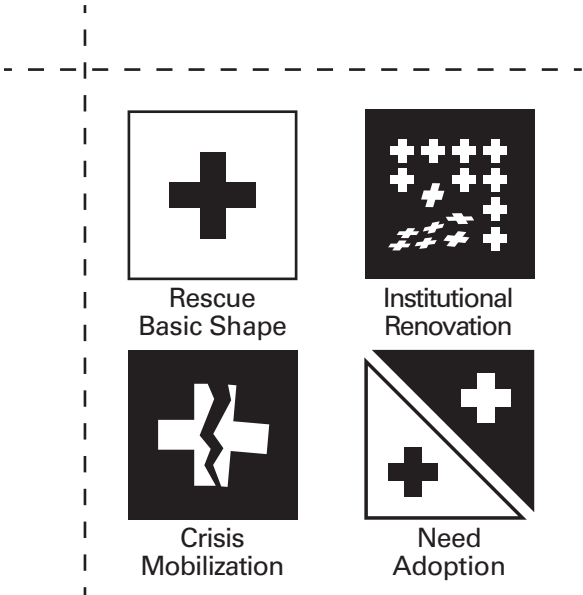
Your church’s vision is to rejuvenate an institution that matters to God, most often a ministry that historically has been significant but has lost a degree of relevance, focus, or momentum. You might state it as, “We will renew a God-ordained institution like marriage, family, or church that has suffered decline, collapse, or neglect.” The key is that churches in this template see the concept of institution in a positive way.

Cross Base Shape for the Rescue Templates



Figure 8.1

Three Rescue Templates with Basic Shape



Rescue  
Basic Shape

Institutional  
Renovation

Crisis  
Mobilization

Need  
Adoption

Figure 8.2

## Institutional Renovation Vision Template

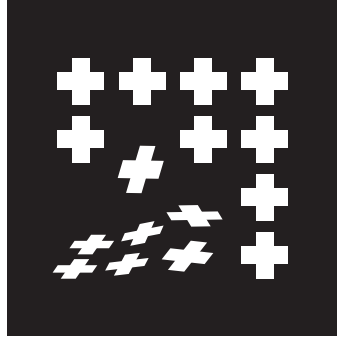


Figure 8.3

### ***Personal Snapshot***

It was brisk summer morning in Billings, Montana, and I couldn't wait to meet with the leadership team of Harvest Church led by Vern Streeter. Harvest is a fast-growing, contemporary-styled church with the mission of living life as if Jesus were living through you. Within the first hour with the team, we focused on the story of the church's founding. This "creation story" of the church would eventually influence the team to select the institutional renovation template for developing their vision.

How did Harvest get started? Vern was a youth pastor at an area church of the same denomination. Someone had given money to the denomination for the purposes of starting a new church. The money had a ten-year expiration date. Every year Vern would inquire about the money, asking his denominational leadership if anyone had taken it yet. When the tenth year came on the horizon with no takers, Vern still wasn't sure if God was calling him to plant. Then a local event changed everything.

A large master-planned community was developing in a new area of Montana. To Vern's shock he read a news article stating that city planners were restricting the development of new churches because they said churches represent zero value being added to a community. The news was like a bomb going off in Vern's heart. How is it possible that churches could be perceived that way? Vern decided to start a church that would renovate the value of God's people and God's institution—the local church—in the eyes of people in his corner of the world.

The day I visited I saw the amazing progress the people of Harvest have made. The foyer of the church was decorated with camping and hunting gear (including a dozen elk-head mounts) for a teaching series designed to reach unchurched men who love the outdoors. I also toured the Oasis Water Park that was a gift to the community in 2012 valued at five million dollars. When Warren Bird interviewed Vern, he conveyed his passion with crystal clarity: “We need to be so relevant and so tangible that even the most ardent critic of Christianity would be bummed if we ceased to exist. If our doors close, we want the most vocal atheist to say, ‘I never believed a thing they said about God, but they were certainly good for our community.’”<sup>1</sup>

I like this story because it illustrates the versatility of the institutional renovation vision template. At first, it’s natural to think about brick and mortar, which certainly fits. But in addition you can think of institution in the most positive way—as God-ordained vehicles—expanding its meaning to the ideas of the local church in general or to families, marriages, and governments as alluded to earlier.

### ***Biblical Reflections***

Romans 11 explains how the Gentiles have been grafted into the blessings of Israel, much like a wild olive shoot can be grafted in to “share in the nourishing root” (v. 17). This teaching speaks to the renewal and rejuvenation needed among God’s chosen people during the time of Christ. In some ways the movement from Old Testament to New Testament is a “renovation of agreements” between God and men. Hence Jesus speaks of the “new command” in John 13:34 (NIV) and elsewhere. Even the cryptic nature of Jesus’ verbal sparring with some Jews hints to this massive renovation in John 2:19: “Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’” They were thinking about the physical temple, and Jesus was referring to His body.

In contrast to the epic “renovation” in God’s redemptive plan, we find a more concrete illustration in the days of Nehemiah when the walls of Jerusalem needed rebuilding—as did the vision and hearts of God’s people. Nehemiah’s amazing fifty-two-day city wall rebuilding project is a perfect example of an institutional renovation vision. In this case the institution is the holy city of Jerusalem.

### ***Starting Point Metaphors***

Figure 8.3 shows an established pattern that’s now falling down, collapsing, or crumbling—all in need of rescue, rebuilding, and innovation.

Another image to depict institutional renovation is a once-solid wall now in need of attention but buttressed by a new foundation. In the old a few bricks are missing,

the sense of freshness is gone, but the new is building on the old, forecasting a sense of fresh start.

Other images that convey this idea are the restoration of the Sistine Chapel (or other historic sites), reconstructive surgery, a stained-glass window being rebuilt, or an antique dealer working on an old stately chair.

Renovation can also carry ideas and images of innovation. Imagine an upgrade of software, installing a new strategy or model or a new invention. Picture the change from filament bulb to an LED bulb or the movement from film processing to digital photography. Imagine a house where every appliance is Internet connected and Wi-Fi enabled.

A great picture of going back and forward is when Volkswagen introduced the new Beetle in 1997. The car was altogether new and updated, yet it was inspired by the original design of 1938 that had become the longest running and most manufactured single design in history. The “bug” design was essentially renovated. Steve Jobs did the same thing to the cell phone.

Use this list of words to expand your idea of renovation that moves from light-duty ideas like “cleaning” to more substantial ideas like “reconstitute”:

- Clean, recondition, refurbish, spruce up, face-lift
- Repair, rehabilitate, revamp, overhaul, refit, retreat
- Remodel, remake, restore, update
- Revitalize, rekindle, reactivate, resurrect
- Recreate, reconstitute, renew, reactivate

### ***Historical Examples***

The Sunday school movement has been a major instrument of breathing new life into established churches. In previous eras the revitalization of Sunday school was a community-wide event. Typical was Brooklyn, New York. Beginning in 1829, when that area was known as the city of churches, churches began holding rally day parades that were the focal point of community life. In 1905 the state legislature created Brooklyn Day as an ongoing official holiday, closing the public schools in Brooklyn for the day so children could participate in these massive Sunday school parades. Churches pulled out all the stops to recruit children into their Sunday school programs, with those events often forming a trigger point to rejuvenate a long-standing congregation.

### ***Contemporary Examples***

There are countless examples of churches that have engaged long-term renovation projects when it comes to location, facility, brand, and mission of the church. For



example, Willy Rice took the helm of Calvary Baptist Church in Clearwater, Florida, in 2005. At the time of this writing, Calvary is preparing for its 150th anniversary as the first church in both its city and county in the 1800s. Before Willy arrived, the church had suffered decline in several troubled interim years. But over a five-year period, Willy led through a massive turnaround season including relocation, building, rebranding, and reestablishing a culture of mission. Within just a few years of clarifying their mission of building relationships that bring people to dynamic life in Christ, the church conducted a congregation survey with remarkable results. One open-ended question asked, “What do you like best about the church?” Twenty percent of the people answered that they liked having a clear mission.

Another example of the institutional renovation template is the Church of the Y. David Newman started a church and church-planting network with the vision of using fourteen thousand YMCA locations globally as community gathering points to plant churches. The hub is Antioch Church of the Y in Lebanon, Ohio, where thirty-five thousand residents are associated with the significant YMCA presence. When sharing the vision, David references the officially stated but practically overlooked global mission of the YMCA: “The Young Men’s Christian Associations seek to unite those young men who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour, according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be his disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of his Kingdom amongst young men.”<sup>2</sup>

Realizing that the Y has drifted from its vibrant evangelical bearings, the church-planting movement is partnering with the 172-year-old organization to refurbish the original intent.

