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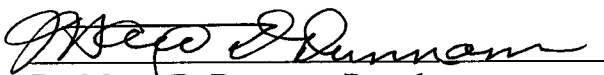
The recipient of the 1997 Distinguished Dissertation Award is **Tim Eugene Barton**. Tim's dissertation, entitled *The Christian Leader as a Spirit-Driven Visionary*, sought to discover how Christian leaders with strengths and expertise in vision formulation hear and/or discern the voice of the Holy Spirit in their lives during the process of creating vision for their ministries.

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- ◆ Demonstrates potential for publication.
- ◆ Consistently follows standard conventions for social science research where applicable.
- ◆ Conforms invariably to designated style guidelines in all respects.

The Faculty of Asbury Theological Seminary commends Dr. Barton for his outstanding work and prays for his continued success in leading others to Christ and training them for Gospel ministry!



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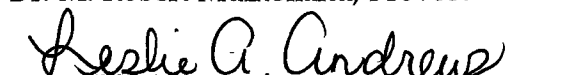
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ABSTRACT

THE CHRISTIAN LEADER AS A SPIRIT-DRIVEN VISIONARY

by

Tim Eugene Barton

The purpose of this study was to discover how Christian leaders with strengths and expertise in vision formulation hear and/or discern the voice of the Holy Spirit in their lives during the process of creating vision for their ministries. Both the leadership and visionary literature of corporate America and the church were surveyed in order to lay the groundwork for this study.

Thirty leaders were chosen to be interviewed based upon their meeting of the following criteria: five years of ministry experience; recognition as visionaries by peers and colleagues in ministry; experienced in forming a vision statement or plan by which a ministry is led; and achievement of some measure of success in leading ministries in the fulfillment of their vision. Data analysis focused upon the transcripts of these interviews.

Major findings included 1) visionary leaders follow a number of different routes toward catching God's vision; 2) God uses a variety of elements to impart vision; 3) living a life of personal devotion to

God is essential for visionary leadership; 4) vision is best created in community with others; 5) vision unfolds developmentally; 6) vision is macro in scope; and 7) God transmits vision along a disengagement-engagement continuum.

This research addresses the integration of leadership development and spiritual formation. Through the conducted interviews, case studies emerge which reveal the interplay between one's spirituality and one's practice of visionary leadership. This dissertation provides a look at how a select group of visionary leaders actually create and form vision as they seek the mind and heart of God.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
THE CHRISTIAN LEADER AS A SPIRIT-DRIVEN VISIONARY

presented by

Tim Eugene Barton

has been accepted towards fulfillment

of the requirements for the

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at

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Mentor

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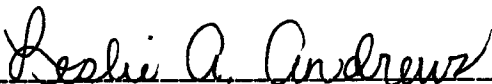
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THE CHRISTIAN LEADER AS A SPIRIT-DRIVEN VISIONARY

A Dissertation
presented to
the Faculty of
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In Partial Fulfillment
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Doctor of Ministry

by
Tim Eugene Barton

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soli Deo gloria

CHAPTER 1

Understanding the Problem

Point: A Beginning Scenario

Approximately five years ago, I sat at my desk in my church office and stared at an imposing stack of paper--research findings, demographic studies of the church and community, newspaper articles, county growth projections, survey results, the report of a church consultant we had recently hired, and a long list of ministry ideas and dreams for the church I pastor, the Canby Alliance Church of Canby, OR. Next to this mountain of information sat a three page document entitled, "The Canby Alliance Church Five to Ten Year Plan." I had just directed the church through a major undertaking: the creation of the church's first strategic plan, including both a vision and mission statement, that would guide our church into the next decade.

My seminary training had done next to nothing to prepare me for this leadership venture. Three years of studies had adequately equipped me to be a pastor, counselor, and a preacher but not a visionary leader of my congregation. Something I had recently read in a book on leadership accurately described my experience in church leadership: "Many people who come into positions of

leadership in churches or Christian organizations have little or no training in leadership and management. Leaders of Christian enterprises tend to be spiritually qualified but often organizationally illiterate" (Finzel 13). In those early years I felt as if I was the blind leading the blind as I stepped out onto the road that would lead us to the creation of a church vision document.

I recalled the one church growth class I had taken in seminary. This course was an introduction to the then burgeoning church growth movement. In order to prepare myself to lead the church through the envisioning process, I tried to recall what that class had taught me about leadership, vision, and strategic planning. To the best of my knowledge, I couldn't recall anything about this aspect of pastoring a church. My seminary class was more a methodology class on how to quantify and qualify church growth.

As a result, I devised a crash reading course for myself on church leadership and began to read everything that I could find. The more I read the more I realized just how important vision was for church leadership and growth and just how little I knew about offering visionary leadership to the challenges facing Canby Alliance Church.

I carefully read a number of books by church growth experts and others addressing the issues of leadership and vision: Carl George's Leading and Managing Your Church and How to Break Growth Barriers; Peter Wagner's Leading Your Church to Growth; Bob Logan's Beyond Church Growth; Leith Anderson's Dying for Change and A Church for the 21st Century; and George Barna's The Power of Vision and Marketing the Church. I kept an eye peeled for articles and interviews in *Leadership Journal* and *Christianity Today* that would add to my growing knowledge about church growth and leadership. I took detailed notes from my study and developed a method whereby I could evaluate both our church and the needs of our community.

Previous to this, we had hired a church growth consultant to come in and perform an analysis of our church. The consultant interviewed the pastoral staff and chosen individuals from the church during the day and spoke on personal and church renewal during the evening. At the conclusion of a week's stay, a document was produced that included a comprehensive picture of the church's past and present, weaknesses and strengths. The document concluded with a prescription for growth, a list of thirty changes that

would propel Canby Alliance Church into a new era of growth and vitality.

When I determined that I had gained at least an elementary understanding of church vision and planning, I organized a leadership retreat for our Governing Board and pastoral staff. I set a goal to pray, dream, and plan our way to a vision statement for the church. This plan would articulate the church's vision for the coming decade.

By the conclusion of the two day retreat, a vision of greatness for the church's future had been hammered out by the leadership team of Canby Alliance Church. This took the form of a church purpose statement, five objectives, and thirty-five goals. From start to finish, the envisioning process had taken fifteen months of hard work, grappling with difficult questions, attendance at endless committee meetings, and the collection and tabulation of hard-to-find but vitally important information. This journey in pursuit of knowledge and new direction for our church had culminated in twelve people coming to embrace a statement that articulated the church's purpose statement, objectives, and goals.

As I sat at my desk reflecting back upon the past fifteen months of work, with the finished Five to Ten Year Plan staring me

in the face, I should have felt an enormous sense of relief and accomplishment. But I did not. Instead I was full of apprehension and a running stream of unanswered questions:

- Did we (the church leadership team under my direction) listen closely to the voice of the Holy Spirit in our envisioning process?

- Did we successfully discern the voice of the Holy Spirit?

- How does the Holy Spirit communicate himself in vision formulation?

- How can a pastor and his leadership team be Spirit-driven while surrounded by a small mountain of data (collected information, facts, demographics, survey results, etc.) that exerts enormous influence upon their conclusions and decisions?

- Does the Holy Spirit move in, outside of, or both in and outside of this mountain of data?

- Was there any difference between the envisioning process the Canby Alliance Church had just completed and the one corporate America typically follows?

- Are there proven ways, means, and disciplines that seem to help visionary pastors hear the voice of the Holy Spirit in vision formulation?

•And how can one be sure that one's vision is Spirit-driven and not self-driven?

I recalled other reading I had done over the years. In particular, I harkened back to the introductory comments found in Eugene Peterson's Working the Angles:

The pastors of America have metamorphosed into a company of shopkeepers and the shops they keep are churches. They are preoccupied with shopkeeper's concerns--how to keep the customers happy, how to lure customers away from competitors down the street, how to package the goods so that the customers will lay out more money. Some of them are very good shopkeepers. They attract a lot of customers, pull in great sums of money, develop splendid reputations. Yet it is still shopkeeping; religious shopkeeping, to be sure, but shopkeeping all the same. The marketing strategies of the fast-food franchise occupy the waking minds of these entrepreneurs (Peterson 1).

I asked myself if I had sold out my church to the shopkeepers? Did this newly minted vision statement of our's bear the marks of Spirit-led ministry or was it simply the result of a human-driven enterprise for greatness and advancement?

As I evaluated how our leadership team had developed our church's vision statement, I recalled something else I had recently read:

Today's ecclesiastical visionaries come to the table with the latest psychographics, opinion polls and market research. They know what the people want: high-tech

communications; high-touch pastoral care; laid-back, easy-flowing, eighteen minute messages; just the right combination of anonymity and tender loving care; great child-care programs; multiple service options; ample parking; an upbeat, positive, exciting atmosphere; a warm, winsome, engaging pastor who can make you laugh and make you cry (Webster 9).

Though I strongly believed that the gospel must be communicated in creative and relevant ways, I questioned how much influence contemporary culture held over us in the conception of the church's vision statement and how much sway the Holy Spirit held. Was the Canby Alliance Church's Five to Ten Year Plan market-driven or Spirit-driven?

In retrospect, I felt as if my pastoral leadership had been far more effective in walking the church through the process of forming vision than it had been in teaching the church how to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit while in the midst of this process. I imagined myself on the verge of new discoveries of what visionary leadership in the church is all about. I wanted to uncover what it would mean to learn how to listen for the voice of the Spirit. I did not believe that the leadership team had totally missed the leading of the Holy Spirit in our Five to Ten Year Plan. I remembered times of praying together and planning where everyone felt the presence and direction of the Spirit. I did believe, though, that not enough of the

Spirit had been let into the process and plan. The diminished role of the Holy Spirit in our planning was not a deliberate move on the part of the church leadership team, as much as it was a matter of ignorance of the Spirit's ways in the envisioning process.

Analysis of the Problem

The average pastor in today's church is expected to fill at least three roles. The first is that of preacher/teacher. Much of one's seminary training is focused on developing pastors for the preaching role. Growing churches are often marked by a strong pulpit ministry. Powerful preaching is one of the first things churches look for when calling a pastor.

The second role is that of pastor/counselor. Pastors take courses in counseling and pastoral psychology. Parishioners expect their pastors to provide guidance, encouragement, and support for an endless number of problems encountered in our dysfunctional world. The pastor is looked up to as a shepherd who will love and care for the flock in their times of trauma, crisis, and need.

The third role is that of leader/manager (George and Logan 14). Increasingly pastors are viewed as the CEOs of their congregations. People, facilities, and finances all require watchful care and responsible stewarding. The creation and casting of vision for the

church's future is looked upon as a necessity for the pastor. Strategic planning takes up large blocks of the pastor's time and focus. The pastor operates as the CEO of the organization, "a leader who actively sets goals for a congregation in accordance to the will of God, obtains goal ownership from the people and sees that each church member is properly motivated and equipped to do his or her part in accomplishing the goals" (Wagner 79).

Typically the pastor receives less training for the leader/manager role than for the other two. Of the three, pastors, on the average, feel the least well-equipped for this role. The focus of this dissertation lies within the pastor's leader/manager role.

Books, seminars, studies, and teaching videos and tapes abound when it comes to equipping pastors to lead their churches today. Seminaries are adding leadership courses and specializations to their degree programs that were nonexistent twenty years ago. Books written from a Christian perspective on leadership, management, and vision development rival those written from a secular perspective. The market overflows with material that is deemed excellent and of high quality in this particular genre of literature. The pastor who seeks to become better educated as a leader/manager has more

resources of this nature available for his/her use today than ever before.

All of this is well and fine except for one thing. Very few of the books, studies, seminars, videos, and tapes available today actually teach the pastor how to tune into the voice of the Holy Spirit as they lead their churches into visionary ventures. For many pastors, the question can be asked if visionary pastoral leadership has almost become a sociological science that functions outside of the realm of the Spirit. Putting one's hands on the right data, information, graphs, statistics, and demographics is viewed as a guaranteed route to successful church growth. The formula for success seems to be: perform your sociological homework on your community and your congregation, decide what kind of church you want to be and what kind of people you want to reach (based upon your homework), develop a vision and strategic plan that will enable you to achieve your desired success, and "just do it"!

Throughout this envisioning process the assumption is made that both pastors and people will pray and seek the mind of God, that they will listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit, and that they intend to become a Spirit-driven people. But the practical help given to pastoral leaders seeking to become Spirit-driven visionaries for their

congregations is minuscule at best in comparison to the assistance offered in the area of sociological research.

Counterpoint: A Biblical Scenario

"Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon" (Luke 2:25). This little-known man in Scripture suggests a solution to our dilemma of how visionary pastoral leadership hears the Spirit of God. When Joseph and Mary presented the baby Jesus in the temple for his consecration to the Lord, Simeon showed up on the scene and surprised them by his actions and words.

We discover in Simeon three forms of the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit himself. First, Simeon is described as a person in constant communion with the Holy Spirit (Bockmuehl 47). The Holy Spirit "was upon him" (Luke 2:25). Whatever Luke meant by this phrase, the point is clear: Simeon enjoyed an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit that was marked by the Spirit's sustained presence in his life.

