

Comeback Churches Visionary Leadership

Everything rises and falls on Leadership. The Comeback Churches research showed that visional leadership was vital to church revitalization. The Comeback Churches in the study, were plateaued for five years. Much of what took place was that Leaders led. We should not be afraid of leadership.

Biblical leadership is essential. Leadership is not without cost.

Leaders help churches to see that their real problems are spiritual. The task of the leader is to define reality. Turnaround leaders distinguish between obvious symptoms and underlying problems. First step is helping the church admit there is a problem and a need for change. Wise leaders help their churches see current reality (sociological realities, facility realities, etc). Charts that analyze the church for the last fifteen years may help them see current realities. “Here is who attends our church” vs. “Here is who lives in our community”, do they match? It takes time to change the climate as a leader. Leadership involves influencing people to develop a direction to accomplish God’s purpose under the power of the Holy Spirit. Leadership is something to be exercised.

What were the leadership factors that affected the comeback?

Comeback leaders were proactive and intentional - They didn’t wait for the church just to see the need for revitalization. “I am going to intentionally help us see reality and lead us to address how we are going to address our future.”

Comeback leaders shared ministry – It is necessary to give away ministry. Leaders don’t just say we need to be involved, they lead us to be involved, and confront us when we are not.

Comeback leaders helped change the attitude toward growth – Sometimes we have the false idea that it is more spiritual if we don’t grow and we celebrate a church that is pure but not focused on the mission of God and transforming communities with the gospel.

Comeback leaders activated a shared vision – Most everybody in the church already has a vision, and they often differ. God speaks to the church and through the church to activate the vision and the task of the leader is to activate that and live out the vision. “If this is what we believe God has called us to do, we are now going to do that.” 60% of the churches that experienced revitalization did so when a new pastor came. What changed with the 40% who were not new pastors? They said, “I changed.” Ultimately churches have to change and leaders have to change. The church together has to say, “We are going to activate and live in this shared vision.” Visional leadership is about getting people on board.

Comeback leaders quickly gave away “non-ministry” tasks - If it is not related to the core function of what God has called you to do as a pastor, give it away to somebody else.

Comeback leaders made choices in whom they invested their time and how they invested their time. Comeback leaders invested in other leaders. They intentionally strategized to reorder their own priorities and cast a compelling vision.

Comeback leaders cast a compelling vision. People follow vision because they want to be a part of something worthwhile. Vision comes from faith and allows the church to do something that is bigger than itself. This is not “church as usual.” Vision has to be credible or attainable, not a pipe dream.

Comeback leaders are able to explain in speech or in writing what a different future looks like. Write out where God is leading your church. Help people see what a different future looks like.
Make sure it is credible.

Comeback leaders are willing to face the dangers of casting vision.

Some will get mad

There will be problems of space, parking, etc.

Comeback leaders multiply leaders. People will buy into the vision when they buy into you. We have created a system that relies on a leader with a bunch of followers. Comeback leaders have people they are investing their lives in so that they in turn become effective leaders.