As Nehemiah began his rebuilding project by spending a period of time inspecting the broken walls of the city, David felt the Lord stir him to spend five years studying the history and mission of the YMCA through a doctoral program that focused on institutional renewal. He also traveled much of the world, meeting with YMCA leaders and seeing God’s ongoing work through this global institution. He wanted to have a true sense of God’s heart for this institution and the “status of the walls.”

When defining renovation as upgrading or innovating, I think of LifeChurch.tv, led by Craig Groeshel, and the investment the church made into the YouVersion Bible App developed by Bobby Gruenwald and the “digerati” team. The popular mobile Bible platform launched in 2008 and currently contains more than nine hundred Bible translations in more than six hundred languages.<sup>3</sup> Having passed 140 million downloads, one church’s vision to “renovate” how God’s Word is made available (even though Scripture is not an institution per se) is making a dramatic impact across the globe.

### Exercise: Should This Vision Be Your Church's Focus?

1. How closely does this template match **your own vision** for your congregation as a gospel-centered, disciple-making church over the next ten years? Use a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. How would you rate your **key opinion leaders' buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. How would you rate the **entire congregation's buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. How would you rate the level of **momentum and progress to date** your church has made on this particular vision template? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

You'll compare the tallies after you've reviewed all twelve templates.

### Need Adoption Vision Template



Figure 8.4

## Rescuing through Need Adoption

### **Definition**

Your church's vision is to adopt a specific need you identify, often through compassion or mercy, typically triggered by studying the needs and then responding to them. You might state it as, "We will choose to respond to a specific need in our society, locally, regionally, and/or globally."

### **Personal Snapshot**

I was spending the day at LakeRidge United Methodist Church in Lubbock, Texas, with Mike Gammill who serves on the Auxano team. Founding pastor Bill Couch personifies the unique strengths of the congregation; the people blend the rugged, can-do spirit of a West Texas agricultural town with deep dependence on God, the virtue of acceptance characterized by the Methodist denomination, and a passion for helping people. The future picture that would develop from our process focused on the goal to eradicate hunger in their city as the first step of breaking the cycle of poverty. Specifically, they would funnel their resources toward ensuring that no kids of middle-school age in Lubbock go hungry. Their rescue mission became totally clear.

Every city has more needs to be met than one church can be called to address. But it is amazing to watch a team gel around a particular need that God leads them toward. Usually this happens when strong gifts of mercy and helps are evident in the senior leadership team, church council, or elder board.

The first time I ran into an active church culture operating out of the centering gift of mercy was Sagemont Church in Houston. One day during our consulting session, I was offended slightly (working hard to keep it unnoticeable, of course) by how many times the senior pastor, John Morgan, was interrupted by his assistant who would pop in with little notes to give to him. My curiosity deepened with each interruption. At a break I realized that the notes were pastoral care needs on which John wanted to be updated.

A new respect began to grow—pushing aside my shortsighted annoyance—for a leader and a church whose guiding value would be stated as, "Each individual matters." Shortly after my day at Sagemont, I consulted another church in another city where I learned of one of their key volunteers named Morgan after Sagemont's Pastor John Morgan. The story was shared that her parents were attending Sagemont at the time of her birth, but they didn't have the money to pay the hospital bill. When Pastor John heard of the need, he took off his boot in the middle of a sermon, passed it around and took up a financial collection for the family. His act of mercy inspired the parents to name their daughter after him.

This simple story illustrates what is now a community-wide reputation for a church. People in the community know Sagemont is a place that really cares.

Most importantly my story might help you recognize if the need adoption template “runs through the veins” of your congregation.

### ***Bible Reflections***

Throughout the Old Testament we see countless expressions of the heart of God toward those in need. In Psalm 12:5 we see Him spring to action: “‘Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan, I will now arise,’ says the LORD; ‘I will place him in the safety for which he longs.’”

God’s wisdom is for His church to be “full of mercy and good fruits” (James 3:17). We are also to be marked by compassion: “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, *compassionate* hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col. 3:12–14, emphasis added). This emphasis came not in teaching alone but was also the practice of Paul and others: “They asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do” (Gal. 2:10).

In addition, God highlights people throughout His Word who paid special attention to those in need. In Acts 9:36 Tabitha is honored: “Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha. . . . She was full of good works and acts of charity.”

In Acts 10:4, Cornelius is commended by an angel, “The angel answered, ‘Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God’” (NIV).

### ***Starting Point Metaphors***

Figure 8.4 shows mirror images where one side has something identical to what the other lacks. This visualization affirms that a church has some resources and can match or plug into a hole created by clear needs.

Another image to represent need adoption are two hands reaching toward each other. One is in a position of greater strength, able to help the other. Another iconic biblical image is that of washing another’s feet.

Think of images that convey the acts of serving, helping, treating, nurturing, fixing, listening, nursing, caring, or supporting. Picture a foster parent, a child being sponsored, a food kitchen, a bandaged knee, or a serving towel around someone’s arm. Imagine the tearful storytelling in a support group with listening friends or a construction work crew ready and willing to build a house.

### ***Historical Examples***

“Immigration reform” may always seem to be in process, but modifications in 1965 were the most far-reaching revision of US immigration policy in more than fifty years, opening doors to new waves of immigrants. In response tens of thousands of churches championed the idea of sponsoring a refugee family, many from a Southeast Asia country such as Vietnam. This in turn led to any number of need-meeting church ministries, the most popular being classes to teach English as a second language (ESL).

Several years ago when visiting Bethlehem Chapel in Prague, I was moved by a “need adoption” story from before the Reformation, as priest and future martyr John Hus led the congregation. While touring the church building, I was immediately struck by two oddities: the first is a large stone water well in the middle of the sanctuary, and the second is the prominence of babies in the larger-than-life medieval-style murals on the walls. The tour guide shared that in the early fifteenth century the town experienced setbacks due to influence of criminals and prostitutes. Evidently the prostitutes disposed of their unwanted babies in the town’s local water source, polluting the water. The horrific acts ignited the people of the Bethlehem Chapel to take up the cause of these murdered children (symbolized in the large mural) and to provide a clean, safe water source for the community. Nonchurch members were invited, even during Sunday services, to come in and draw water from the well.

### ***Contemporary Examples***

Although Rick Warren of Saddleback is most known for the widely successful book *Purpose Driven Church*, I wonder if his greatest contribution comes from building a church that meets real needs. Rick has always challenged pastors to know more about their community than anyone else. The first line of Saddleback Church’s vision says, “It is the dream of a place where the hurting, the hopeless, the discouraged, the depressed, the frustrated, and confused can find love, acceptance, guidance, and encouragement.” Saddleback has developed more than seventy ministries to targeted felt needs within the community like Empty Arms for women dealing with miscarriages or Hope for the Separated for people trying to save their marriage.<sup>4</sup>

But perhaps the church’s best-known and widely adapted ministry, Celebrate Recovery, is a fusion of the Sermon on the Mount and the classic twelve-step approach of Alcoholics Anonymous. What started in 1990 has today brought the Christ-centered approach to recovery to more than twenty thousand churches worldwide helping people recover from “hurts, hang-ups, and harmful behaviors” including drugs, alcohol, pornography, anger, depression, and abuse.<sup>5</sup>

Leaders at The Life Church, Memphis, Tennessee, were surprised by a newspaper headline saying their city had the “hungriest zip code in the United States,” where 74 percent of children went to bed hungry every night. They focused their outreach efforts on that area and bought an old bread delivery truck to distribute food. The church was able to partner with schools in the neighborhoods with the greatest need—showing up after school on Friday to distribute bags with enough groceries to feed a family for a weekend. Volunteers in the growing ministry do more than hand out food; they do it all in Jesus’ name. “Volunteers line up outside the school,” explains Pastor John Siebeling. “When the kids come out, they give them hugs and pray for them. They tell them, ‘You’re a champion’ and give them their bags.”

Another specific need churches adopt is the opportunity to adopt orphans within their sphere of influence. In Colorado, LifeBridge Church, for example, has set a goal—and invited other churches to participate as well—to zero out the number of kids waiting for adoption through Colorado’s child welfare system. Over a six-year period, that number of waiting children has already reduced by 70 percent.<sup>6</sup>

Another way we see the need adoption template expressed is through the starting of separate nonprofits and parachurch organizations to cooperate with the church in meeting particular needs. According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics, more than ninety-one thousand nonprofit Protestant organizations filed tax forms for Christian work last year in the US. Mack Stiles writes, “This dizzying array of parachurch ministries feed the hungry, focus on families, evangelize youth, and send missionaries. They publish, lobby, and educate. They broadcast, fund, clothe, and heal. Parachurch ministries serve the Christian community around the world.”<sup>7</sup>

### Exercise: Should This Vision Be Your Church’s Focus?

1. How closely does this template match **your own vision** for your congregation as a gospel-centered, disciple-making church over the next ten years? Use a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high):

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

2. How would you rate your **key opinion leaders’ buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

3. How would you rate the **entire congregation’s buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

4. How would you rate the level of **momentum and progress to date** your church has made on this particular vision template? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Now add up these four scores: \_\_\_\_ (You'll compare the tallies after you've reviewed all twelve templates.)