Second, Simeon had received a divine revelation from the Lord in relationship to the baby Jesus. "It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke 2:26). The Holy Spirit gave Simeon a vision of the future. He would see the Messiah.

Third, Simeon received immediate directions from the Holy Spirit. "Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts" (Luke 2:27). The directions were so practical and "so specific that he is at the right place at the right moment to see the baby Jesus and recognize him as God's Messiah" (Bockmuehl 48).

Luke presents Simeon as someone who was Spirit-driven. The Holy Spirit rested upon him; the Holy Spirit gave him divine vision regarding his future; and the Holy Spirit supplied him with everyday directives in order to fulfill this divine vision. The moral or spiritual basis for Simeon's experience with the Holy Spirit is made unmistakably clear by Luke. According to Bockmuehl, Simeon is said to have been righteous (toward people) and devout (toward God): he moved within the two spheres of the Double Commandment of Love (48).

The Simeon story becomes a paradigm for visionary pastors seeking to be led and directed by the Holy Spirit as they articulate vision for their churches. In the midst of their church growth studies and sociological research, Simeon stands before them as a model of Spirit-drivenness. As they juggle the many leadership balls thrown to them, do they also juggle a spiritual discernment ball? I believe that as pastors cultivate an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit,

the Spirit will supply them with divine revelation for their churches as well as the practical suggestives to carry it out.

The Purpose Stated

The purpose of this study identified the different ways in which visionary pastors and leaders hear and/or discern the voice of the Holy Spirit in the process of formulating vision for their ministries. This study does not intend to minimize the importance of using the tools that the social sciences and the marketing people provide for analyzing one's church and community. It accepts and values their place and usefulness for visionary leadership.

This study determined the role the Holy Spirit plays in the lives of pastors and leaders as they generate vision for their ministries, with or without the assistance of the social sciences and market research. The commonly discovered ways in which the Holy Spirit moves in a select number of leaders during their envisioning experience is delineated within these pages.

Statement of Research Questions

The following research questions are addressed in this study.

Research Question 1

How does the Holy Spirit customarily communicate to pastors who are in the process of creating vision for their churches?

Research Question 2

Are there proven steps, habits, or routines that, if followed, seem to help pastors hear the voice of the Holy Spirit?

Research Question 3

What part does the practice of personal spiritual disciplines play in vision formulation?

Research Question 4

What safeguards or guidelines can be followed for testing or confirming the visionary input that one receives as coming from the Holy Spirit?

Definition of Terms

Vision is defined by Barna as "a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances" (Power of Vision 28). In short, vision is the end state toward which the leader desires to move (McFarland, Senn and Childress 94).

Visionary pastor or leader is meant to refer to pastors or leaders of Christian organizations who are possessed by a clear vision for their ministries, are able to articulate it clearly and with

persuasion, and are able to advocate and mobilize for it (Shawchuck and Heuser 115).

The *formulation and articulation of vision* is a five step process that includes the following: 1) the conceptualization of the vision; 2) communicating the vision; 3) empowering people to own and carry out the vision; 4) creating tangible and intangible incentives to support the vision; and 5) constant communication at all levels of the game plan for achieving the vision (McFarland, Senn and Childress 103). In this sense, visionaries are people who are adept in their application of these five steps.

Hear and/or discern the voice of the Holy Spirit refers to the leader's ability to recognize the voice of God. According to Barna, prayer is critical for recognizing the voice of God in vision development

because it is a time when you can ask God to speak to you. He may do so by conveying impressions that you must then pursue in more tangible terms. He may do so by speaking directly to you in words that seem audible. The key is to be silent and focused enough to allow Him to break through to you and to communicate what He wants you to grasp (Vision 90).

Barna indicates that inactivity for the purpose of allowing God to speak and impart wisdom seems to be a prerequisite for God speaking clearly to Christian leaders.

Methodology

Through a descriptive study, data was collected through semi-structured interviews with visionary pastors and leaders. These interviews were audio taped and transcribed to provide a verbatim record. Interviews were conducted in person or over the phone. Each interview attempted to elicit answers that provided insight into how a particular leader hears the voice of the Holy Spirit in vision formulation. A list of the interview questions can be found Appendix B.

Subjects

The interview population was composed of thirty pastors and Christian leaders who are distinguished by their followers and colleagues as exercising a gift of vision in their ministry. Because the author intended to conduct as many as possible of these interviews in person, limitations of time, money, and travel were taken into account in choosing who was interviewed. Pastors and Christian leaders who fell into the following categories constituted the interview pool: 1) Contacts from The Christian and Missionary Alliance in both the United States and Canada; 2) Contacts who live along the I-5 corridor from Salem, Oregon, to Seattle, Washington, and are within a reasonable driving distance from the author's home;

and 3) Contacts from across the United States who agreed to a telephone interview when a personal interview could not be arranged.

Four criteria were established for selecting pastors and leaders to interview:

- 1) They must have at least five years of ministry experience.
- 2) They must be acknowledged as visionaries by their followers, peers, and colleagues in ministry.
- 3) They must have developed a written or a mentally formulated vision plan for their churches or ministry.
- 4) They must have experienced some degree of success in the accomplishment of their vision.

The author attempted to interview pastors and leaders from a number of different theological persuasions. The largest single grouping of participants came from the author's own denomination (13 of the 30 interviewees), The Christian & Missionary Alliance. He traveled to his denomination's Annual Council in Pittsburgh, PA. from May 22 to May 28, 1995, in order to conduct interviews with pastors whom otherwise, due to financial limitations, he would not have been able to interview. Other leaders or pastors interviewed include Dr. David Allan Hubbard, Dr. Maxie Dunnam, Gordon MacDonald, Steve

Sjogren, Dr. Bob Morehead, Dr. Dale Galloway, and Dr. Joe Aldrich. A complete list of the interviewees can be found in Appendix D.

Variables

The primary variable of this study was the manner in which the participants “listen to the Holy Spirit” as they formulate vision for their ministries. The intervening variables taken into consideration alongside the primary variable were the following: age, ministry experience, visionary strengths, spiritual giftedness, geography, denominational background, theological convictions, practice of spiritual disciplines, and gender.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used. First, a researcher-designed questionnaire supplied the author with background information on each pastor. Second, a researcher-designed semi-structured interview protocol of eight questions was used (see Appendix B). Interview questions were pre-tested in order to improve their intentionality and strengthen the interview format. Feedback from this field testing was incorporated into the final instrument revision.

Data Collection

Data collection proceeded along the following steps: 1) Identifying visionary pastors and enlisting their agreement to an

interview; 2) Conducting a personal, face-to-face or telephone interview; 3) Recording the interview; 4) Transcribing the interview; and 5) Analyzing the interview data according to the research questions of this study while remaining open to helpful information that arose but was not directly connected to the research questions.

Visionary pastors and Christian leaders who fit the aforementioned criteria were identified by the author using the following means: 1) The author's personal knowledge of the interviewees and their ministries; 2) Names that were suggested to the author by personal friends with a wider exposure to the church-at-large than the author's; and 3) Names that were suggested to the author by professional colleagues with a national knowledge of a wide range of pastors, leaders, and ministries.

Delimitations and Generalizability

Vision formulation is surrounded by numerous factors. This study focused on the pastor or leader's own personal hearing or discerning of the voice of the Holy Spirit in contrast to how the Holy Spirit may reveal himself to a group of people led by the leader. This delimitation is not intended to devalue any of the other factors that often influence vision (community context and history; church context and history; circumstances and needs of the community;

church resources such as giftedness and finances, etc.). The target group of this study were pastors or Christian leaders who received the Holy Spirit's promptings. The individual receiving of vision is only one small part of the much larger equation of what is called visionary leadership.

The author believes that the findings of this study are applicable to a large number of pastors and leaders who desire to understand more clearly the process of vision formulation from both a human and a divine perspective. His hope is that the discoveries unearthed by this study will cross both denominational and theological lines. The breadth of theological stripes represented by the interviewees--Reformed, Dispensational, Wesleyan, Pentecostal, and Charismatic evangelicals--certainly lends itself to a wide generalizability.

Overview

In Chapter 2, five different literature streams that flow into the river of vision formulation were reviewed and examined: the literature of corporate America and visionary leadership; the literature of the church and visionary leadership; the literature of the church's theologians; the literature of spiritual discernment and

listening to God; and a study of the book of Acts from the perspective of divine guidance.

Chapter 3 provides a more detailed explanation of the design of the study. Chapter 4 furnishes an analysis of the interview findings. And Chapter 5 reports the major findings of the study as well as practical applications that flow out of these findings.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Selected Literature

In Chapter 2 I reviewed five types of literature apropos to Christian leaders. Vision and visionary leadership are big-league ingredients in the successful corporations of this country. An extensive literature has developed around visionary leadership in corporate America. In the past twenty or so years, the church has made use of this business/leadership corpus in its quest for church growth. Much has been borrowed from the leadership gurus of corporate America, such as Peter Drucker, Peter Block, Peter Senge, and Tom Peters, to mention just a few of the prominent names. Visionary leadership in corporate America will comprise the first part of the literature review.

Secondly, the literature of the church and visionary leadership was surveyed. As with corporate America, an extensive body of books and articles on vision and visionary leadership have rolled off evangelical presses in recent years. A sound theology of biblical leadership is well on its way to fruition. The church has been captured by the necessity of visionary leadership.

Thirdly, the writings and reflections of the theologians of the church were explored in search of a solid theological basis for pastors

and leaders becoming Spirit-driven visionaries today. Questions regarding creation, God's providence, revelation, the Holy Spirit, and Christian community were investigated.

Fourthly, since this study intends to identify ways in which pastors ascertain the voice of God, the literature of spiritual discernment and listening to God was reviewed. How a pastor or leader recognizes the voice of God is the point at which spiritual formation and leadership practice intersect and one potentially becomes a Spirit-driven Simeon. Such an experience comprises the crux of the pastor's visionary leadership: Whose voice is he or she hearing? One's own? The culture's? The congregation's? Or God's?

And lastly, the biblical component of this literature review encompassed a study of the book of Acts. The rationale for delimiting the biblical component to the book of Acts can be stated as such: Acts describes how leaders hear the voice of the Spirit while in the midst of ministry and the formation of their respective leadership mandates. More will be said about this when Acts is handled in the literature review.

Corporate America and Visionary Leadership

Seven different subsections are covered under Corporate America and Visionary Leadership: the importance of vision;

definition of vision; the nature, characteristics, and properties of vision; mission versus vision; visionary leadership described; the origins of vision; and the power and effect of vision.

The Importance of Vision

Fortune magazine (May 22, 1989) reported on a survey of 1500 business leaders, 870 of them CEOs, from twenty different countries. The survey asked for respondents to describe the key traits or talents desirable by a CEO today and important for a CEO in the year 2000 (Quigley 7). The trait most frequently mentioned, both at the time of the survey and for the year 2000, was "a strong sense of vision." This sense of vision was rated the top trait by over ninety-five percent for the year 2000. Quigley goes on to relate that "when the leaders were asked to cite key knowledge and skills for CEOs of the present and future, 'strategy formulation' to achieve a vision was seen as the most important skill for now and in the year 2000, by a margin of twenty-five percent over any other skill" (7).

Visionary abilities and skills in the leader's repertoire cannot be underestimated. A true leader cannot afford to be without visionary deftness. "The first basic ingredient of leadership is a guiding vision. The leader has a clear idea of what he wants to do and the strength to persist in the face of setbacks. Unless you know

where you are going, you cannot possibly get there," says Bennis (Becoming A Leader 39). Bennis' foregone conclusion is that effective leaders cannot live without some expertise in the area of vision formulation.

Definition of Vision

Vision is variously defined in the literature of corporate America. According to Nanus, "A vision is a realistic, credible, attractive future for your organization" (8). Kouzes and Posner view vision as "an ideal and unique image of a common future. It is a mental picture of what tomorrow will look like. It expresses our highest standards and values. It sets us apart and makes us feel special. It spans years of time and keeps us focused on the future" (27). Block spells out vision as "the future we wish to create, a dream created in our waking hours of how we would like the organization to be" (113). One more definition comes from Broholm who writes of vision being "a valued image of the future which connects to our sense of purpose and draws forth the commitment of our energy" (6).

One common element in all four definitions is vision's orientation toward the future. Vision addresses the future by creating a picture of what we desire tomorrow to look like. Vision is

a destination toward a tomorrow that will be better, more successful, or more desirable than what is real at the present moment. Vision is a signpost that supplies direction and guidance, a target at which the organization aims.

Vision is both limiting and expansive. Vision is limiting in that it reflects an unequivocal picture of the future, as opposed to just any version of the same. Vision refers to a limited image of what tomorrow might look like. Vision, by the same token, is expansive because it possesses "power to motivate and empower us to make" our mental image of the future a reality (Broholm 6). Vision is more than just a mental image of the future. Within that image lies the energy and passion to inspire one to make it happen.

