

# **How to Develop a Church Mission/Vision Statement**

**By Thom S. Rainer**

## Introduction

Countless church leaders have asked me how they should go about developing a church vision or mission statement. I use the words *vision* and *mission* interchangeably, though I am aware that some leaders prefer to distinguish between the two.

Before we proceed further, let's acknowledge the importance of a vision statement. It sets the tone and the priorities for the church. It reminds members where the focus of the church is. It motivates members to give and to serve. It keeps the church focused on what it should be doing, and bold to eliminate what it should not be doing.

Unfortunately, many churches have a vision statement that no one remembers, no one mentions, and no one acts upon. The mission statement is a mere document that has no value or importance in the church.

In this brief template, I plan to show you how to develop a vision statement. Please hear me clearly. This template is *one* way to develop a vision statement. It is not the only way. And my examples are nothing more than examples. You can expand upon them, change them, or use them in their entirety.

## **The Four Keys of a Church Vision Statement**

Most good church vision or mission statements have four key components. Without these four keys, the impact of the statement will be minimal.

1. *It is biblical.* A church vision statement is not a replica of something used in the corporate world. It must have biblical and theological foundations. Indeed, I encourage you to include relevant biblical texts when you explain the vision statement to your congregation.
2. *It is concise.* A church vision statement cannot be too long. Lengthy statements lose their effectiveness. They are hard to remember. They discourage members because they lack the focus needed to make a difference. One of the great challenges of most mission or vision statements is to keep them very brief.
3. *It is memorable.* The vision statement must not only be concise; it must be something easy for all members to remember. I have seen many brief statements that made little sense. Of course, irrelevant vision statements are quickly forgotten if the members cannot understand and remember them.
4. *It is actionable.* This key is the most overlooked facet of all church vision statements. The statement must not only state the priorities of the congregation; it must also be an action plan to carry out those priorities. I will expand upon this theme in the examples I use.

## Step 1: Answer Two Indispensable Questions

As you or your leadership group begins to think about the church's vision statement, it is imperative that you can answer two critical questions:

1. *What is your primary goal for the church members?*
2. *What are the minimum expectations of church members?*

Okay, let's expand upon those two questions. Let's suppose that your primary goal for the church members is for them to become disciples who regularly practice the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. Frankly, I have been unable to find a much better answer, but I will leave that up to you. The point to remember is that the vision statement should communicate that primary goal.

So what are the minimum expectations of a church member? If someone in the church were to ask you where they would need to start to grow as disciple in corporate church life, how would you respond?

For me (and many church leaders smarter than I), I would want them attend a worship service faithfully; be active in a small group; be involved in at least one local or international mission or ministry project a year; and give faithfully to the church. You can refer back to this page when you begin forming the vision statement.

Now it's your turn:

What is your primary goal for the church members?

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What are the minimum expectations of a church member?

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## **Step Two: Articulate the vision statement with the four keys and two questions.**

Now you're ready to form a vision statement. Remember, it should be biblical, concise, memorable, and actionable. The fourth key may present the greatest challenge.

Let's continue my line of thinking and say that we want to see church members growing as believers by practicing the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. And we want them to do so as they have four basic commitments to the church. Now we have to put all of these thoughts together in a concise, memorable, and actionable vision statement.

Action 1: Attend corporate worship services regularly. For brevity in the vision statement we will call this: *love God*.

Action 2: Grow as disciples by gathering together in small groups studying God's word. Since community is created in these groups, we will call this: *love others*.

Action 3: Get involved in at least one local or international mission or ministry endeavor each year. We will call this Great Commission and Great Commandment obedience: *reach others*.

Action 4: As a good steward, each member is expected to give generously to the church. This action can be stated very basically: *give generously*.

Now you can put this all together to reflect obedience to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission while stating clearly the basic expectations of members of the church:

*Love God. Love others. Reach others. Give generously.*

The beauty of this vision statement is that it not only reflects the priorities of the church; it is also immediately actionable. You are able to share with church members that they express "love God" when they gather for worship. They "love others" by joining a small group. They "reach others" by getting involved in a ministry or mission endeavor. And they "give generously" by giving a generous portion of their funds that God has entrusted to them to the church.

The statement is thus biblical, concise, memorable, and actionable. Now it's your turn. Let's go to the next page, and let you and your team take the same steps for your church's vision statement.

## Forming Your Church's Vision Statement

In step one, you stated the primary goals that are desired of church members; and you provided the minimum expectations of the members. Now let's finish step two, and make those two indispensable questions become action items for the members.

Here are six blanks for six action items. You may need more or less. I used four in my example.

*Action 1:*

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*State this action in a concise form, two to four words.* \_\_\_\_\_

*Action 2:*

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*State this action in a concise form, two to four words.* \_\_\_\_\_

*Action 3:*

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*State this action in a concise form, two to four words.* \_\_\_\_\_

*Action 4:*

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*State this action in a concise form, two to four words.* \_\_\_\_\_

*Action 5:*

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*State this action in a concise form, two to four words.* \_\_\_\_\_

*Action 6:*

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*State this action in a concise form, two to four words.* \_\_\_\_\_

Now take the concise words from each of the action items to form your vision statement:

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- Does it reflect the primary goals desired of all church members?
- Does it describe the minimum expectations of church members?
- Is it truly biblical?
- Is it concise?
- Is it memorable?
- Is it actionable?

I encourage you to read *Simple Church* by Eric Geiger and me. We expand upon these concepts in greater detail in the book.