## Crisis Mobilization Vision Template



Figure 8.5

## Rescuing through Crisis Mobilization

### **Definition**

Your church's vision is to mobilize for crises, or be prepared to mobilize for a future crisis. You might state it as: "We will respond to crisis by rallying our people and resources for immediate relief and/or long-term deployment and development."

### **Personal Snapshot**

I was riveted to the story of Rich Kannwischer as he talked about leading a congregation through the shocking September 11, 2001, tragedy in New York. He said the finest hour for Central Presbyterian in Summit, New Jersey, was in the wake of the terrorist attack. A church traditionally marked with a myriad of activity and even competing agendas at times became totally galvanized around one ministry: rallying for the families impacted by the devastating attack. With many church members working in the World Trade Center's twin towers that day, the church became laser focused first

on accounting for missing family members, then on crisis care, and then on long-term recovery.

Some churches are best in crisis. And this template accounts for this not-so-common possibility as a long-range area of contribution for a church.

### ***Bible Reflections***

The book of Acts is full of ways God's people mobilized for crisis. Sometimes it was the entire church community banding together. For instance, when a famine arose in Jerusalem, the church in Antioch responded as soon as they heard about it: "The disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers and sisters living in Judea" (Acts 11:29). Other times it was individual responses, such as Peter saying to a lame man, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" (Acts 3:6).

In fact, God's people from Old Testament to New Testament are marked by mobilized compassion, just as God is: "For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted" (Isa. 49:13; see also 2 Cor. 1:3–4). With the psalmist we can say, "I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have known the distress of my soul" (Ps. 31:7).

The recent run of Hollywood-produced Bible movies (some of which have tried to stay faithful to the original text and others have been more creative) remind us that life was full of drama, giving constant opportunity for God's people to rally behind one another in crises. Noah, for example, is a strong example of a crisis preparation. So are Moses and Joseph.

### ***Starting Point Metaphors***

Figure 8.5 shows that the cross symbol has cracked or broken, implying a need for help that the church could be mobilized to address. Imagine an earthquake, a building cut open by a tornado, the broken glass of a downtown riot, or a family photograph ripped in half.

Still other images that convey this idea are the Red Cross, an ambulance, an EMT team, a rescue ladder dropping down from a military helicopter, a "jaws of life" machine cutting a trapped person from a smashed car, or a bright orange life-flight helicopter.

### ***Historic Examples***

In May 1861, at the dawn of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln issued by executive order a call for three-year volunteers to increase the size of the regular army and navy. Plymouth Church in Brooklyn rose to the occasion and defined its vision in



light of the wartime crisis for years. The members immediately raised money first for the 13th Regiment to buy clothing, blankets, pistols, holsters, and other equipment. Later the church would adopt two other regiments. The soldiers and their families were supported by special sermons and events. Church facilities were used to store weapons, and the church parlor was turned into a workshop training women and girls how to sew, knit, and pack for soldiers and their wives. The entire community rallied around the special needs of the crisis.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Contemporary Examples***

When Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and the surrounding region in 2005, becoming the costliest natural disaster in US history, the greatest army of workers to provide relief efforts came from church teams. Not only did churches from across the country send teams to help with rebuilding efforts, but existing church facilities in the affected area became staging grounds and support bases for those teams. Congregations worked with one another at unprecedented levels to rescue and rebuild these hard-hit areas.

Likewise, for international crises from Rwanda's genocide to Haiti's massive earthquake, churches have been quick to organize a response of prayer, physical resources, and human expertise.

Sometimes the crisis is real but short-term. When racial tension spilled into violence in Ferguson, Missouri, and Baltimore, Maryland, pastors and their congregations were among the first to offer help and be a voice of peace. When the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre occurred in Newtown, Connecticut, local clergy, backed by other caregivers in their congregations, sprang into action.

Sometimes the crisis mobilization occurs with denominational help, such as the Southern Baptist state convention in Virginia. It created a "ready church" training program.<sup>9</sup> Over the years Virginia has faced college shootings, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, massive industrial accidents, and more. Its "ready church" process develops teams to respond within the local church when events go wrong in their communities, mobilizing their members to make a difference. Each training offers necessary instruction for volunteers to respond with other Southern Baptists around the world. This concept sounds sticky, something other denominations could develop as well.

UK-based Tearfund works through churches to help the people in the world who are in the greatest need, regardless of race, religion, gender, or nationality. Founded in 1968, they have experience around the world in crisis mobilization. For example, after the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, many people lost their homes and were given temporary accommodation in camps. The Pentecostal Mission in Port Blair, the Andaman Islands, listened to, prayed for, and cared for people living in a camp and also served

food to more than five hundred people a day. Emergency financial help and support came from Tearfund.

Tearfund's book, *Disasters and the Local Church*, identifies four basic types of disasters. This list, shown in figure 8.6, builds an appreciation for the scope of crisis mobilization opportunities. In addition each kind of crisis provides many different opportunities for the role of a church including immediate response, resource provision, compassion and care, influencing and shaping values, acting as a community peacemaker, facilitating community action, and advocating for marginalized people.<sup>10</sup>

Crisis Mobilization Applies to Many Types of Crises	
Bias	Examples
1. Slow-onset disasters	Drought, displacement, water-logging, long-term conflict
2. Rapid-onset disasters	Windstorms (hurricanes, cyclones, typhoons, tornadoes), earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, flash floods, glacial lake bursts, tsunamis
3. Human-made disasters	War, civil strife, displacement, fire
4. Technological disasters	Severe pollution, nuclear accidents, air crashes, major fires, explosions

Figure 8.6

### Exercise: Should This Vision Be Your Church's Focus?

1. How closely does this template match **your own vision** for your congregation as a gospel-centered, disciple-making church over the next ten years? Use a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. How would you rate your **key opinion leaders' buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. How would you rate the **entire congregation's buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. How would you rate the level of **momentum and progress to date** your church has made on this particular vision template? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Now add up these four scores: \_\_\_\_ (You'll compare the tallies after you've reviewed all twelve templates.)

### **How Do You Rate on Vision That Rescues?**

The three vision templates in this chapter each explored some aspect of vision that rescues. At the conclusion of each template, you rated how this model applies to your church. You'll do likewise for all twelve templates, and then I'll ask you to look back and see which one or two you scored as highest.

## Chapter 9

# Vision That Becomes

*Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.*

—Paul the apostle, Colossians 1:28–29

The previous chapter looked at vision that rescues. Now this chapter will look at three templates all characterized by vision that becomes. The dominant symbol or basic shape for becoming is the image of a circle to represent wholeness, completeness, and purity. The white colors represent God (see figure 9.1).

Vision that becomes is whole, healthy, authentic, and maturing. Becoming vision says, “Grow it!”

All three overflow templates are represented as figure 9.2, with the basic shape in the upper right.

## Becoming through Spiritual Formation

### Definition

Your church’s vision is for a spiritual formation that changes people and takes them along a significant pathway toward spiritual maturity. You might state it as, “We will grow as God’s people to reflect individually and corporately the spiritual maturity of Christ in specifically defined ways.”