Nanus helps us to gain a better grasp of what vision is by listing what it is not: 1) While a vision is about the future, it is not a prophecy; 2) A vision is not a mission; 3) A vision is not factual; 4) A vision cannot be true or false; 5) A vision cannot be static, enunciated once for all time; and 6) A vision is not a constraint on actions, except for those inconsistent with the vision (31-32). As is true of many things in life, one of the best ways to understand what something is, is to look first of all at what it is not.

To sum up, vision is "the concise statement or picture of where the company and its people are heading and why they should be proud of it" (Peters and Austin 284).

The Nature, Characteristics and Properties of Vision

In Peter Block's writings on vision, vision is always a "vision of greatness." The word 'greatness' for Block is a weighty one:

The wish to hedge against the word greatness is to hedge against committing ourselves to something we may not be able to achieve. Greatness demands that we eliminate caution, that we eliminate our reservations, and that we have hope in the face of the history of our limitations (109).

If vision does anything for those who create it, it expands their horizons of what is possible and attainable. It sets them on a course of dreaming of how they can turn the impossible into something possible.

A vision is great when it has these three qualities, according to Block:

1. It comes from the heart. A vision is in some ways unreasonable. The heart knows no reason. When our vision asks too much of us, we should begin to trust it.
2. We, alone, can make this statement. The statement needs to be recognizable as ours. It needs to be personal, and those who know us should be able to recognize who it came from.
3. It is radical and compelling. A vision dramatizes our wishes. This makes it radical and demanding. Radical

in the best sense of service rather than rejection. Our willingness to take a unique stand is what empowers us (122-123).

Stating the above in a different manner, a vision of greatness speaks the language of hope and idealism. It leads one to believe that anything is possible.

Building off of Block, Nanus asks what we are looking for in a vision and proceeds to list nine properties of a good vision:

- 1) It is future-oriented and begins by dealing with a world that exists only in the imagination;
- 2) It is idealistic and offers a future that is demonstrably better for the organization;
- 3) It is appropriate for the organization and for the times;
- 4) It sets standards of excellence and reflects high ideals;
- 5) It clarifies purpose and direction;
- 6) It inspires enthusiasm and encourages commitment;
- 7) It is well articulated and easily understood;
- 8) It reflects the uniqueness of the organization; and
- 9) It is ambitious and calls for sacrifice and emotional investment by followers (25-29).

We see in Nanus' properties of vision how vision is both limiting and expansive. A successful working vision is not just any vision of the future, but a vision of the future that is marked by the vision qualities of Block and the vision properties of Nanus. As much as vision is about a future effort to bring what does not presently exist into existence, it is still a picture of tomorrow that is closely linked to the context and realities of one's situation.

One last characteristic of vision worth mentioning is this-- vision is a "see" word; it evokes images and pictures, visual metaphors (Kouzes and Posner 85). Some have referred to vision as a right-brain function. Vision is caught up with symbols, images, and word pictures. It speaks to the heart before it engages the mind. It is often emotional and spiritual in nature rather than logical and rational.

Mission Versus Vision

Mission and vision are not the same thing, although they are closely linked to one another. Often they are used interchangeably, but for the purposes of this study, they are two entirely separate items. Each complements and strengthens the other, yet each plays a different role.

Vision answers the "what" question: What do we want to accomplish? What do we want to be? What do we want to see happen? In this sense, vision is a picture of the future we seek to create (Senge 223).

Mission answers the "why" question: Why do we exist? Why are we here? Mission addresses matters of purpose. Mission clarifies the general heading or direction of the organization. Mission is more abstract, while vision is more concrete.

To illustrate, "advancing man's capability to explore the heavens" is a mission statement which clearly states the purpose. Setting "a man on the moon by the 1960s" is a vision statement, an example of how the abstract is made concrete. Another example, "be the best runner I can be" (mission) and "break four minutes in the mile" (vision) (Senge 148-149). According to Nanus, vision provides the direction, mission states the purpose, and strategies provide the framework for getting there.

One way of seeing the difference between vision and mission is provided by Shawchuck and Heuser. Mission is the bridge that connects vision to reality. Under vision, mission is the grand plan, the achievement of which will likely require many lesser plans, strategies, and activities (73). Where there is no clear sense of vision, there will be no clear sense of mission.

If mission connects vision to reality, then vision makes the mission, or the purpose of the organization, more concrete and tangible. Vision helps to paint pictures that will enable people to see just what the mission of the organization is.

Visionary Leadership Described

What is visionary leadership according to the management experts of corporate America? Max DePree says the first

responsibility of leadership is to define reality (11). Defining reality, in part, is setting a clear vision of what the organization ought to be. Visionary leaders are painters of the vision and architects of the journey. But as painters and architects, their responsibility is wide-ranging and, sometimes, borders on the genius.

William T. Solomon, Chairman and CEO of Austin Industries, Inc., describes visionary leadership as the fulfillment of a vision through others (McFarland, Senn, and Childress 103). He then lists five basic elements of such leadership. First, is the conceptualization of the vision. Leaders, through whatever means available, draw together the essential elements of a vision and state it in a form that makes sense to followers. The final responsibility for the creation of the vision lies with the leader.

Second, visionary leaders communicate the vision. They take every conceivable opportunity to reaffirm, reassert, and remind everyone of the vision at hand (Philipps 169). Great leaders have the ability not only to conceptualize the vision, but also to proclaim and convey it in a manner that attracts people's attention and causes them to embrace and own it for themselves.

Third, effective leaders empower people to take a piece of the leadership. They give away power, responsibility, and authority for

the fulfillment of the vision to as many people as possible. They have a keen eye for potential vision players. They possess an ability to pass onto others the dream that lies buried in their heart for their organization's future. Visionary leaders understand people and how to lead them in a concerted effort toward the same end result.

Fourth, such leaders create tangible and intangible incentives to support the vision. They help their followers to taste success and see the fruits of accomplishment before fulfillment of the vision is achieved. Visionary leaders are able to effectively communicate what life will be like if the vision is reached. By the same token, they communicate equally well what life will be like if the vision goes unfulfilled. The pros and cons are made concrete and real by dangling them before one's eyes and reach.

And lastly, visionary leaders provide constant communication at all levels of the game plan for achieving the vision. They ask questions like, "What are we trying to do today? What are the problems? What are the solutions?" (McFarland, Senn, and Childress 103). This kind of communication is critical for successful performance. People are given a sense of ownership and participation over the vision. They realize that they are team players; that they have input into the fleshing out of the vision; that

the vision is not just a "top down" plan laid upon them, but that they, too, have creative powers within the vision's working plan.

If Solomon clearly articulates what visionary leadership does, Nanus provides the four critical roles for effective visionary leadership: 1) Direction setter; 2) Change agent; 3) Spokesperson; and 4) Coach (11-15). Nanus' four roles depict "how" the leader accomplishes Solomon's five basic elements.

As a direction setter, visionary leaders formulate and cast vision within their organizations. A successful direction setter will establish a vision so compelling that everyone in the organization will want to help make it happen (Nanus 13).

As a change agent, the leader is responsible for producing changes within the organization that will result in achievement of the vision. Good change agents prepare their followers to make necessary changes no matter what the cost or sacrifice. Experimentation and risk taking are encouraged. Problems are viewed as opportunities for the future. Visionary leaders build organizations that are managerially flexible to allow for the greatest degree of change at the fastest rate of change.

As a spokesperson, the leader functions as a skilled speaker, a concerned listener, and the very embodiment of the organization's

vision. He is the chief advocate and negotiator for the organization and its vision both with inside followers and outside constituencies (Nanus 14). The organization's vision is communicated far and wide as something that is worthwhile, attractive, and exciting.

As a coach, the leader functions as a team builder, someone who skillfully relates to the managers and workers inside the organization who look to him for guidance, encouragement, and motivation (Nanus 11). Modeling the vision is a major component of coaching. By "living the vision" with great passion and energy, the leader becomes a mentor and example before followers. Coaches show their commitment to make everyone in the organization a success. They build trust, show respect, and give others learning opportunities. The bottom line is helping others to improve their abilities so that the vision comes closer and closer to becoming a reality.

Nanus is convinced that these four roles together comprise the responsibility of visionary leaders. "They are all equally important, and no one can be a successful leader without excelling at all of them" (15). Each of these roles, once accepted and developed in the leader's life, will enable him or her to lead out of the circle of Solomon's five basic elements of visionary leadership. In the words

of John Gardner, "Visionary leaders describe the outlines of a possible future that lifts and moves people. They actually discern, in the clutter and confusion of the present, the elements that determine what is to come" (131). This kind of visionary leadership is demanding and, at times, Herculean. One quickly begins to realize why visionary leaders as defined here are often difficult to find, identify, and develop.

The Origins of Vision

We come now to the most pertinent vision question of this section for this study: Where does vision come from? One can read page after page and book after book in the business/leadership literature of corporate America and come away with very little material of substantial value to help answer this question. The genesis, the inception, the emergence of vision is not widely written up and discussed. Writers who bridge the topic do so in a cursory fashion. The origin of vision seems to be left up to each individual leader to ponder and discover on his or her own.

Kouzes and Posner come the closest to giving a definitive answer to the origins of vision:

Intuition is the wellspring of vision. One fact recurs repeatedly in all this research (as to the beginning points of vision): the key managerial processes are enormously

complex and mysterious, drawing on the vaguest of information and using the least articulated of mental processes. These processes seem to be more relational and holistic than ordered and sequential, and more intuitive than intellectual; they seem to be most characteristic of right-hemispheric activity (93).

Kouzes and Posner also cite a recent study which documents senior executives reporting that their intuition has been a guide in most of their important decisions.

Kouzes and Posner, among the few who write on this aspect of vision, continue by explaining how intuition works in the life of a visionary leader:

As we acquire experience in an organization and an industry, we acquire information about what happens, how things happen, and who makes them happen. The longer we spend in an organization and an industry, and the more varied our experiences, the broader and deeper our understanding is likely to be. Often when presented with an unfamiliar problem, we consciously (or unconsciously) draw upon those experiences to help us solve problems. We select relevant information, make relevant comparisons, and integrate experience with the current situation. For the experienced leader, all this may happen in a matter of seconds. But it is the direct contact with a variety of problems and situations that prepare the leader for unique insight. Listening, reading, smelling, feeling, and tasting the business improve our vision (94-95).

Kouzes and Posner appear to be saying that vision springs forth from our intuition. Experience and information become lodged in our intuition. When vision or decisions are called for, our intuition jumps

into action. "If necessity is the mother of invention, intuition is the mother of vision" (101).

Nanus believes that visionary leaders are a combination of instinct and judgment. He likens visionary leaders to artists who "try to rearrange the materials at their disposal" (33). For Nanus, "vision is composed of one part foresight, one part insight, plenty of imagination and judgment, and often, a healthy dose of chutzpah" (34). Visionary dreams are built upon information and knowledge, values, frameworks, and insight or intuition. The process of creating vision is full of introspection. Though Nanus acknowledges the place of intuition in vision development, it carries a far lesser role in his understanding of the origin of vision than it does in Kouzes and Posner's.

In conclusion, the genesis of vision for corporate America is what lies within one's self. Though it is mysterious, and even mystical, it remains something that comes from within the visionary leader.

The Power and Effect of Vision

Vision rightly conceived and artfully cast has enormous potential for good. People generally respond in a positive manner to something challenging that carries with it a promise for a better

tomorrow. Quigley writes that "the leader who offers a clear vision that is both coherent and credible, and who lives by a set of values that inspire imitation, has a fundamental source of power" (10). This power gives the leader the capacity to turn a vision into reality. Vision is inspiration and inspiration becomes a powerful tool for transformation in the life of followers and within the corporate culture.

Vision unleashes four forces (Nanus 15-17). First, vision attracts commitment and energizes people. People want a significant challenge that they can commit their lives to, especially something that claims to make life better for others, or that represents improvement for their community, or that helps their organization attain new levels of growth and development.

Next, vision creates meaning in worker's lives. Vision can make a difference in the follower's sense of pride, self-image, dedication, and job performance. Vision can provide a sense of purpose for many people's lives.

Thirdly, vision establishes a standard of excellence. Vision helps to make clear what the organization's purposes are. It gives people a standard by which to measure their contributions.

And fourthly, vision bridges the present and future. "The right vision transcends the status quo. It provides the all-important link between what is now taking place and what the organization aspires to build in the future" (18). Vision makes it more difficult for people to get caught up in the problems and details of everyday work. It reminds people that in the midst of their daily routine, there is a bigger challenge on the horizon that one must not lose sight of. Vision draws a line between today and tomorrow and reminds people that there is a direct link between the two. What I do and who I am today will eventually impact what I do and who I am next year.

Perhaps Nanus gives the best summary of the power of vision in people's lives (18):

The vision is the beacon, the sense of destination shared by the people who care most about the organization's future. Once people buy into the vision, they possess the authority, that is, they are empowered, to take actions that advance the vision, knowing that such actions will be highly valued and considered legitimate and productive by all those who share the dream.

In one word, vision is "empowerment" for those who create, follow, and cast it. The right vision possesses a tremendous potential for turning around, not only the lives of people, but the shape and future of an organization.