Circle Basic Shape for the Become Templates

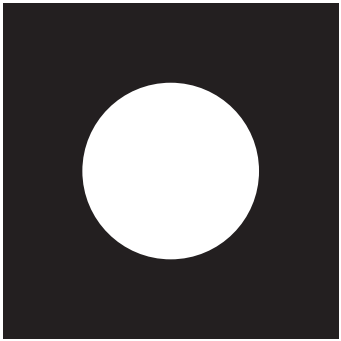


Figure 9.1

Three Become Templates  
with Basic Shape

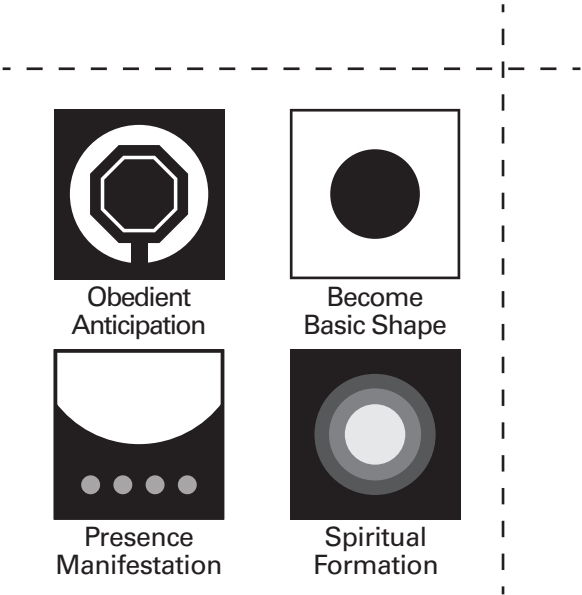


Figure 9.2

## Spiritual Formation Vision Template

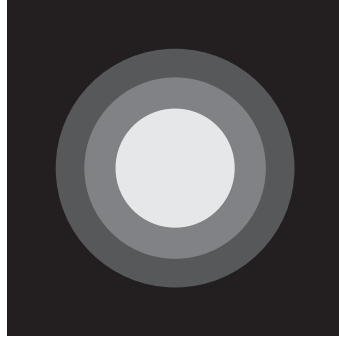


Figure 9.3

### ***Personal Snapshot***

Newport Beach in California is one of the most idyllic locations to be in ministry. My first time visiting Saint Andrew's Presbyterian, located almost within visibility of the beach, the flowery aroma of the parking lot caught me by surprise. The nearby beach, the flowers and greenery, and the large yet cozy outdoor campus, made it one of the most pleasant walks from car to worship center I've ever experienced.

When Rich Kannwischer, a young and brilliant communicator, came in 2009 to lead Saint Andrew's, he paid close attention to the local culture, which he described as an intoxication of the good life—that is, the good life defined by the world. Spend one day in Newport and you'll feel the power of that image. For me it started with the Ferrari dealership across from the hotel, the counter of plastic surgery promotional cards at the local Banzai Bowl, the endless healthy eating options, and the countless joggers with their Lululemon-wrapped pristine bodies. Who else has named their local mall Fashion Island?

When it comes to church vision, Saint Andrew's chose to make a dynamic contrast from, while building on, the pursuit of the good life. God has a good life too, not defined by the image of the world but by His image, made crystal clear in the life of Jesus. Saint Andrew's mission is following Jesus Christ to lead lives that reveal *God's* goodness. They chose the spiritual formation vision template, and the church plans to use its strength in education, its intellectual bent, and its leadership influence to found a discipleship institute that will extend its robust and replicable model for growing believers.

### **Biblical Reflection**

Maturity is an important goal for the New Testament church. The oft-quoted passage in Ephesians 4 about God raising up pastors (and other gifted individuals) is actually one long sentence in the Greek from verses 11 to 16. Using several different metaphors, the passage affirms that the goal of the church and its leaders is to grow the body of Christ into spiritual maturity. The visual force of Paul's teaching is conveyed by the contrasting image of silhouettes: a man's versus a young boy's. There's nothing wrong with being a boy, but there's something unnatural about staying a boy and not growing up to a full stature of maturity. See also Colossians 1:28 where Paul wants to "present everyone mature in Christ."

Another relevant passage is Acts 11:19–26 where the believers, after one year of teaching and growth, were called Christians for the first time in the biblical record—a term which means "little Christs." Why did it take a year? It required a season of formation from teaching and from applying and living out those teachings.

Consider as well the warning and exhortation to the seven churches in the book of Revelation. Note that the Spirit at times salutes a church for the *work they have done* but calls them to repent for *who they have become*. The spiritual formation template in this sense is more about *being* than *doing*. The church at Ephesus is commended for "your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil" (Rev. 2:2). But then they are rebuked in verse 4: "You have abandoned the love you had at first."

What template do you use when your vision is to resurrect a life of love for Jesus across a congregation? The spiritual formation template.

### **Metaphors for Communication**

Figure 9.3 shows a series of circles where, if white represents God across these symbols, the Holy Spirit is transforming people from the inside out. Think of the metamorphosis of a squirming caterpillar frozen in its cocoon only to become a gold and bold monarch butterfly.

Another image that depicts spiritual formation is a majestic tree, reaching not only upward and outward but founded by a strong, healthy root system that has also penetrated the ground deeply. Picture the individual described by Psalm 1:3: "He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers."

Still other images that convey this idea are a seed falling on fertile ground or a water purification process. Imagine places that connote development, like a family

having devotions around their dining room, a fitness center filled with exercise equipment, or a monastic setting made for silence and solitude.

### **Historical Examples**

One essential component to spiritual formation is a solid understanding of Scripture. In earlier centuries most sermons in the United States were devotional, motivational, and/or topical three-point messages followed by a poem. Lawyer-turned-Bible-teacher C. I. Scofield influenced a large section of the evangelical world to use the Sunday morning sermon not as a motivational pulpit but to teach the Word of God. His *Scofield Reference Bible*, published in 1909 by Oxford University Press, became one of the most influential books of evangelical Christianity in the last century. It was one of the first published Bibles with doctrinal and study notes on which several generations of pastors and lay leaders built their teaching.<sup>1</sup>

### **Contemporary Examples**

Some churches focus on a particular aspect of spiritual formation while others carry a special focus and energy for holistic development. An example of the latter is Robby Gallaty during his time at Brainerd Church and founder of a ministry named Replicate. Robby embodies a total focus on spiritual maturity as reproducing discipleship. Every story, every ministry environment, and every tool are shaped to transition a relatively traditional Baptist church to become a disciple-making force in Chattanooga. Their simple discipleship strategy to “worship, deliver, develop, and deploy” has become the “operating system” of the church.

Another example of a masterfully designed approach to spiritual formation is Randy Frazee’s thirty core competencies or big ideas. Designed originally while pastoring Pantego Bible Church, the thirty-point definition of discipleship was initially published as a set of tools called the Christian Life Profile. It was rereleased by Harper Collins under the banner *Believe, Living the Story of the Bible to Become Like Jesus*. The tools for Believe ([believestory.com](http://believestory.com)) are built around a spiritual-growth experience that helps Christians of all ages think, act, and be more like Jesus. The thirty big ideas are made up of ten key beliefs of the Christian faith, ten key practices of a Jesus follower, and ten key virtues of a person who is becoming more like Jesus.

The most impressive aspect of the tools is not the tools themselves but the idea of a church community using them together to grow collectively more like Jesus. When I consulted with Randy Frazee at his current church, Oak Hills in San Antonio, I was impressed by how deeply embedded these ideas are in his personal life. For example, when Randy runs, he prays through the thirty big ideas asking the Lord to direct where



he needs to grow. It's amazing to me how many churches do not have a basic definition of a disciple with accompanying ministries designed to produce disciple-making outcomes.

Some churches focus on one aspect of spiritual formation. Grace Fellowship in Katy, Texas, has focused their ultimate contribution as a church to be a "house of prayer for all nations." Being people of prayer is the cornerstone attribute of discipleship for them and the "mortar" that holds together everything they do as a church.

Watermark Community Church in greater Dallas believes so strongly in supporting healthy marriages that they continually sponsor ministries designed to help couples have a winning marriage. They don't just talk about good marriages, but they invest time and resources as well. One of the simpler things they do is to sponsor occasional "Date Nights" for couples.<sup>2</sup> This may seem insignificant, but as one researcher discovered,<sup>3</sup> couples who spend two hours together at least once a week (a "date") have expressed a level of satisfaction 3.5 times higher than couples who don't date regularly each week.

### Exercise: Should This Vision Be Your Church's Focus?

1. How closely does this template match **your own vision** for your congregation as a gospel-centered, disciple-making church over the next ten years? Use a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high):

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

2. How would you rate your **key opinion leaders' buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

3. How would you rate the **entire congregation's buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

4. How would you rate the level of **momentum and progress to date** your church has made on this particular vision template? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Now add up these four scores: \_\_\_\_ (You'll compare the tallies after you've reviewed all twelve templates.)

## Presence Manifestation Vision Template

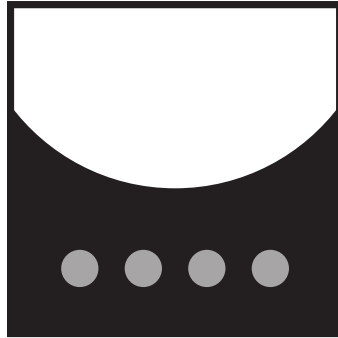


Figure 9.4

### Becoming through Presence Manifestation

#### **Definition**

Your church's vision is to welcome and experience God's presence anticipating ripple effects far beyond the life of your congregation. You might state it as, "We will seek God's presence to be manifested to do whatever He wants and however He wants through our response, renewal, and revival."