The Church and Visionary Leadership

Much of what has been written about visionary leadership from the perspective of the business/leadership authorities is true as well of visionary leadership in the church. Visionary leadership in corporate America and visionary leadership in the church both hold in common considerable amounts of information and viewpoints. All truth is God's truth, no matter if it originates with Peter Block or George Barna, with IBM or the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth. The church certainly can learn from its secular counterparts in leadership research. This study allows for a healthy crossover between the disciplines of Christian and secular leadership and vision studies.

In this section I address material covered in the previous section but from a Christian direction. I attempt to point out Christian perspectives on visionary leadership. In keeping with the focus of this study, my interest is in how Christian pastors hear from God as they formulate his vision for their churches. In this section I begin to directly address this concern.

In Church Marketing, George Barna mentions a number of business leaders whose lives have been interesting examples of vision in action: John Sculley, former president of Apple Computers;

Jan Carlson, airline president; Tom Watson, Sr., founder of IBM; Michael Eisner, CEO of the Walt Disney Company; and former President John F. Kennedy (121-122). Barna states the decisive difference between the above mentioned leaders and the visionary pastor: "They relied upon their own vision for the future, rather than God's vision of what He wanted the future to be" (122).

For leaders such as Sculley and Eisner, the resource they rely upon for creating, articulating, and casting their visions is themselves:

It is the leader who evaluates the world around him and dictates the opportunities worthy of pursuit. It is the leader who develops the image of the better future and doggedly conveys it in winsome language to those who must be enlisted in the effort to make that vision real. It is the leader who sets the goals and determines the means of satisfying those goals (122).

Such leaders show their importance and promise by creating future-altering visions for their companies. They become catalysts for needed change and far-ranging good in our world. What sets them apart from a Christian leader is the source of their vision. Ideally, a visionary pastor's vision should find its wellspring in God. In contrast, the key resource for vision in a secular leader's life is the leader himself.

The Importance of Vision

George Barna is recognized as one of the most prolific Christian authors on visionary leadership. He states, "My work with churches has led me to the conclusion that the single most important element in having an effective and life-changing ministry is to capture God's vision for your ministry" (Marketing 119). For Barna, vision is the leader's starting point. Vision cannot afford to be relegated as just one of the many important tasks set before a leader.

Barna sets vision at the very center of who the leader is and how he functions. "Vision is part of the heartbeat of a leader; it is the insight that motivates his actions, shapes his thinking, defines his leadership, and dictates his view of successful ministry" (Marketing 120). On the question of the importance of vision, everyone, both Christian and secular, agree that it is a top, if not, the top priority, of the leader. Therefore, the strategic value of this study cannot be minimized or depreciated.

Definition of Vision

Barna's definition of vision is standard fare in evangelical circles. I have chosen it as the working definition of vision for the purpose of this study: "Vision for ministry is a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants and is

based upon an accurate understanding of God, self, and circumstances" (Power of Vision 28).

Barna's definition breaks down into seven parts. *A clear mental image* conveys "a picture held in your mind's eye of the way things could or should be in the days ahead" (29). This is the leader's visual image of how he or she sees the future. A clear picture in the leader's mind is essential if others will be expected to catch the same vision. Vision is, first of all, a mental portrait of the future.

Preferable future suggests that the leader's vision entails change. The status quo is not in view; removing the status quo from the future is. Vision is working with the present state of things, even when the church is in good shape, and reaching toward even better conditions. "It focuses on thinking ahead rather than on dwelling upon or seeking to replicate the past" (30).

Imparted by God refers, again, to the source of one's vision. Envisioning is getting in touch with what God wants to accomplish through the leader in order to build his kingdom. Barna passionately believes that God's kingdom plans are "too important to him to allow people to lean on their own innate abilities and talents to develop half-baked schemes for reaching the world" (30).

Certainly God makes room for human creativity, giftedness, ability, insight, and intuitive design in the shaping of vision. But, in the final analysis, visionary leaders, if they are Godly leaders, obtain their ministry vision from God.

His chosen servants refers to those individuals God has called into leadership in his church. Along with a calling from God, they have received a gifting from God. God entrusts his vision for his church to called and gifted leaders. Vision lies within the domain of church leadership.

Based upon an accurate understanding of God reflects a realistic perspective upon vision. "God is listed first among the sources of insight and among those realities that we must seek to fully comprehend" (31). The visionary leader must first interact with the God of the universe and seek to know who he is and how he acts before turning his or her attention to the actual vision itself.

An accurate understanding of self comes next in understanding vision. This alludes to the visionary pastor's abilities, gifts, limitations, values, and desires. Vision "involves integrating (the leader's) personal abilities and limitations within God's plan to accomplish what needs to be done and how it can be accomplished through His chosen people" (31).

An accurate understanding of circumstances deeply roots all envisioning in reality. Vision is designed to be not an impossible dream, but a dream that is possible to attain. Visionary leaders work hard in order to establish a thorough knowledge of "existing and potential needs, conditions, competition, opportunities, barriers, and potential" that face the church (32). The operational environment within which one serves cannot be ignored.

Shawchuck and Heuser would agree with Barna on these last three components of his definition of vision. The three primary dimensions of vision according to them are: 1) An "upward" view toward God; 2) An "inward" view of oneself; and 3) An "outward" view of the circumstances (70-72).

In summary, the major difference between how corporate America defines vision and how the church defines vision, comes down to one word, namely, God. God is gladly welcomed into the picture by the church's visionary leaders as the primary source of their vision.

The Characteristics of Vision

Barna's nine characteristics of vision are similar to Nanus' eight properties of a good vision. For Barna, vision is inspiring, change-

oriented, challenging, empowering, long-term, customized, detailed, people-oriented, and reveals a promising future (Power 96-104).

Barna's contribution to this discussion comes at the point of people-oriented vision. This acts as a reminder of God's love for people. He created them, values them, sent his Son to die for them, and designed the church as a means for people to receive his love. Therefore, the vision he gives to his leaders will focus on how he wants to change the lives of people. "Organizational development is useful. Buildings serve a purpose. Programs are a means to an end. But the end itself is always related to changing the lives of people (Power 102). A true vision from God will in some way, shape, or form encompass the connection of people with God and God with people.

Mission Versus Vision

As with the secular literature of business/leadership, the church's literature on leadership differentiates between mission and vision. Mission is the broad-based definition of the reason for existence that undergirds everything the church does and stands for. On the other hand, vision is something future-based, detailed, and unique to the church's calling (Power 46). To illustrate, "making disciples" qualifies for a mission statement, while "becoming a host

church for monthly alternative music outreach concerts" is a vision statement. Another example, "become a church marked by awe-inspiring worship" points to mission, while "worship for forty-five minutes every Sunday morning using a worship ensemble, drama, and dance" reveals the worship vision.

Visionary Leadership Described

Barna writes that "a mark of a great leader is the ability not only to capture the vision, but also to articulate it and to cause people to fully embrace it" (Power 52). Inherent within Barna's description of a great leader, one would find Solomon's five basic elements of visionary leadership (see pgs. 24-25) and Nanus' four critical roles for effective visionary leadership (see pgs. 26-27).

The natural and acquired skills, abilities, and strengths that make for an exceptional Apple Computer CEO will also make for an exceptional visionary in Christian leadership. Much of the leadership terrain is the same in both worlds inspite of the obvious differences.

The Origins of Vision

Kouzes and Posner come to the conclusion that "intuition is the wellspring of vision." Although intuition can play a major role in vision formulation, it is an intuition informed by God for the visionary Christian leader. In order to be possessed of God's vision

for their work, pastors and leaders "must develop a 'clear eye' toward their own situation and a 'big ear' toward God. God does not speak to people out of a vacuum, but out of their concrete realities" (Shawchuck and Heuser 145). Thus, for Shawchuck and Heuser, the origins of vision are one's circumstances and relationship with God.

How one's relationship with God affects vision development is hinted at by Shawchuck and Heuser in the following sentences,

God tends to speak softly--in nudges and hunches, in a gentle turning of one's will toward God's desires. In a frenzied world such as ours, many people never develop the capacity to sustain the silence and openness necessary to transparently assess their situation and its potentialities or to enter into the silence where God's still, small voice may be heard (145).

The God who speaks is the God who imparts vision to his listening servants. The prayer life of the visionary pastor is critical for listening to this speaking God. In vision development, prayer is the time when God can be asked to speak, convey impressions, and give guidance. Barna conveys this need for listening prayer as well:

A vital part of knowing (God's) vision is to be still and attentive long enough to hear Him. God seems to speak most clearly to Christian leaders when they are inactive; that is, when they have made a conscious effort to allow Him to lead the conversation and to impart wisdom (Power 90).

What an awesome experience it is to come to the realization that God wants to impart his vision to his servant leaders for their ministries. Part of the concern that lies behind this study is the fear that visionary pastors can too easily forget this wonderful truth and become preoccupied by the findings of social science and the marketing people as they strive to create a vision of greatness for their churches. In other words, leaders can become so bound by the circumstances from which they are attempting to form vision, that they can stumble past the most important source for their vision. In the name of God, God can be unconsciously or consciously swept aside.

Theological Underpinnings

The theological underpinnings of this study of visionary leadership provide substantial insights and perspectives to understanding how God communicates vision and how leaders discern this communication. A solid theological foundation must undergird the visionary process.

Creation

All forms of life and creativity begin with God. As Genesis 1-2 reveals, God is the creator of the world and everything in it, including humanity. One look at the world surrounding us illustrates

that God's creation is rich in variety and diversity. As such, God reveals himself in numerous ways through his creation.

Genesis 1:26 teaches that God created man and woman in his image and likeness. While much debate has gone on over the years as to what this means, Millard Erickson believes that, at least,

the image is the powers of personality which make man, like God, a being capable of interacting with other persons, of thinking and reflecting, and of willing freely. They are (the powers of personality) those qualities of God which, reflected in man, make worship, personal interaction, and work possible (2: 513-14).

Part of God's work is that of creating. And with humanity formed in the image and likeness of God, part of what it means to be human is to work, and more specifically, to work with respect to creativity.

The work of fashioning vision is a work that requires creative powers, powers such as those that first led God to create this vast, mysterious, and wonderful universe. God's vision for his creation includes the work of reconciliation, which is brought about by the life, death, and resurrection of his son, Jesus Christ. When visionary pastors and leaders, in humble dependence upon God, strive to give birth to a vision for their ministries that flows from the reconciliatory vision of God, they are simply expressing one component of what it means to be created in the image and likeness

of God. Because God is a creative visionary, those who are created in his image have the potential to be creative visionaries as well. To be involved in the work of vision-making is to be, at least in part, God-like.

Providence of God

The providence of God is defined by Thomas Oden as,

The expression of the divine will, power, and goodness through which the Creator preserves creatures, cooperates with what is coming to pass through their actions, and guides creatures in their long-range purposes (270).

One dimension of God's providence, according to Oden, is

God guides and governs all events and circumstances, even free, self-determining agents, overruling the regrettable consequences of freedom and directing everything toward its appropriate end for the glory of God" (271).

Such an understanding of Divine Providence is indispensable for coming to grips with how the visionary process is orchestrated between God and his pastors and leaders.

Events, circumstances, and people (self-determining agents) figure prominently in the visionary process. A strong belief in the providence of God leads one to entertain the fact that God does guide and govern this process. What may appear to be unexplainable coincidences are, in fact, God's way of remaining incognito: a book

unexpectedly arrives in the mail at the exact same time you are in search of its contents; while eating lunch alone in a restaurant, a pastor friend from the area suddenly walks in the door, sits down to eat lunch with you, and brings up a topic of conversation that dovetails with a piece of the vision puzzle that you have been struggling with all week; while attending a seminar, the speaker presents an idea that coincides with a dream you have been considering for your ministry; or you visit a church on vacation and pick up a ministry brochure on the information table that immediately sets off lights and sirens in your visionary heart for a similar ministry in your own church.

The providence of God assures the visionary leader that nothing happens by chance or mistake. In a manner that is often times beyond the comprehension and understanding of those involved, God is arranging and rearranging events, circumstances, and people in order to bring about his higher purposes through the visionary goals and actions of his servant leaders.

Revelation

Scripture teaches that God has revealed himself to his creation by means of three different modalities: historical events, divine speech, and the incarnation (Erickson 1: 181). God's revelation is

historical, propositional, and personal in nature. The incarnation, in particular, is the most complete modality of revelation. According to Erickson, Jesus' life and speech were a special revelation of God (1:190). Thus we find Jesus referred to as the Word in John 1:1, God's primary avenue of communication with his creation.

Therefore, God is a speaking, communicating, and revealing God. Through creation, history, scripture, and Jesus himself, God has clearly manifested, not only his will and ways, but his person and work. Visionary pastors and leaders who possess this understanding of God will find reason to rejoice and be filled with hope. A major part of the nature of God is to speak, communicate, and reveal his person and will. Church leaders can be confident that God still speaks today and desires to unveil his purpose and plans to those who are seeking to bring forth his kingdom. The testimony of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is that God speaks to his people (Blackaby and King 35).

People of vision should pay close attention to the world around them. God may choose to reveal something of his will through the arenas of creation and history. People of vision should also pay close attention to scripture. Scripture is God's revealed word to us. The word through which God has spoken is the same word through which

God continues to speak. And people of vision should pay close attention to Jesus. The indwelling Christ speaks by his Spirit as visionary pastors and leaders open their minds, wills, and hearts to follow, serve, and obey him.

Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus who is active in the world, the church, and the individual believer. More specifically, for the visionary leader, God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal himself, his purposes, and his ways (Blackaby and King 35). The Holy Spirit, therefore, ties together in the life of the visionary leader what has been written above about creation, providence, and revelation.

The Holy Spirit plays a pivotal role in prayer. According to Gordon Fee, “(prayer) is God siding up to his people, and by his own empowering presence, the Spirit of God himself, brings forth prayer that is in keeping with his will and ways” (God’s Empowering Presence 866-67). Prayer is the visionary leader’s pipeline to the Holy Spirit. Through the practice of Spirit-driven prayer, pastors and leaders are put in touch with God’s vision for their ministries.

Community

In his treatment of the church Thomas Oden writes, “No one can simply become a Christian by oneself, or worship wholly by oneself, or be converted by oneself, or preach to oneself, or serve only oneself” (3: 281). In view of the subject of this dissertation, the following can also be said: no one can function as an effective and Spirit-driven visionary by oneself. The church exists as an assembly, a community of like-minded believers in, and followers of, Jesus Christ. Believers are not called out separately to live out a merely individuated relation to God but are called together and bound together as a people (Oden 3: 281).

Therefore, however one understands the nature of vision formulation, room must be left for God to work through, not just one individual, but the whole community of believers. In Ephesians 4 and I Corinthians 12-14, Paul lays out for us the metaphor of the church as the Body of Christ with Christ himself functioning as the Head of this Body. As the Head, time, study, and experience seem to indicate that Christ seeds his Body with visionary components that, once brought together, help to form a complete picture of the vision. Practically speaking, the fleshing out of the metaphor of the church as the Body of Christ, means that there is a high probability that

there is more vision in any church that has biblically literate and functioning people in it than can possibly be put to work.

Leaders, then, are stewards, not only of the visionary notions God gives to them, but also of those he gives to the people who surround them (members of the leadership team, spouses, pastoral staff, trusted peers and colleagues). A leader with proven visionary gifts and skills will value a strong and dynamic ecclesiology that recognizes the church as the embodied life of Christ in the world today. As such, leaders will expect Christ to reveal portions of his emerging vision through the lives of those who make up the body of Christ. A healthy biblical theology of the church will encompass visionary input coming from both those who are recognized leaders within the church and those who may simply be members of no rank and file in the church.

The next major section of the literature review probes the theme of spiritual discernment and listening to God in light of its importance in vision development. The goal is to begin to identify some constructs by which the Holy Spirit speaks to his people today.

Discernment and Listening to God

The assumption is made that visionary pastors and leaders seek the mind of God while in the midst of forming vision for their

ministries. Ascertaining the voice of the Holy Spirit comprises the spiritual component to vision planning. Envisioning and listening to God are where spiritual formation and leadership practice converge, the intersection where scripture, demographic studies, facilities, finances, pastoral staffs, surveys, gift assessments, dreams, and prayer meet head on. This intersection must be seen as the critical point where plans can move from an information-driven perspective to a Spirit-driven one. Doors can be opened to allow the Holy Spirit into the process as its Guide and Leader.

Vision developed solely by human beings, as innovative, intelligent, inspiring, far-reaching, and powerful as it might be, suffers from human limitations. According to Barna, "(Such) vision is limited by personal abilities and capabilities. It is filtered through societal and cultural boundaries and expectations. It is sometimes constrained by communal bonds" (Power of Vision 71). And, foremost, it lacks a spiritual element that allows God's mind to be brought into the picture.

The purpose of this study is to identify ways in which visionary leaders in the Kingdom of God hear or discern the voice of the Holy Spirit in the creation of ministry vision. Specifically, the thrust of this study is to pinpoint the work of the Holy Spirit in the

life of the visionary leader while in the thick of vision formulation. Our concern is not to clarify how the Holy Spirit works in the lives of others on the leadership team during this process, as important and critical to a successful vision as that is, but how he works in the life of the Christian leader or pastor. With this in mind, we now turn our attention to the literature of spiritual discernment and listening to God.

Definition of Discernment

According to Parker Palmer, all Christians have an inner, divine light that supplies them with the guidance they need. This light is the indwelling presence of God's Spirit. "The presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts means that no one is devoid of certain basic elements of discernment. Discernment is a gift of the Spirit. All are gifted to a greater or lesser degree" (Yeomans 3, 5). Discernment, therefore, is a spiritual endeavor that has as its intention the seeking and finding of God's will. All Christians practice discernment throughout their lifetimes for a myriad of questions, problems, and decisions. Some engage in it with a high degree of deliberateness while others do so with a far lesser degree of intentionality or consciousness. Green succinctly defines discernment as the "art of interpreting God's word to us and his call for us" (Opening to God 48).

Three presuppositions of genuine discernment are suggested by Green (Weeds Among the Wheat 63): 1) a desire to do God's will in the concrete, confused situations of life; 2) an openness to be taught by, and led by, the Lord; this manifests itself in an openness to God where he is allowed to be the sovereign of one's life and plans; and 3) a growing understanding of the knowledge of God. By this Green means a biblical sense of experiential knowledge of God's ways and love.

To apply this to visionary pastors, the vision that they pursue must be one in which they covet God's vision as opposed to their own or someone else's. To receive God's vision, they must be open to God's leading, even if he takes them down roads and turns that are unexpected and mysterious. And their pursuing and receiving of God's vision must take place within a spiritual life that is growing deeper and deeper in an experiential knowledge of being led and directed by God's Spirit.

For Green, discernment is the "meeting point of prayer and action" (Marketplace 69). He calls discernment the more technical term for people who pray for guidance. Discernment endeavors to discover what God wants of someone in very specific and concrete

situations. And for Green, this always takes place in God's peace and usually in a slow manner (Open To God 51).

Larkin brings us to an insightful summary of discernment: "Discernment is not one discrete act in the spiritual life, but rather the whole spiritual endeavor. (It is) spirituality in the concrete, because spirituality is precisely the Spirit acting within us and discernment is the awareness of that action" (9). As such, discernment is a life work, a life-long discipline.

For the visionary pastor or leader, discernment is listening to the speaking voice of God's Spirit, the voice that speaks both from within the heart, and from within the external circumstances surrounding one's life and ministry. The veil between nature and grace, between the seen and unseen, the material and the spiritual, is mysteriously removed by discernment. All of the vision process, the prayer as well as the future forecasts, are under the hand of God. Spiritual discernment helps the pastor to "see" God's fingerprints throughout the envisioning process. Discernment involves listening to the delicate intersection of the human heart, with its desires and dreams, and the vast and silent mystery that is God (Wright 11).

In Search of Guidance

The title for this section is borrowed from Dallas Willard's book on developing a conversational relationship with God. Willard's book is about divine guidance, listening for God's voice, and then responding and obeying. The material of this section comes from Willard's book as well.

The God Who Speaks

Scripture reveals a God who speaks to his creation. Beginning with his conversation with Adam and Eve in Genesis, the Bible portrays God as the speaking God. Of Jesus Christ, John writes in his gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (1:1). As the human manifestation of God, Jesus the Word communicated God's love, acceptance, and forgiveness to humanity. Jesus "spoke" God's word by both his speech and his deeds. After his resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven, the Holy Spirit was sent to indwell the church. Acts is the church's record of how God continued to speak to his people by the Holy Spirit.

Does God still speak to his people today? "There is nothing in Scripture to indicate that the biblical modes of God's guidance to humans are superseded and abolished by the presence of the church

or by the close of the scriptural canon" (Willard 103). Willard goes on to make the point that with the close of the canon, nothing more need be said about the general principles and doctrines that constitute the substance of Christian faith and practice. God has nothing else to communicate that will enlarge or enlighten what is presently found in scripture.

But beyond this, it must be pointed out that the Christian life is not just a life of holding particular beliefs about the Bible. A life of personal, intelligent interaction with God is displayed throughout the pages of Scripture (106). The followers of Jesus Christ are called to live this kind of life. For such a life, divine guidance is required to provide light and direction on those issues, questions, problems, or concerns that are not directly addressed by Scripture itself. In regards to vision, the Bible provides ample instruction about who the church is and what the church is to be about. But with regards to specific vision for specific churches, the Bible has far less to say. Further direction is dependent upon discernment and divine guidance.

The presence of God in a believer's life is a presence which becomes personal as God speaks to those whom he loves. Willard illustrates this point by referring to church history:

When reviewing the ages, we consider a Saint Augustine, a Saint Francis of Assisi, a Martin Luther, a George Fox, a John Wesley, a Charles Spurgeon, a D. L. Moody, a Frank Laubach, an A. W. Tozer, or a Henri Nouwen, we see in each case a person for whom personal communion and communication with God are regarded both as life-changing episodes and as daily bread (Willard 11).

These people heard and recognized the speaking voice of God in their lives on a consistent basis. They experienced God's direct communication or divine guidance.

How God Speaks

If God is a speaking God who reveals himself and his will to his people, the question arises: How does God speak? We now turn our attention to six ways in which people are addressed by God within the biblical record: 1) Phenomenon plus voice; 2) Supernatural messenger or angel; 3) Dreams and visions; 4) Audible voice; 5) The human voice; and 6) The "human spirit" or the "still small voice" (Willard 93). These six ways are richly represented throughout the pages of Scripture.

Phenomenon plus voice is the first category of divine-human encounters that Willard mentions. Moses was told by God to lead Israel out of Egypt while standing before the burning bush (Exodus 3:3-6). In another Old Testament example, the nation of Israel was

called into a covenant relationship with God by God's own voice, while they stood before the mountain of God that was ablaze with both darkness and fire (Deuteronomy 5:23). The word of the Lord came to the prophet Ezekiel (1-2) "in the context of a meteorological display that defies all but poetic description" (Willard 93).

Looking at the New Testament record, the baptism of Jesus was marked by the voice of God ("This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased") as well as by what appeared to be the Spirit of God descending upon Jesus in the form of a dove (Matthew 3:16-17). In the book of Acts, Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus entailed an audible voice ("Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?") and a bright light from heaven that literally blinded Paul for a short time (Acts 9:3-8).

In these examples, and many others that could be given, the physical phenomenon is designed to arouse one's attention for the purpose of hearing the voice of God. The physical phenomenon is visible while the source of the speaking voice remains unseen.

The next category of divine-human encounter is the *supernatural messenger or angel*. The word angel means "messenger." Angels in the Bible are supernatural beings sent by God on a divine mission. They are avenues of God's communication

and guidance. Whether it is an angel present in the Biblical narrative, or the Lord himself, is not always clear. One example of such a case can be found in Genesis 18 and the three men who appeared to Abraham.

Following are a number of instances where angels appeared to human beings in Scripture: Balaam (Numbers 22:22-35); Gideon (Judges 6:11-24); the parents of Samson (Judges 13); Isaiah (Isaiah 6:6-13); Daniel (Daniel 9:20-27); Joseph (Matthew 1:20-25); Zacharias (Luke 1:11-20); Mary (Luke 1:26-38), and the women at the empty tomb (Matthew 28:2-5).

Dreams and visions are the next category. Dreams and visions are treated together. Gustave Oehler points out that the difference between a dream and a vision is not sharply marked out in the Bible. Oehler concluded that dreams are regarded as a lower form of communication from God than visions. Both are unusual states of consciousness by which God reveals himself and his ways (Willard 96), although they involve some degree of a trancelike condition, a certain detachment from actual surroundings, that marks them off from ordinary waking consciousness (Willard 95).

Examples of both would include: Jacob's ladder (Genesis 28); Joseph (Genesis 37), Joseph's jailmates (Genesis 40), Pharaoh (Genesis

41); Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4); Joseph (Matthew 1-2); Ananias (Acts 9); and Peter (Acts 10).

Next we come to an *audible voice*. "However we are to understand the mechanisms involved, it is clear that on occasion God has addressed human beings through what was experienced as an audible voice with no visible speaker present" (Willard 96). The story of the young Samuel is such an occasion (I Samuel 3). It took Samuel three times of hearing God's voice, along with spiritual direction from the priest, Eli, before Samuel recognized the voice as the Lord's.

God speaking through an audible voice alone appears to be a rare occurrence in Scripture. As we have already seen, an audible voice coupled with some form of physical phenomenon is more common.

According to Willard, *the human voice* is the most common means of communication between God and humankind in the Bible and the history of the church. For his explanation of this category, Willard writes the following:

In such cases God and the person "used" speak conjointly. And it may be that the one spoken *to* is also the one spoken *through*. The word is at once the Word of God, God speaking, and the word of a human being who also is speaking. The two do not exclude each

other any more than humanity and divinity exclude each other in the person of Jesus Christ. Now we may say with assurance that this action in union with the human voice and human language is the primary *objective* way in which God addresses us. That is, of all the modes in which the message concerned comes from *outside* the mind or personality of the person addressed, in the most common of cases it comes through another human being (97-98).