#### **Personal Reflection**

When developing this template, I was thinking primarily of charismatic strands of evangelicalism and churches I have worked with in the Assembly of God, Foursquare denominations, and other faith tribes that are "supernaturally sensitive." I think of conversations with Vanguard University's leadership (an Assembly of God school), where the big idea of "opening worlds" represented not just the bodies of knowledge and vocational opportunity for undergraduate students but the Spirit-empowered life in God's supernatural world. Or I think of Visalia, California, First Assembly whose mission is "to help people see that God can do more than they believe," conveying the mind-stretching reality of God's present miraculous power.

But churches that work with the manifest presence template are not necessarily from a charismatic or Pentecostal background. One example is Hope Church in Las Vegas pastored by the founding planter, Vance Pitman. Vance and his team are deeply drawn to a practical expression of "the abiding life." Take note of the language they

use to describe what they call the marks of abiding. Here are three from a list of fifteen they have articulated:

- **Intimacy:** Understands that God's primary call on my life is to be with Him, not to do things for Him.
- **Word:** Pursues time in, under, and around the Word, alone and with others.
- **Prayer:** Talks with God consistently, desperately, and expectantly.

To empower these spiritual outcomes, Hope uses a "5 percent time strategy" for how to build a relationship with God. All relationships require time, so Hope's ministry is designed around four kinds of time, including daily individual "God time" (fifteen minutes a day is 1 percent of your life's time) and "Go time" which is the investment of time with people in cross-cultural settings (one week of your year is 2 percent of your time). The other two times are "Gather time" (a weekly worship service) and "Group time" (a home-based small group setting with other believers) that each make up an additional 1 percent.

Not only is God's daily presence and emphasis individual, but it is an important part of sharing the church's history. Every significant event in the church's life can be directly attributed to God's intervention and leadership. For example, the unlikely idea that a pastor like Vance from the deep South should uproot his family and go to a city like Las Vegas. Or the unexpected dynamic of God's leading Hope to become a multiethnic church or rescuing them from a financial crisis that should have closed their doors. Hope does a lot as a church, but its primary template is based on God's speaking and showing up *first*.

### ***Bible Reflections***

The Israelites' wilderness journey contains many pictures of the Christian's walk with God today. The pillar of fire taught that when God moves, we move. When God does not move, we stay put as well (Exod. 40:36–38). The children of Israel would respond with awe and worship as God met with Moses: "When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, each at his tent door" (Exod. 33:10).

Likewise the New Testament, especially in the book of Revelation, forecasts the worship of heaven as a continual experience of God's presence before His throne. People in heaven don't even need the sun to shine "for the glory of God gives it light" (21:23; cf. 22:5) as God dwells among His people: "He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God" (21:3).

### **Starting Point Metaphors**

Figure 9.4 shows a big circle coming down upon smaller circles, representing God's coming down from heaven onto His people, descending on various people in church or other holy gatherings.

Another image that depicts manifest presence might be smoke rising from a fire, marked by power, vitality, uniqueness, and mystery. These qualities could symbolize God's pervasive presence in a church.

Still other images that convey this idea are Damascus road (Luke 24:32), worshipers with arms lifted, a crowd watching a countdown clock, raindrops beginning to fall, or a waterfall washing trees and rocks as it cascades.

### **Historical Examples**

The book *A God-Sized Vision: Revival Stories that Stretch and Stir*<sup>A</sup> recounts the fascinating details of world-changing revivals, beginning with biblical events and continuing through awakenings and revivals of recent centuries. It also explores what these revivals have in common and how people prepare for them. A vision of God's manifest presence was often part of that preparation.

One illustration is Timothy Dwight, grandson of Jonathan Edwards (the key figure in North America's First Great Awakening in the 1730s) who became the president of Yale in 1795. At that time only 10 percent of Yale students would claim Christ's name in public, even though the school had been founded to produce great pastoral leaders. But Dwight believed in revival and led with several means of pursuing it: gospel preaching, Bible reading, prayer, talking with Christians, catechism, and self-examination. During his tenure revival broke out three different times. In his own words describing one of them:

So sudden and great was the change in individuals, and in the general aspect of the college, that those who had been waiting for it were filled with wonder as well as joy, and those who knew not what it meant were awe-struck and amazed. Wherever students were found in their rooms, in the chapel, in the hall, in the college-yard, in their walks about the city, the reigning impression was, "Surely God is in this place." The salvation of the soul was the subject of thought, of conversation, of absorbing interest; the "peace in believing" which succeeded was not less strongly marked.<sup>5</sup>

The revival at Yale, like all revivals, owes its ultimate timing and power to God's sovereign initiative. But men and woman have nonetheless pursued a vision for revival and seen God work in dramatic ways in their lifetime. For Timothy Dwight, that

meant a huge surge in the quality and quantity of fervent pastors who left Yale over the decades to influence the world with a similar vision.

### **Contemporary Examples**

Vertical Church is an association of worship-centered churches pioneered by James MacDonald. He begins his book *Vertical Church* by asking, “Is your church experiencing a window-rattling, earth-shattering, life-altering encounter with the living God? That’s not a common experience in North America today. But it should be. And it can be.”<sup>6</sup> Worship that seeks and welcomes God’s presence is a priority for churches like this.

When I navigated Bellevue Baptist Church, in greater Memphis, Tennessee, through a year of visioning, the church changed its one hundred-year template of anointing amplification to a new template of presence manifestation. Their ten-year vision is to be a *catalyst for spiritual awakening in Memphis and beyond*. This led to many new initiatives including a redesign of Sunday evening worship to become an “Awaken” service where pastors from across the city—including the different ethnic churches—preach and where multiple congregations come together to pray for spiritual awakening for the city.

### **Exercise: Should This Vision Be Your Church’s Focus?**

1. How closely does this template match **your own vision** for your congregation as a gospel-centered, disciple-making church over the next ten years? Use a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high):

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

2. How would you rate your **key opinion leaders’ buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

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3. How would you rate the **entire congregation’s buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

4. How would you rate the level of **momentum and progress to date** your church has made on this particular vision template? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Now add up these four scores: \_\_\_\_ (You’ll compare the tallies after you’ve reviewed all twelve templates.)

## Obedient Anticipation Vision Template

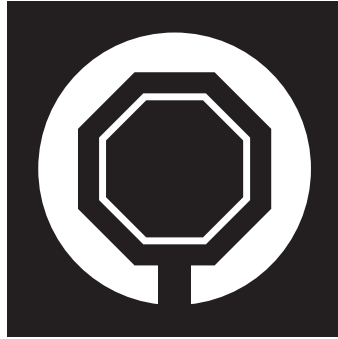


Figure 9.5

### Becoming through Obedient Anticipation

#### **Definition**

Your church's vision is to live in strategic or obedient anticipation of more clear revelation from God and with the intent to respond as He leads. For now, however, you are waiting only, posturing to hear because God has not yet given direction. You might state it as, "We will posture our lives individually and corporately to hear from God and receive His direction for our congregation."

#### **Personal Snapshot**

For predictable reasons this template is not as familiar in my consulting experience because a church that waits doesn't need the kind of collaborative vision journey I guide.

A few years ago I talked at length with a pastor from Mississippi. As far as I could tell from a few hours of conversation over a several week period, he was as thoughtful, smart, and godly as any pastor I have met. He had read *Church Unique* and was a fan of Auxano. He really wanted to go through a visioning process but kept feeling a check in his spirit that was hard to identify.

As I probed and asked questions, I began to talk him out of the process. It became clear to me that God was calling him and his church to a season of strategic waiting. This pastor knew God was not ready to disclose the next stage of the church's ministry

and believed some shared experience must come first. I discerned that he had 100 percent clarity and that it was important not to pursue a visioning process at this time.

As I mentioned earlier in the book, I was a spiritual formation pastor before I was a church vision consultant. In some ways I still am. During my seminary days I enjoyed reading the Christian mystics in the library more than my assigned reading. It's this influence of mystery, the reality that God is infinitely unfathomable, that leads me to have a "mystery template" or a "template of unknowing."

This is the heart of the obedient anticipation template: it's okay not to know. It's God's universe not ours. He is in control and sometimes, by faith, we wait.

### ***Biblical Reflections***

Throughout Scripture good things happen when people wait on God. As Isaiah 40:31 says, "They who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

God's Word abounds with examples of people taking an intentional pause while they wait on God's direction. Some are prominent like Abraham who waited numerous times on God's guidance. Other stories are told more succinctly, but it's easy to sense their heart, such as the prophet Habakkuk, to whom the Lord said: "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay" (Hab. 2:2–3).

In Acts 1:4–5, Jesus ordered His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were baptized in the Holy Spirit. That happened on the day of Pentecost, but the New Testament church practiced other seasons of fastings and otherwise waiting on God before moving into action. Examples include the fasting of Acts 13:2–3 and 14:23 and the seasons of prayer implied in Acts 4:31; 10:4, 9, 30; 12:5, 12; 16:25; 22:17; and 27:29.

### ***Starting Point Metaphors***

Figure 9.5 shows something like a stop sign, perhaps God's voice indicating to wait and pause, instructing, "Don't go into the future yet."

Another image that depicts obedient anticipation is a door just starting to open with brightness pouring in; the wider the door opens, the more light will come through. Images of stillness come to mind like a pond on a quiet morning with a mirror-like unmoved surface.

Other images that convey this idea are kneeling in surrender to God and waiting on Him, sails or kites awaiting the wind, or an airplane on a runway.

### **Historical Examples**

Many books on revival describe a stage where God's people wait on God in prayer, looking for instruction and leading. Leonard Ravenhill, author of *Why Revival Tarries* and other books on the topic, emphasized the season of waiting as essential. "We mistake the scaffolding for the building," he would say. Armin Gesswein, another great preacher and writer on revival, saw seasons of waiting in prayer as foundational to revivals in the book of Acts as well as to historic revivals from Norway to New York City.

### **Contemporary Examples**

Many in the charismatic world know of The Church on the Way, Van Nuys, California, as, for many years, the largest-attendance church in the Foursquare denomination. Few know that early in its story the vision was simply to wait on God through prayer and worship. In 1969 Jack Hayford, age thirty-five, accepted a six-month position to pastor there. At the time the congregation regularly drew fewer than twenty people, and the average age was sixty-five or higher. One day as Hayford was praying, "There descended on me an awareness that I was to stay at the church," he says.<sup>7</sup> In another season of prayer he received the strong mental impression that God would bless the church "here," and even as attendance grew to exceed maximum seating capacity, he didn't want to expand or relocate the small church facility. He led the congregation to pray and wait "here" at that site until God made clear what the next chapter in their vision as a church should be.

### **Exercise: Should This Vision Be Your Church's Focus?**

1. How closely does this template match **your own vision** for your congregation as a gospel-centered, disciple-making church over the next ten years? Use a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high):

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

2. How would you rate your **key opinion leaders' buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

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1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10



4. How would you rate the level of **momentum and progress to date** your church has made on this particular vision template? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Now add up these four scores: \_\_\_\_ (You'll compare the tallies after you've reviewed all twelve templates.)

### **How Do You Rate on Vision That Becomes?**

The three vision templates in this chapter each explored some aspect of vision that becomes. At the conclusion of each template, you rated how this model applies to your church. You'll do likewise for all twelve templates, and then I'll ask you to look back and see which one or two you scored as highest.

## Chapter 10

# Vision That Overflows

*Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them.*

—Acts 6:3 NIV

The previous chapter looked at vision that becomes. Now this chapter will look at three templates all characterized by vision that overflows. The dominant symbol for overflow is the image of a wave. See figure 10.1. The white coloring, here and in all of the templates, represents the work of God. Vision that overflows is good, bountiful, extending, and blessing. Overflowing vision says, “Let it go!”

All three overflow templates are represented as figure 10.2, with the basic shape in the lower right.

## Overflowing through Leadership Multiplication

### Quick Definition

Your church’s vision is to develop more leaders so as to take the church to where God wants you to go. You might state it as, “We will raise up and release leaders to accomplish whatever God calls them to do.”

Wave Basic Shape for the Overflow Templates



Figure 10.1

Three Overflow Templates  
with Basic Shape

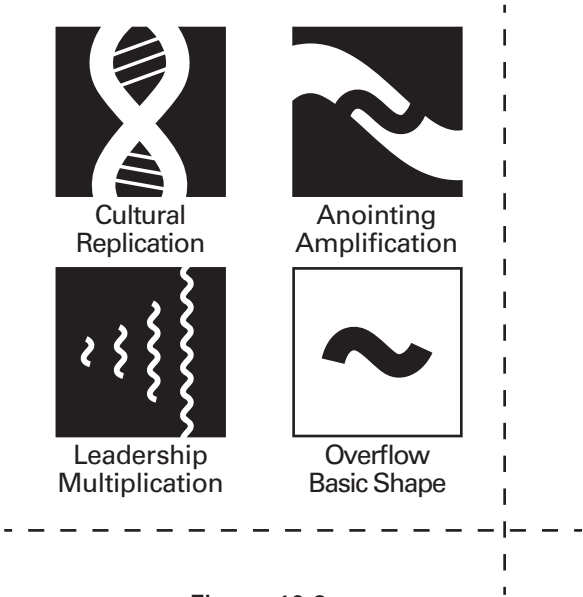


Figure 10.2

## Leadership Multiplication Vision Template

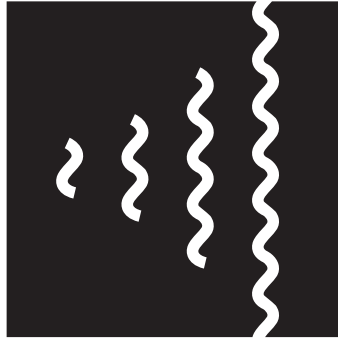


Figure 10.3

### ***Personal Snapshot***

The day started at the “yellow box,” the term for Community Christian Church’s largest campus in Naperville, Illinois. I was grateful for another opportunity to learn from founding pastors Dave and Jon Ferguson and their team. From the onset as Dave shared the story of the church, it was clear that two things were important: reaching the city of Chicago and reproducing leaders. One of the first drawings Dave made was a general map of the city broken down into quadrants reflecting their desire to multiply and not just have one campus. You could see both values at play in the drawing. At the break I asked him what the bigger idea in his heart was: reaching the city or releasing leaders. (As you read through these templates, I want to encourage you to wrestle with this question. It’s easy to like many of the templates, so keep forcing yourself to consider the *most* important one for your church.)

I remember watching Dave process my question. I had a hunch that reproducing leaders was the bigger idea. And indeed it was. Not only does Community Christian strive to develop leaders by multiplying at every level, but they have started a church-planting network called NewThing, a relational network designed to be a catalyst for movements of reproducing churches. If you listen to their introduction video, you will hear the word *reproduce* more than any other word ([Newthing.org/about](http://Newthing.org/about)).

The heartbeat to model “we’re always multiplying” is captured in their book titled *Exponential* with the subtitle *How You and Your Friends Can Start a Missional*

*Church Movement.*<sup>1</sup> Churches like this are comfortable with a lot of expressions of what those leaders do—some lead small groups, others start new campuses of this multisite church, others start entirely new churches through their NewThing network. Hybrid models are also welcome; what matters most is that leadership bubbles up and goes anywhere. As Bill Easum comments, “The only way they can achieve such multiplication is because they have a culture of developing leaders. They develop leaders whether or not they need them because they want to see people grow in their faith, not because they want people to run their programs.”<sup>2</sup>

### ***Biblical Reflections***

Exodus 18 is one of the quintessential leadership texts in the Bible. Before Israel could accomplish anything of significance after the exodus, it needed a full-scale leadership pipeline. Moses, with the prompting of his father-in-law, Jethro, was awakened to a massive leadership deficit and got to work to deploy leaders of tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands, in the mobile community of over one million people. In the end God provided one leader for every eight Israelites. The problem was not a lack of leadership supply, for God had provided the leaders; it was the missing vision and strategy to discover and develop them.

Jesus’ entire ministry was built around His training of the twelve apostles and of many other leaders as well, such as the women that traveled with the apostles and of the seventy. One poignant passage is Mark 3:14–15 where He called the twelve “that they might be with him,” learning from His modeling, mentoring, and presence, and also that they might “have authority” as He trained them through empowering them. Jesus spent disproportionately greater time with three among the twelve—Peter, James, and John. These were not His favorites but a functional leadership core that received additional modeling and shared experiences with Jesus. Paul describes Peter, James, and John in Galatians 2:9 as those who are “reputed to be pillars” (NASB) in the church. Additionally we see the twelve multiplying sixfold in Luke 10:1 when the young movement multiplies.

### ***Metaphors for Communication***

Figure 10.3 shows wavy lines going out and increasing in size and number. These symbolize the multiplication of leaders rather than merely the addition of leaders. In this image picture a movement of people ever expanding, moving from left to right, or what my friend Alan Hirsch calls “the sneeze” of movement. (Imagine the wet particles of a sneeze spreading rapidly through the air at the moment of achoo.) Leadership

multiplication is also pictured by boot-camp ideas of military training and the language of rounds and residencies of medical training. Other ideas include:

- **Launching and mobilizing:** Think rockets and aircraft carriers.
- **Reproducing and spreading:** Think greenhouses and unending rows of corn.
- **Releasing and sending:** Think commissioning and kicking someone out of the proverbial “nest.”