Willard's point is that God speaks to and through his human vessels and the Bible is full of many such examples.

The Biblical record would indicate that God's *modus operandi* often includes using instruments who are weak and inarticulate. Moses comes to mind in the Old Testament ("O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue." [Exodus 3:10]). The apostle Paul himself hints that he was not an eloquent speaker in his Corinthian correspondence (he came to them not with "superiority of speech or of wisdom" [I Corinthians 2:1-5]). These two, Moses and Paul, two of the people responsible for most of the human authorship of the Bible, were unskilled and weak with words. Out of their weaknesses they were forced to cling to God as the source of their words and message. The Word of God "can and does come to us through the living personality, mind, and body of other human beings as they, in unison with God, speak to us (Willard 101).

The *human spirit or the still small voice* is the sixth and final category of the divine-human encounter. God can speak to us through our own thoughts and feelings, whether they be directed toward ourselves, others, or the events surrounding us. For Willard,

this is the primary *subjective* mode through which God addresses us. That is, of all the ways in which the message concerned comes from *within* the experience of the person addressed--such as dreams and visions or other mental states--it most commonly comes, for those who are living in harmony with God, in the form of their own thoughts and the attendant feelings (102).

With this sixth category, self-knowledge and self-awareness are heightened by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Through our thoughts and feelings, God can reveal truth to us about ourselves and our world. Here we confront one of the fruits of our union with God via the reality of the indwelling Christ in our lives.

God Speaks Today

As a postscript to Willard's six ways in which people are addressed by God in the Biblical record, the position of this study is that God continues to speak through these same modes to people today. No foundation in scripture appears to support the standpoint that God no longer reveals himself in these ways. Any or all of these types of communication might still be employed by God, without minimizing the final form of scripture which he has given to guide

and direct his church. The record of church history and of contemporary experience clearly indicates that God's children continue to find themselves addressed by God in ways common to Biblical characters.

The fact that God still speaks today becomes a matter of primary importance for visionary leaders and their ministries. God cannot be placed in a box. He will reveal himself and his mind in the visionary process as he chooses, whether by the still small voice, another human being, a dream or vision, or an angel. If Willard is correct in identifying the human voice as the primary objective way in which God addresses us, and the still small voice as the primary subjective way in which God speaks to us, then attention must be paid to these two modes of hearing from God as vision is formulated and articulated.

How Can We Be Sure God Has Spoken

A brief word is in order regarding the confirmation of God's guidance. The need to test our perceptions cannot be overlooked. Huggett provides this advice, "If you believe God has told you to do something, ask him to confirm it to you three times: through his word, through circumstances, and through other people who may know nothing of the situation" (141). This counsel is not meant to

function as law but as a good rule of thumb to follow in an area where subjectivity can be blind and dangerous.

More advice is offered by F. B. Meyer who writes of "three lights" one can follow to confirm God's leading in his book, The Secret of Guidance:

The circumstances of our daily life are to us an infallible indication of God's will, when they concur with the inward promptings of the Spirit and with the Word of God. So long as they are stationary, wait. When you must act, they will open, and a way will be made through oceans and rivers, wastes and rocks (Willard 182-183).

These four points of reference found in Huggett and Meyer are common in almost all discussions of divine guidance. When these four point in the same direction, strong consideration should be given to the guidance that they are asking one to follow.

Scripture is the starting point. Meyer makes this abundantly clear: "The written Word is the wire along which the voice of God will certainly come to you if the heart is hushed and the attention fixed" (Willard 196). Bockmuehl would concur, "Holy Scripture is the starting point and measuring rod for individual insight" (149). God will not guide someone to do or be something that stands in contradiction to his revealed Word. Individual insight must always be in agreement with scripture.

Circumstances, as well as scripture, cannot be ignored.

Circumstances compose the boundaries out of which pastors and leaders live their lives and serve their God. As Sovereign, God is able to shape one's circumstances and enlist them as a means of his speaking. Since all of life is spiritual, the concrete realities of our lives hold some bearing in relationship to God's will for our lives.

The promptings of God's Spirit also carry a certain weight or force. If such impressions are the primary subjective way in which God speaks to us today, then learning to detect these impressions becomes a practice that will reap many dividends.

Finally, however, *the confirmation of another person*, or persons, complete this list of factors that demand our attention for confirming God's leading in our lives. If God speaking through other people is the primary objective way, apart from scripture, that God speaks to us today, then the feedback and counsel of others is too significant to dismiss.

These, then, are the four factors that one should consider in making a responsible judgment or decision about what one is to do. For the visionary Christian leader, scripture, circumstances, divine hunches, and the opinions of trusted advisors are essential for testing the form and content of one's visionary perspectives. God uses each

of these in divine guidance. Each are a tool in the hand of the Holy Spirit. Together they call for spiritual discernment, the Spirit-inspired ability to "read the signs" of one's leadership and vision.

Acts As a Paradigm for Visionary Leadership

Up to this point, we have looked at visionary leadership both from the vantage point and experience of the business/corporate world and from that of the church. We have sought to clearly define vision and set it in its high-ranking leadership perch. Next, the theological foundations of visionary leadership were explored. Space was then given to the place of discernment and listening to God, in hopes of discovering how visionary pastors might hear the voice of the Holy Spirit so that they might become Spirit-driven visionaries as leaders of their congregations.

In this section we turn our attention to the book of Acts. Acts is our Biblical paradigm for Spirit-driven visionary leadership. Illustrated within the narrative are the truths and principles of visionary leadership presented in earlier sections. Acts holds within its pages insights for learning how the Spirit wants to work in the lives of pastors who are gifted as visionaries.

Preliminary Considerations

Before investigating the book of Acts as a paradigm for visionary leadership, two preliminary considerations call for attention: the delimitations of the book and today's dilemma of Scripture and Spirit.

The Delimitations of the Book of Acts

Limiting our Biblical study to the book of Acts is based upon the following statement: Acts, at least in part, is a record of how church leaders heard the voice of the Holy Spirit while they were in the throes of ministry and leadership. Therefore, Acts directly relates to the purpose of this study, which is to identify the different ways in which visionary pastors and leaders hear and/or discern the voice of the Holy Spirit in the process of formulating vision for their churches and ministries.

Even though any study of leadership in the book of Acts must be viewed as a "descriptive" study (one that describes what occurred), as opposed to a "prescriptive" study (one that prescribes certain actions and mandates), Acts certainly contains "normative" resource material for leadership consideration. Found within the descriptions of the Holy Spirit's work in the lives of leaders in the book of Acts are principles that transcend space, time, and culture.

In other words, they open a window on how the Holy Spirit potentially works within leaders and leadership today.

A second reason for delimiting this study to the book of Acts is based upon the fact that Acts sits in a transitional place in the New Testament canon. Acts is a narration of the progress of the church between the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus and the epistle versions of a church approaching early forms of institutionalization. The implication of the above statement is that the church in Acts is experiencing times of change, flux, crisis, and turbulence. The old accepted forms of the past (synagogue and temple, priest and prophet) are giving way to the new and unknown forms for the future (synagogue and house churches, apostle and evangelist).

The 1990s are turbulent times for churches and church leadership. Peter Drucker observes that our era of rapid change is forcing business planners and managers to be more responsive to people's felt needs. He also observes that thriving churches are ones that have discovered creative ways to address a multiplicity of human interests (George 17). The volume of change facing the church is greater today than at any other time in its history. And the pace of change today is faster than at any other time in the church's

history. Technological advances and the information age are upon us. In their wake, the church will never be the same again.

Add to these changes still others. Post-Christian America is a reality that gains in power and influence yearly. Moral absolutes are quickly fading off into the sunset. Demographic studies highlight at least five generations of Americans who sit in church pews every Sunday, each with their own unique formative experiences and memories: the G. I. Generation (those born between 1901-1924); the Silent Generation (1925-1942); the Baby Boomers (1943-1960); the Generation Xers (1961-1981); and the Echo Boom Generation (1982-present) (Generations 96). Metaphorically speaking, one size of church will no longer fit all.

These are just a few of the changes that could be mentioned. If the 1990s are a time of rapid and unceasing change for the church, then the book of Acts can function as a picture of dynamic Spirit-driven leadership in a season of change.

One last reason for limiting our research to the book of Acts is suggested by Bockmuehl:

The early disciples were careful not to do the planning for their Lord. The book of Acts make clear that planning expressly falls under the department and competence of the Holy Spirit. We can attempt to spread and strengthen the faith by our own effort, or

we can allow ourselves to become part of God's greater design (79).

Within the New Testament, Acts is a natural choice for studying visionary leadership that takes its clues from the Holy Spirit. If ever a group of leaders were Spirit-driven, one only has to look as far as the book of Acts to find them.

The obvious problems of confining our study to the book of Acts are two in number: First, we fail to discover what the rest of scripture has to contribute to the purpose of this study; and second, we face the danger of forming a leadership mandate from material that is descriptive in nature rather than prescriptive.

Today's Dilemma of Scripture and Spirit

I am indebted to Klaus Bockmuehl and his book, Listening to the God Who Speaks, for the following insights. In relationship to the Holy Spirit, Bockmuehl defines our dilemma as that of Reformational orthodoxy, on the one hand, and the Enlightenment, on the other hand. Reformational orthodoxy fails to present a biblical balance of scripture and Spirit, objective truth and subjective apprehension (135). According to Bockmuehl, Reformational orthodoxy stresses Scripture at the expense of Spirit, the objective at the expense of the subjective: "Subjectivity undoubtedly is a prerogative of the

Christian faith, which affirms a personal God-human relationship and not just subscription to a collectively held package of dogma or nominal participation in a religious or social institution" (135).

The Enlightenment fallacy is just the opposite imbalance. It reduces the Holy Spirit to human subjectivity. "Without equal emphasis on the objective, however--without the common spiritual property of the fellowship that is safeguarded by the Holy Spirit--the individualism propagated by the Enlightenment philosophy will produce appalling examples of immoralism and anarchy" (136). Scripture cannot be sacrificed to our subjective whims and notions.

Thus, Bockmuehl postulates "two impoverished versions of the faith." His solution is to return to the stance held by the church before the split over Reformed orthodoxy and the Enlightenment. Bockmuehl calls for a recovery of a third way, "a synthesis, in which what is objectively given, scripture, is personally accepted through the Holy Spirit" (137).

Bockmuehl's "third way" casts a consequential shadow over this study of visionary pastors and their openness to the God who speaks. According to Bockmuehl, "When man listens, God speaks. We are not out to tell God. We are out to let God tell us. The lesson the world most needs is the art of listening to God" (8). This "third way" is the

way of divine guidance or the discernment of God's voice in our lives and circumstances.

Such guidance is meant to be normative for visionary pastors. "Definite, accurate, adequate information can come from the mind of God to the minds of men" (8). Scripture and Spirit, objective and subjective avenues of God's revelation, inform and guide pastors of vision, so Bockmuehl would say. For those who lean to either side, the scripture or the Spirit side, the middle way of scripture and Spirit is the way of the book of Acts and the way of visionary pastors seeking to follow God and lead their churches in the 1990s.

The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts

The book of Acts is divided into twenty-eight chapters. The Holy Spirit is mentioned in seventeen of these twenty-eight chapters, for a total of fifty-seven references. The promised Holy Spirit of Joel 2:28-29 is poured out at Pentecost in the second chapter of Acts. Bockmuehl refers to this prophecy and fulfillment as the "generalization" or the "democratization" of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Originally, the prophetic experience was available only to the king and prophet. But with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the experience "appears to have been decisively expanded to include all God's people" (28).

The book of Acts confirms that "all God's people" receive the gift of the Spirit. This gift may manifest itself in prophesy, dreams, and visions. Every strategic leader in the book is defined in terms of their experience with the Spirit. Each major advancement of the church comes under the guidance of the Spirit. Some scholars view the book as "the acts of the Holy Spirit accomplished through the apostles and followers of Christ."

Stories of Divine Guidance

The book of Acts reverberates with story after story of divine guidance. These stories hold ministry and leadership clues for the perceptive visionary pastor or leader. After a number of these "Acts stories" have been reviewed, an attempt will be made to summarize their abiding principles for Spirit-driven leadership today.

Philip. The noteworthy sequence of stories containing divine guidance begins in the eighth chapter of Acts with the story of Philip. Philip, one of the deacons of the young church in Jerusalem, was minding his own business when "an angel of the Lord" said to him, "Go south to the road--the desert road--that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza" (8:26). He obeys and meets a chariot containing the minister of finance for the Queen of Ethiopia, who is reading the book of Isaiah while traveling.

"The Spirit" now speaks to Philip and says to him, "Go to that chariot and stay near it" (8:29). The angel of the Lord begins Philip's experience of divine guidance and the Spirit concludes it. The story comes to a close with the Ethiopian eunuch coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Philip baptizes him, and before we know it, "the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away" (8:39).