Another image that depicts leadership multiplication is the mathematics of expanding exponentially, for example when a group of leaders keeps multiplying by two: 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512, etc. A church that doubled its leadership every year starting with one leader would have more than thirty million leaders in twenty-five years. An image like that could show the beginning of a network of multiplication, moving from a few to a potentially unlimited outcome.

Still other images that convey this idea are healthy antibodies spreading, a viral video, an image of an acorn with a forest inside, or kudzu vines that take over a field or mountain.

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A church that doubled its leadership every year starting with one leader would have more than thirty million leaders in twenty-five years.

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### ***Historical Examples***

The Protestant Reformation, with its emphasis on faith alone and Scripture alone, laid the foundation for the liberation of the laity to exercise new levels of leadership. Teachings on the priesthood of the believer (see 1 Pet. 2:5, 8) and on equipping the saints to do the work of ministry (see Eph. 4:11–12) are at the heart of recent movements about body life, spiritual gifts, and lay mobilization.

In 1951, a student at Fuller Theological Seminary named Bill Bright received a unique impression from God, while studying Greek, to invest his life to help reach the entire world starting with college students.<sup>3</sup> Within the first year 250 students would receive Christ through the ministry, and six staff would join. For the next six decades, what's known today as Cru would grow to be one of the largest Christian ministries in the world with more than twenty-seven thousand staff and 225,000 volunteers in 190 countries.

How did this ministry expand so rapidly over the decades? Cru is known for its world revolutionary leadership training in evangelism and discipleship. While I was never on staff, my role in student leadership in the late 1980s changed my life. I can

still remember the tools and training I received, and I can still recite the Four Spiritual Laws by memory! Bill Bright could have never created that impact without the core conviction that one person could change the world through the power of multiplication. And while I never personally met Bill, he, indirectly through leadership multiplication, passed that belief on to me.

### **Contemporary Examples**

In recent meetings with the leaders of Kensington Community Church in Troy, Michigan, I've been blown away by their commitment to multiply leaders. Kensington has been noted as one of America's top twenty-five multiplying churches.<sup>4</sup> Steve Andrews, Dave Wilson, and Mark Nelson are cofounders of the church and display a rare blend of apostolic, evangelistic, and prophetic functions (respectively) that keep their scorecard focused on mobilizing the next person and group. Whether it's a new church, campus (local or translocal), or ministry, the biggest idea of the church is mobilization. They have planted scores of churches (giving an impressive portion of their budget toward multiplication) while growing their own attendance to fifteen thousand in worship across seven campuses and spinning off countless ministries like Portable Church Industries.

Another church noted for multiplication is Larry Walkemeyer, pastor of Light & Life Christian Fellowship in Long Beach, California. Light & Life is highlighted in Todd Wilson's book on multiplication entitled *Spark*. Larry recounts his "conversion" from a mind-set of addition growth to multiplication growth: "The vision was to stop becoming a lake church and instead become a river church. In a lake church, people flow in and stay. It seeks to get more and more people around one pastor in one place. In a river church, the people flow in but keep moving downstream. God takes them to other places to minister. The measurement becomes about 'flow rate' instead of 'volumes contained'; about 'gallons per minute' instead of 'gallons retained.'"<sup>5</sup>

### **Exercise: Should This Vision Be Your Church's Focus?**

1. How closely does this template match **your own vision** for your congregation as a gospel-centered, disciple-making church over the next ten years? Use a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high):

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

2. How would you rate your **key opinion leaders' buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

3. How would you rate the **entire congregation's buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. How would you rate the level of **momentum and progress to date** your church has made on this particular vision template? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Now add up these four scores: \_\_\_\_ (You'll compare the tallies after you've reviewed all twelve templates.)

## Cultural Replication Vision Template



Figure 10.4

## Overflowing through Cultural Replication

### **Quick Definition**

Your church's vision is to replicate its model, whether via multisite or other forms, spilling over to many places, new franchises, and new brands of "our" kind of ministry. You might state it as, "We will expand our influence by starting more campuses or church expressions that carry our ministry philosophy, unified vision, and brand."

### **Personal Snapshot**

What does it feel like to be a church with the ability to do cultural replication? Unique! Let me introduce you to Ken Werlein, pastor of Faithbridge Church in Houston, who pastors what is currently the fastest-growing church in the United Methodist denomination.<sup>6</sup> Ken doesn't just empower others, but he does so with as a



cultural-savvy style. You might describe the Faithbridge fusion as a blend of Wesleyan spirituality that brings fervent prayer together with an amazingly transparent leadership style and disciple-making zeal. Faithbridge is truly one of a kind. While they are involved in church planting efforts in their city, their greatest contribution is to expand by replicating the Faithbridge DNA. Ken is a cultural architect in the truest sense. He doesn't build with wood and steel but with values, leadership philosophy, and brand reputation. Some of the skills Ken embodies include a big-picture perspective but also attention to detail, a bias for action but a sensitivity to people. Most importantly Ken releases other leaders to represent the Faithbridge culture to keep it "overflowing" to others.

How does Ken champion and protect the culture? Like all the churches I serve through Auxano, Ken has developed a Vision Frame that captures the unique mission, values, strategy, and mission measures of the church. But Ken is particularly adept at continuing to emphasize the culture itself, allowing the time for each new wave of staff to deeply process and rehearse how Faithbridge has become who it is.

People in the city love Faithbridge. One public school, aware of the interest for church plants to rent their space, actually invited Faithbridge to apply as a rentor. While Faithbridge is not in a hurry to franchise (true cultural architects rarely are), there is no question that cultural replication will be their long-range template.

### ***Biblical Reflections***

The New Testament offers many healthy examples of imitation and modeling, such as the church in Thessalonica: "And you became *imitators* of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an *example* to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia" (1 Thess. 1:6–7, emphasis added). In the next chapter Paul commends them as "imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea" (1 Thess. 2:14).

In like manner Paul established consistent teaching among the churches he planted. "This is my rule in all the churches," he said at one point (1 Cor. 7:17). He likewise also established similar structures among all church plants, such as appointing elders "in every church" (Acts 14:23). Paul also directed his followers like Titus to follow suit: "Appoint elders in every town as I directed you" (Titus 1:5).

The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1–35) was a watershed event in the life of the early church as leaders prayerfully wrestled with whether the requirements to follow Jesus should be the same for both Jews and Gentiles. One major question was which Jewish practices Gentile believers would need to follow. The decision was to define a set of universal qualifications, which were then to be replicated across all new congregations. These issues were difficult ones as many New Testament chapters, such as in

Galatians and Romans, had to keep showing believers how to walk in the freedom of grace without abusing it.

### **Starting Point Metaphors**

Figure 10.4 shows a DNA strand, which carries the components of life, containing everything necessary to replicate a culture an infinite number of times.

Another way to depict cultural replication is the idea of an apple full of seeds, each of which leads to an entire orchard and a similar-looking orchard at that.

Still other images that convey this idea are a restaurant franchise system, a chain of department stores, seashell fractals in nature, a message being retweeted on Twitter, or a fish or other animal that can birth dozens if not hundreds of near-identical babies.

### **Historical Examples**

Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, started in 1965 in Southern California, has birthed an association of more than sixteen hundred churches, all recognizable as examples of cultural replication. Whichever Calvary Chapel you visit, you're likely to find the same characteristics: an emphasis on the teaching of the Word of God, typically using an expositional approach, accompanied by a strong emphasis on worship. See Donald E. Miller's *Reinventing American Protestantism*<sup>7</sup> for more on the Calvary Chapel approach to training prospective pastors and raising up new churches.

### **Contemporary Examples**

Some of the more well-known and codified church cultures that have turned into franchise models include Northpoint Ministries pastored by Andy Stanley, LifeChurch.tv pastored by Craig Groeschel, and Hillsong Australia led by Brian Houston. At the time of this writing, Hillsong has thirty-six sites in ten countries. Northpoint Church has its "Northpoint Partners" which includes thirty-two churches, most of which are in North America, and LifeChurch.tv shows forty-eight churches, mostly in North America.

The advantage of being a NorthPoint Partner illustrates the value of being a franchise. The leader doesn't need to articulate the ministry philosophy or strategy from scratch but can utilize, for example, the language of strategic environments (foyer, living room, kitchen), the five faith catalysts, and a host of other curricula (Starting Point, Orange) as well as frequently beaming in Andy Stanley himself for the Sunday morning teaching event.

### Exercise: Should This Vision Be Your Church's Focus?

1. How closely does this template match **your own vision** for your congregation as a gospel-centered, disciple-making church over the next ten years? Use a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. How would you rate your **key opinion leaders' buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. How would you rate the **entire congregation's buy-in** at present for this template as the focus of their vision? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. How would you rate the level of **momentum and progress to date** your church has made on this particular vision template? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Now add up these four scores: \_\_\_\_ (You'll compare the tallies after you've reviewed all twelve templates.)

### Anointing Amplification Vision Template



Figure 10.5

## Overflowing through Anointing Amplification

### Quick Definition

Your church's vision is to do all you can to leverage and amplify the impact of a particular leader, often someone who is a stellar teacher. You might state it as, "We will promote the special gifting and anointing of a person whom God chose to make a unique contribution to our society or world."

### Personal Snapshot

Like many I was a bit skeptical when First Baptist Dallas announced what would become a \$135 million building project to recreate the presence of the church in downtown. *What else could you do with that money?* many wondered. But when I learned more about their history, context, and culture, my perspective changed to imagine God's smile on the massive project.

First, it's important to consider the legacy of First Dallas. Pastors like George Truett and W. A. Criswell were nationally known and politically active over a century. In 2006 the church's pastoral search committee carefully considered more than 150 candidates to stem the tide of attendance decline and restore First Dallas's national platform. Robert Jeffress was selected in 2007 to be the next pastor. The church's vision is to be a national voice for biblical truth, guided by the mission to transform our world with the power of God's Word, one life at a time.

Behind that vision is an anointing amplification template. Truett and Criswell were anointed leaders, not just preachers but champions for biblical truth. Robert Jeffress is a relatively short person, but when he steps into the pulpit, he is a gladiator. The world-class investment into a facility and extensive search for the right leader reflect a 150-year-old strength to amplify God's Word and the practical forcefulness of it.

How many pastors give dozens of interviews on Fox News each year for political and cultural commentary? How many pastors have been aired on HBO's brashly liberal *Real Time with Bill Maher*? Robert Jeffress has and continues to baffle his would-be detractors with an endearing kindness as he boldly proclaims the power and practicality of God's Word. He leads with humble genius and represents God's Word with simple clarity, unwavering confidence, and honest kindness. And that's what makes Jeffress so meaningful to the people of First Dallas.

The credibility of the congregationally owned vision was validated through a congregational survey Auxano conducted just before the opening of their facility. It revealed that over 90 percent of the congregation is motivated to have a public voice

for God's Word with the primary result of cultivating everyday boldness for representing Jesus and sharing the Bible with others.

### ***Biblical Reflections***

Throughout the Bible, God raises up people for a certain time, anointing them in the sense of choosing them, from judges to kings, from artists to prophets. Each was raised up with the sense, as Esther, "for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14).

As just one example, Exodus 17 shows how people sought to magnify the gifts of Moses. The Israelites were encountering their first opposition while wandering in the desert. While Joshua led the troops into battle against the Amalekites, Moses, along with Aaron and Hur, watched from a nearby hill. Exodus 17:11 reads, "Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed." Eventually, Moses became weary, so Aaron and Hur held up his arms until the Israelites were finally able to repel the Amalekites.

In the New Testament the story of choosing seven new leaders in Acts 6, often interpreted as the first deacons being named, is in part motivated by needing to free the apostles to use their gifts to reach as many people as possible. "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables," the apostles said, so the new role was created so the apostles could devote themselves "to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:2, 4).

Similarly, Ephesians 4 speaks of exercising whatever gifts you've been given, so that those gifts can be amplified. For example: "If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well" (Rom. 12:7 NLT).

As church consultant Bill Easum comments: "All people are equal in the sight of God, but not all leaders are equal, not even in God's sight. In fact, treating all leaders as if they're equal, even for fairness' sake, is not only unrealistic, it's not biblical. Jesus chose twelve from the crowd to be his apostles. Then he selected Peter, James and John to be in his inner circle. Ultimately, he charged only Peter to be the keeper of the flock."<sup>8</sup>

Another example of gift amplification is how the church in Philippi had a special "partnership in the gospel" with Paul (Phil. 1:4–5; 4:14–16). They supported him, cared for him, and resourced him in his missionary journeys. Apparently they saw one of their roles in amplifying his gifts.

### ***Metaphors for Communication***

Figure 10.5 shows a small wave within the big wave, indicating that the smaller wave is being amplified.

Another way to depict anointing amplification might be the way people rally behind a personally impacted figure to elevate to public awareness a particular cause that may otherwise never have been recognized apart from that figure's circumstance.

Still other images that convey this idea are a magnifying glass, a megaphone, and a ship's wheel or rudder.

### ***Historical Examples***

At age twenty Charles Spurgeon's anointing as a gifted preacher was so evident that he was invited to become pastor of one of London's largest-attendance churches. He pastored there from 1854 to 1892. In his early years the crowds grew so large the twelve-hundred-seat facility filled quickly. The church relocated to a larger setting, and during Spurgeon's heyday its five thousand seats were filled many times a week, with the remainder of the crowd standing in the yard outside, listening from as far away as Spurgeon's voice could be heard.

### ***Contemporary Examples***

It's easy to think of dozens of nationally known preachers and teachers whose churches or ministries amplify their gifts with radio, television, and/or the Internet. But what makes this vision template useful for a church is when the congregation's vision is wed to the platform. To validate the connection, usually look for some continuity between the gifting of the individual leader and the culture of the church. In other words, if you lose the leader, some special ability the leader possessed is resident in the body.

For example, when I worked with Max Lucado at Oak Hills, while he was the senior minister, a storytelling identity was built into the fabric of discipleship, distinct from but related to Max's special gift of storytelling and writing. Or when Chuck Swindoll planted Stonebriar Community Church in Frisco, Texas, a congregation was formed around his gift for expository preaching and his emphasis on a lifestyle marked with joy. They articulated their mission around the idea of a joy-filled relationship with Christ, and they plan services around a preaching time that enables for two, twenty-two-minute radio messages. When I visited both churches, Oak Hills in San Antonio and Stonebriar in Frisco, tour buses of people from other churches were visiting these well-known communicators.

Another example is Bellevue Baptist Church in greater Memphis, Tennessee. Bellevue has had only a handful of senior pastors since its founding in 1903. Most recently Adrian Rogers was pastor from 1972 to 2005, followed by Steve Gaines through the present. The church has a long heritage of world-renowned Bible teachers,

whose teaching ministry has overflowed from the church across the globe. From the church's television, radio, and Internet broadcasts to its large seating-capacity auditoriums—a three-thousand-seater built in 1952, a seven-thousand-seater built in 1989—everything you see in that culture was meant to magnify gifts and anointing of their teaching ministry.

### Exercise: Should This Vision Be Your Church's Focus?

1. How closely does this template match **your own vision** for your congregation as a gospel-centered, disciple-making church over the next ten years? Use a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high):

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4. How would you rate the level of **momentum and progress to date** your church has made on this particular vision template? Same 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Now add up these four scores: \_\_\_\_ (You'll compare the tallies after you've reviewed all twelve templates.)

### How Do You Rate on Vision That Overflows? How Does That Template Compare to Others?

The three vision templates in this chapter each explored some aspect of vision that overflows. At the conclusion of each template, you rated how this model applies to your church.

Now it's time to compare your scores on all twelve templates from chapters 7 to 10. Please write them below. Note especially the one or two you scored as highest. Then before reading further, discuss the suitability of these templates as an expression of your church's disciple-making vision.

Write the scores from the exercises, in order from highest to lowest and the corresponding name of each vision template:

Which Vision Templates Seem Closest to Your God Dream?		
Write your scores from the previous exercises in order from highest to lowest. Also write the corresponding name of each vision template.		
	Score	Name of Vision Template
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		

Figure 10.6

### Where Do These Templates Lead?

I hope you will pause now to experience meaningful dialogue as a team around these twelve vision templates. I've observed many times, as I've watched these conversations begin in various churches, that a moment of God's revelation often occurs, an "aha!" discovery that proves to be meaningful. Typically it happens as you're looking at one of these vision templates and someone notices, "Wow, we're a such-and-such model, and I never realized it before." Or "historically our church was this model, but in recent years we've been moving to that model."

The twelve vision templates are not meant to limit you but to offer a meaningful sense of trajectory for your beyond-the-horizon vision. The next chapter will help you do just that, leading your team to select two top vision templates that you'll combine into one idea and direction.

Take a peek at figure 10.7 on the next page for how the twelve templates all fit together, and then let's jump into finding and focusing the Horizon Storyline for your own church.