This story contains two divine commands ("go south to the road" and "go to that chariot") that were immediately obeyed by Philip. What followed as a result? "The church did not simply stumble upon the idea of evangelizing the Gentiles; it did so in accordance with God's deliberate purpose" (Marshall 161).

Paul and Ananias. Chapter 9 reports the conversion of Paul (Saul in the chapter). He is on his way to Damascus to persecute the Lord's disciples and take them to Jerusalem as prisoners. As he approaches Damascus, he is blinded by a bright light and hears a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (9:4). Saul was told to go into Damascus and wait for further instructions.

The Lord spoke to a man named Ananias through a vision. Ananias receives Paul's exact address, a description of his present situation, and a command to visit him. Meanwhile, by this time, Paul has received a corresponding vision of Ananias. After some

reluctance, Ananias obeys. He lays his hands on Paul who is immediately filled with the Holy Spirit, given back his eyesight, and baptized.

This story contains a "phenomenon plus voice" and a double vision. Immediate obedience, again, is an important factor in this account of divine guidance.

Peter and Cornelius. The Peter-Cornelius story takes up almost all of chapters 10-11. The Holy Spirit is mentioned a total of ten times, composing the highest concentration of Spirit references in the complete book.

God speaks to two people at once (similar to Paul and Ananias) in Cornelius' conversion through Peter. The story begins with an angel visiting Cornelius in a vision. He is told to send for Peter who is in Joppa. Cornelius obeyed and sent for Peter. As the servants of Cornelius approached Joppa, Peter himself sees a vision that plays three times before his eyes with the byline, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean" (10:15). Peter's vision carried the message that both Jews and Gentiles were acceptable to God. "While Peter ponders the meaning of this vision, the Spirit tells him directly that three men have arrived to fetch him and he is to go with them" (Bockmuehl 74).

All the pieces of divine direction fit together in this remarkable picture. Peter obeys and explains the gospel to the household of Cornelius. The Holy Spirit falls upon these Gentiles and the whole house is baptized. Again, as in the case of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, the evangelization of the Gentiles is by God's deliberate plan, executed through his servants who follow his signs of divine guidance.

Two factors appear to govern the two visions of Cornelius and Peter. In the case of devout and God-fearing Cornelius, his prayers to God are a prelude to the vision. They act as a condition to a divine message. In the case of Peter, the vision comes to him while he is at prayer. God guides those who are seeking him in prayer. It can also be said of Peter that he received two forms of divine communication in this story: that of the vision and that of inward guidance that came directly from the Spirit ["the Spirit said to him" in 10:19] (Marshall 187).

Paul and Barnabas sent out by the Spirit. Paul and Barnabas, the first missionaries sent out from the church in Antioch, "are sent out in an action initiated by the Holy Spirit" (Bockmuehl 74). During a time of prayer and fasting, "The Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'" (13:2).

We are not told here "how" the Holy Spirit spoke to the church. Did he speak through one of the prophets? Did God speak "through the Spirit's witness in their hearts and minds" (Stott 217)?

Stott points to this story as an example of healthy balance in divine guidance. Rather than an example of individualism (a claim of direct personal guidance by the Holy Spirit without any reference to the church) or institutionalism (decision-making done by the church without reference to the Spirit), one finds in this story the middle ground between both (Stott 218). The Spirit working in the lives of individuals through the church is the guidance triad found in this chapter of the book of Acts.

The spread of the gospel to Europe. According to Bochnmuehl, "The most extraordinary directives given by the Holy Spirit surround the spread of the gospel to Europe" (74). The story is found in Acts 16. Paul and his companions are preaching in Phrygia and Galatia. They have "been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia" (16:6). Therefore, they turned a different direction and tried to enter Bithynia, "but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to" (16:7). Following these two prohibitions, Paul receives a night vision "of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us'" (16:9). Paul and his

traveling companions left at once for Macedonia, "concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them" (16:10).

How the Spirit kept Paul from going to Asia and Bithynia is not stated. Marshall suggests that God used either an inner compulsion or perhaps a prophetic utterance by one of the party. Stott submits that divine guidance might have come through an inward impression or outward circumstances, such as illness, Jewish opposition or a legal ban. From this story Stott helps us to discover that guidance can be both negative (don't go) and positive (go), circumstantial (Holy Spirit kept them from going) and rational (Paul "concluded" that God wanted them to preach in Macedonia), and personal (the vision came to Paul) and corporate (Paul and his companions mulled over the date and "concluded" they were to leave for Macedonia).

Paul's "resolve in the Spirit." In Corinth (18:9-11), during a time of confusion and turmoil, the Lord spoke in Paul in a vision, assured him of his continuing presence, and told him to remain in Corinth and preach the gospel. The rest of the book of Acts is a record of Paul's movements under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Principles of Divine Guidance

In this section an attempt is made to spell out principles of divine guidance. These principles come from an inductive study of

the stories of divine guidance found in the book of Acts. Common characteristics of divine communication lifted from the narratives in Acts are believed to have practical application for Spirit-driven visionaries today. These implications are shared following each principle of divine guidance.

First, the subject-agent of divine guidance: *God uses a number of different subject-agents in his communication with people.* Divine guidance comes from an angel of the Lord (8:26), a voice (10:13), the Lord himself (10:4), the Holy Spirit (8:29; 10:19), or a vision (9:10; 10:11). Often communication is accompanied by a vision of some kind. In the book of Acts, a vision never occurs, however, without verbal communication (Bockmuehl 76). Sometimes the communication seems to take the form of a conversation, as in the case of Cornelius. When the Holy Spirit is mentioned, it is assumed that he speaks through an inner voice. Another point worth noting is that within a story, the agency of divine guidance can change. For instance, from an angel to the Spirit (8:26, 29) and from a voice to the Spirit (10:13, 19).

Implication for visionary pastors and leaders: *In addition to expecting God to speak to them through his written Word, they likewise need to cultivate an openness to hearing God speak through*

means such as angels, voices, dreams, visions, and the inner voice of the Holy Spirit. None of these extra-Biblical agents of divine communication can be guaranteed to occur. The fact remains, though, that God may choose to speak to pastors through one of these divine agents at certain strategic times in the pastor's life and ministry. A closed mind to the supernatural may result in missing important components of God's guidance for vision.

Second, addressees or recipients of divine guidance: *God speaks to a mixture of different people in vision formulation.* God speaks to a variety of people in the guidance stories of the book of Acts: apostles, a deacon (Philip), a Christ follower (Ananias), "a devout and God-fearing" Gentile (Cornelius), and even unnamed prophesying believers in several congregations. They are called by their first names. The divine direction is personal (directed at their lives and not someone else's) and immediate. "Receiving instructions for others seems to have its place only when leading others to faith (e.g. Ananias for Paul; Peter for Cornelius; Philip for the Ethiopian)", according to Bockmuehl (77). In the church language of today, both ordained and lay people receive divine guidance.

Implication for visionary pastors: *The visionary pastor should not view themselves as the sole recipient of God's divine*

communication. Although this study is directed to the question of how the Christian leader hears the voice of God in vision formulation, this is not to conclude that God only discloses his mind to the church or ministry leaders. In this case, the visionary pastor or leader needs discernment with respect to wading through visionary input from church leaders and others who may carry an important role in the process. As DePree states, "A leader doesn't have to have a gift for vision or be the author of the vision. Vision can come from a number of sources" (Leadership 18). Pastors responsible for vision must be aware of these "number of sources."

The case can be made from the book of Acts, and all of the Bible, that God does speak to those who are leading and serving in the heart of his kingdom work. Vision comes to people who are "doing" God's work and not sitting on the sidelines somewhere. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the leader has as good a chance as anyone else of being the receiver of God's communication.

Third, the versatility of the Holy Spirit: *Divine guidance addresses the situation at hand.* The Holy Spirit speaks through Scripture. He speaks through other people. But this isn't all, as Bockmuehl clearly points out:

The Holy Spirit uses other ways and means to direct and guide as well. Luke's account in Acts shows the Holy Spirit at work in a very versatile way: he calls and sends (13:2,4); he constrains to preach (18:5); he binds one to pursue a given task (19:21; 20:22); he hinders and prohibits (16:6); he testifies (20:23); and, generally, he speaks to those he addresses.

As one ponders the communication of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers, one is struck by how specific and intentional the Spirit can be in guiding people. It would be fair to say that he "customizes" his guidance to each individual and each set of circumstances.

Implication for visionary pastors: *Don't be surprised at how detailed, clear-cut, and pertinent God's guidance may be.* After all, the Spirit told Simeon the exact time and location of the Christ child's arrival in the temple (Luke 2). The Spirit told Ananias where he would find Paul: "go to the house of Judas on Straight Street" in Damascus. God is the author of both macro-like vision ("you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth") and micro-like vision ("Come over to Macedonia and help us").

Fourth, the conditions of divine guidance: *God divinely directs those whose spirituality, obedience, and availability match what he expects of his people.* Conditions for receiving God's guidance are clearly set forth in Luke-Acts. Bockmuehl, relying upon Simeon

(Luke 2) and Cornelius (Acts 10), points to piety and probity (78). Simeon was "righteous and devout;" Cornelius was "devout and God-fearing." The book of Acts also states as a general principle that "God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey him" (5:32). A third condition is availability. Spirit direction comes to those who are willing and ready to respond. Issues of lifestyle and spirituality, then, figure prominently in who God reveals himself to. Obedience is also a major contributing.

Implication for visionary pastors: *Spirituality, obedience, and availability are yardsticks by which to measure one's potential for receiving divine guidance.* Matters of righteousness and holiness matter greatly to God. In speaking of gifted Bible teachers, Clinton makes this important point: "A student who learns from the Bible must willingly decide for and obey its moral claims or lose sensitivity to its further teachings" (204). The same can be said of pastors and leaders seeking to become Spirit-driven visionaries. They must obey God's moral claims if they want to position as worthy vessels of God's direction and attention. Spirituality leads to obedience which, in turn, leads to availability. A life of spiritual, moral, and professional integrity are highly valued in God's eyes.

Fifth, living "under orders": *Submission to God's plans is essential if one hopes to become a recipient of divine communication.* The Holy Spirit must be allowed to function as the grand strategist for the extension and building up of God's Kingdom. The book of Acts portrays disciples who followed God's plans instead of making God's plans for him. "The book of Acts makes clear that planning expressly falls under the department and competence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit does not leave the pursuit of Christ's Great Commission, to make disciples of all nations, to human enthusiasm or rational calculation" (Bockmuehl 79). The early Christian mission ran according to a "higher plan," not that of the church hierarchy, but that of the Holy Spirit. Paul wanted to go to the province of Asia but was prohibited. He then turned to Bithynia but was not allowed to preach there. His human plans were foiled by the Spirit who directed him to Macedonia instead.

Implication for visionary pastors: *God expects obedient submission to his revealed directives.* This boils down to the major difference between vision from a secular perspective and vision from a Christian perspective: in the first, the vision is the product of human reasoning and intuition alone, while in the second, vision is the product of God's revelation of his will and purposes to Spirit-

receptive leaders. God's greater design stands atop the visionary opportunities and is given to God's leaders in order to be followed and implemented, whether it fits with the leaders hopes and dreams or not.

Does God leave any room for human initiative? The stories of divine guidance in the book of Acts do not present the disciples of Jesus as "helpless puppets dangled from strings" (Bockmuehl 81). Bockmuehl sees in the book of Acts, mature executive personalities acting with authority as they implement God's detailed will and instruction.

Sixth, the contents of divine guidance: *Practical matters are presented first and foremost in God's communication.* The specific actions God intends for individuals form the content of the divine directives in the book of Acts: "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do" (9:6). Certain individuals are addressed in certain circumstances. The instructions of the Spirit "are not 'ethics' in the general sense of rules and regulations, but they concern the 'here and now' of people and their actions" (Bockmuehl 82). While Ananias is told exactly where to find Paul (9:11), Paul is only told to go to Macedonia (16:9) and is not given any specifics. This illustrates how the message is sometimes all that

one needs, and at other times, seemingly less than what one would desire. Just the same, it is practical in its focus.

Implication for visionary pastors: *Expect God to direct in the nuts and bolts, practical aspects of vision formulation.* Ethical and doctrinal matters are revealed once and for all in Scripture. But instructions for different temporal or geographical circumstances can be found if one walks the road of listening for the God who still speaks today. Divine communication for the concrete realities of one's visionary setting is what we find in the book Acts.

Seventh, the "when" of divine communication: *God can communicate at any time.* Several times we find divine guidance occurring during prayer (Peter in Acts 10 and the Antioch church in Acts 13). Fasting was a part of the Antioch experience. It can happen during the day or night. "The night visions mentioned in Acts may have to be understood less as dreams than as visions that occur during prayer at night, a practice common with the apostles, as it was with the psalmists" (Bockmuehl 84). We also find God's instructions given during moments of crisis (Paul sailing for Rome in Acts 27).

Implication for visionary leadership: *the visionary leader should be ready for God to speak at any time, but especially during*

times of prayer or seeking God's face. Although God speaks at unexpected times, one should expect him to speak when he is sought in sincere prayer for direction. This indicates the importance of "seeking-listening prayer" for the visionary pastor. Blocks of time must be set aside for listening to God and expecting him to speak. The apostles throughout the narrative of Acts are pictured as leaders who pray. Prayer and divine guidance go hand-in-hand together.

Eighth, the "how often" of divine guidance: *God supplies guidance and instruction as it is needed.* It would appear from the instances reported in the book of Acts that divine guidance was not an everyday experience. Guidance seems to come whenever it is needed. Calvin believed that Paul, for example, ordered his whole life to be able to discern the will of God and depended on the secret leading and inspirations of the Holy Spirit (Bockmuehl 85). Paul sought to be always open to the instruction of the Spirit, and when that was not available, he lived by obedience to the commands of God, instances of previous guidance, and his general calling from God to be an apostle to the Gentiles.

Implication for visionary pastors: *an "open stance" toward receiving divine guidance at any time is imperative.* Visionary pastors must live by faith, believing that whenever they need divine

guidance, God will make it available. Just as important, they must live as if guidance might come at any time. Therefore, the discipline of listening must become one of the most important spiritual disciplines the visionary pastor practices. Times of deliberate reflection and examination occupy an important place in vision formulation. Such times may reveal occasions during the past few days or weeks where God was speaking but the pastor was not picking up his voice. Disengagement from one's normal routines for the express purpose of listening to God and reflecting upon the events and circumstances of one's ministry can yield unexpected discoveries of divine direction previously missed.

And ninth, the gradualness of divine guidance: *God's guidance comes most often through a step by step process.* Acts teaches that God's instructions come gradually, as they are needed. Seldom is there a full and final revelation of what God expects of an individual. For example, Philip (Acts 8) is sent to the southern portion of the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza without any explanation of what he is to do there. Only later does the Spirit instruct Philip to approach the Ethiopian eunuch. In the case of Peter, while he was still wondering about the meaning of the vision he had just received, the Spirit gave him still more information (Acts 10). And even

though Paul is aware that Rome is his destination, he is far from settled in regards to the exact course of events that will bring him to the capital of the Roman Empire. Bockmuehl summarizes the gradualness of divine guidance as follows:

The "divine response" comes gradually, step by step. The larger perspective, or "the big picture", is merely the framework; details remain to be given by the Spirit. This arrangement confirms the ongoing authority of the Holy Spirit, who does not abdicate his guiding role or leave his place to be filled by human rules and regulations. The Spirit calls us simply to respond in obedience and trust and faith, all along the way (85).

Implication for visionary pastors: *God's normal pace for divine guidance is instruction that comes step by step.* Visionary direction from God might come as a string of insights or ideas rather than as the complete package that arrives all at once. The key for the visionary leader is to heed each piece of guidance as it comes, even when one cannot see where God is leading. Divine guidance is like the wilderness manna; God will supply as the need arises.

In conclusion, the leadership and visionary literature of corporate America, the church, the church's theologians, the church's spiritual masters, and God's revelation through the Acts of the Apostles, formed the lenses through which the author's interviews with thirty visionary individuals were both conducted and analyzed.

In particular, the record we have of God's speaking to individuals in Scripture, especially throughout the book of Acts, was utilized as the criteria for God's speaking to his people in contemporary situations today. The author was keenly aware of the results of the literature review as he stepped into the lives of the interview participants.

CHAPTER 3

Design of the Study

Purpose of the Study

The problem addressed by this study falls within the boundaries of pastoral leadership and personal spirituality. A major part of the pastor/leader's responsibility is vision formulation. This study identifies the different ways in which visionary pastors and leaders hear or discern the voice of the Holy Spirit as they formulate vision for their churches.

Scripture abounds with examples of Spirit-driven visionaries. Generally speaking, we know how the Spirit directed people in Biblical times. This study seeks to address the question: how does the Holy Spirit reveal himself to visionary leaders in God's church today? As such, it is a descriptive study designed to assist pastors and church leaders who desire to discover God's vision for their churches with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Statement of Research Questions

This study centers around four research questions that flow from the above stated purpose. Question 1 concerns the identification of "how" the Holy Spirit speaks to pastors and church leaders today: How does the Holy Spirit customarily communicate to

Christian leaders who are in the process of creating vision for their ministries? A variety of ways are possible (see the interview questions Appendix B).

Question 2 deals with "patterns of revelation" that are discovered in a particular group of visionary leaders: Are there proven steps, habits, or routines that, if followed, seem to help leaders hear the voice of the Holy Spirit? The hoped for result of this question is to discover what Christian leaders can do to place themselves in a "listening mode" where the Holy Spirit's voice can be heard.

Question 3 explores the leader's own practice of spiritual formation as an avenue of the Holy Spirit's activity: What part does the practice of one's personal spiritual disciplines play in vision formulation? In other words, does the visionary pastor or leader's personal engagement with Scripture, prayer, journaling, fasting, etc., play a vital role in vision direction?

Question 4 seeks to determine what can be done to ensure Spirit accuracy during the envisioning process: What safeguards or guidelines can be followed for testing or confirming the visionary input that one receives as coming from the Holy Spirit? The key

here is to determine how the foursome of self, community, Scripture, and Spirit work together to both provide and legitimize vision.

Subjects

Four criteria have been established by which to select visionary pastors and leaders for the interviews:

- 1) They must have at least five years of ministry experience. This span of time allows for a proven track record to be established.
- 2) They must be acknowledged as visionaries by their peers and colleagues in ministry. Church leaders with visionary strengths begin to emerge among their co-workers over time. Their passions, gifts, and proven leadership seldom go unnoticed.
- 3) They must have developed a written or mentally formulated vision plan for their churches. The key here is the development of a clearly articulated vision statement. In the majority of cases, this vision statement will be written down in some form or another.
- 4) They must have experienced some success in moving their churches or ministries in the direction of their vision plan. Part of what defines a visionary leader is not only the ability to create the vision, but the ability to cast that vision for ownership and implementation among one's followers.

Thirty pastors and leaders were selected for interviews based upon the above criteria. The number thirty was chosen because it represents a large enough number to statistically analyze the data at a confidence level of $p \leq .05$.

Six resources were tapped for assistance in building a pool of names from which the thirty participants came: 1) The author's own observations and knowledge of Christian leaders; 2) Networking conversations with fellow pastors and colleagues; 3) The author's Congregational Reflection Group; 4) Rev. Don Bubna (Minister-At-Large in The Christian & Missionary Alliance); 5) Dr. David Rambo (former President of The Christian & Missionary Alliance); and 6) Dr. Leslie Andrews (Asbury Theological Seminary).

Since the author is a pastor in The Christian & Missionary Alliance, the largest portion of the participants came from the C&MA. The I-5 corridor running north and south between Seattle, Washington and Salem, Oregon, served as the geographical region from which the bulk of the interviewees came. A general profile of the interview participants reveals the following picture--that of an Anglo-Saxon male who is 52 years old and has 27 years of ministry experience. He is the senior pastor of a church with a worship

service average of 1830 people, holds a Master's degree, and serves with spiritual gifts of leadership and preaching.

Instrumentation

The author used two self-designed instruments for the interviews. The first is a background questionnaire. The background questionnaire is designed to provide the author with information about the participant's education, ministry experience, present ministry, spiritual gifts, passions, Myers-Briggs profile (if available), and one's theological persuasion. The questionnaire helped to establish the personal and ministry context of each visionary pastor and leader and provided some clues for the interpretation of responses given in the interviews.

The second instrument employed in this study was the author's self-designed interview protocol. Each pastor and leader interviewed was asked a series of eight questions that arose out of the research questions, the author's reading, and the author's curiosity about the subject.

A pre-test was performed on the interview protocol once it was developed. Two pastors were presented with the questions for their evaluation and input. Both pastors offered helpful insights that resulted in dropping two questions, the rephrasing of others, and the

restructuring of the order in which the questions were asked. The author's Congregational Reflection Group also contributed to the testing of the interview questions.

The author followed the guidelines listed below in order to achieve consistency between all of the interviews:

1. Read the questions exactly as worded.
2. If the respondent's answer to the initial question is not a complete and adequate answer, probe for clarification and elaboration in a nondirective way; that is, in a way that does not influence the content of the answers that result.
3. Answers should be recorded without interviewer discretion; the answers recorded should reflect what the respondent says.
4. The interviewer communicates a neutral, nonjudgemental stance with respect to the substance of answers (Fowler 33).

Data Collection

The following steps comprised the procedures for collecting data in regards to the interviews. Every attempt possible was made to ensure that these steps were followed with each visionary leader interviewed.

First, the only persons chosen to be interviewed were those who met the four criteria mentioned under Subjects.

Second, participants were contacted, either by phone, letter, or in person, and invited to participate in the interview process. An informational letter explaining the scope and purpose of the author's

study, and the role played by the interviews themselves, was mailed to each potential interview participant.

Third, once an interview was agreed upon, each respondent was asked to complete a background questionnaire. They also received a copy of the interview protocol in order to stimulate their thinking and prepare for the actual interview.

Fourth, an interview was conducted either in person or over the telephone. Each interview took 45 to 60 minutes to complete. A microcassette recorder was employed to record each conversation.

Fifth, each interview was transcribed into a typewritten record of the recorded material.

Sixth, interview findings were colorcoded according to the author's research questions. The pertinent material from each interview was collected and stored together for final analysis once the interviews are completed.

Data Analysis

Once the thirty interviews were completed and all the interview tapes were transcribed, the author had on hand 155 pages of single-spaced typed material to analyze. To examine this data, the following steps were developed and closely followed in an effort to remain as consistent as possible with each of the interviews.

First, each of the interview questions was assigned a color in order to colorcode the interview manuscripts. This procedure was designed to help the author wade through a mountain of information and identify that which was pertinent to his research.

Second, using colored highlighters, the author carefully read through each interview and marked the appropriate responses according to the color assigned to each question. For example, answers to question 5, “share what you would call the clearest and most powerful visionary experience God has given you for your ministry,” were colorcoded with a teal colored marker. Over a period of time, all thirty interviews were studied in detail and colorcoded according to this fashion.

Third, careful attention was paid to the fact that often, for example, while answering question three, the interviewee would share something that was directly applicable to question number six. These responses were judiciously colorcoded as well even though the author might end up with two or three different colors under one question.

Fourth, in order to amass together all of the material throughout the interviews on each question, the author went through the colorcoded manuscripts, pulled out all of the responses for each

question, and wrote these responses up in the form of mini-documents. This allowed the author to read, analyze, and reflect upon everything said with regards to each particular question. Comparisons and contrasts quickly emerged as various responses were read side-by-side.

And fifth, while scrutinizing the interview manuscripts as described above, the author also culled from the interviews forty-four stories that the participants shared to illustrate their points. This story collection proved to be a valuable asset in helping the author to understand, in a practical sense, how the Spirit interfaced with the interviewees in their everyday ministry lives. These stories helped to contextualize in flesh and blood the answers provided in the interviews.

Variables

The variables that affected the outcome of this qualitative research project need to be emphasized.

First, age and ministry experience of the leaders. Older, more experienced pastors and leaders may have found it easier to articulate how they have discerned the work of the Holy Spirit in their visionary leadership. In contrast, persons with less years of

experience may still be in the process of discovering how the Spirit works in this area of their lives.

Second, the pastor or leader's conscious awareness of the Holy Spirit's work in his or her life in vision formulation. Often the work of the Holy Spirit is mysterious. As Jesus himself taught, the Spirit's work can be likened to the wind that blows whenever and however it wants. Some pastors and leaders may have a more reflective side to them, and as a result, be aware of the Spirit's role in vision formulation. Other pastors may be less reflective and more action-oriented, and thus, not as skillful at identifying the presence of the Spirit in the envisioning process.

Third, the respondent's understanding of the interviewer's questions and terminology. This is a key factor. Care was taken during the interviews to ensure that language and terminology were not a hindrance to the interview process.

And lastly, variables of culture, geography, denominational background, theological persuasion, spiritual giftedness, and gender have to be taken into consideration. African Americans may view and experience the pastor as a Spirit-driven visionary in ways slightly different from someone of an Anglo-Saxon background. Would there be significant differences on this question between a

pastor from southern California and one from New England or the midwest? Theology and denominational affiliation may color outcomes as well, particularly in the area of how active the Holy Spirit is believed to be in our world and lives today. Do men experience the Holy Spirit in the same ways as women? These are variables that will influence the outcome of the interviews and must be taken into account when the data is analyzed.

This concludes the author's presentation of how he designed his study with regards to purpose, research questions, subjects, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and variables. We now look to Chapter 4 for the results of the interview analysis.

CHAPTER 4

Interview Findings

While Ray Cotten was pastoring the Central Community Church in Wichita, Kansas, God gave him a vision “of a greatly expanded ministry.” At the time the church was situated on three acres in downtown Wichita and had grown from 250-300 people to about 1200. The church had outgrown its facilities and property and any possibility for future growth in the present location was limited.

Under Cotten’s leadership, the church purchased some acreage and made plans to relocate. They needed \$7.5 million to build a new facility but they could only identify \$5.5 million. The church was at a crisis point. It was facing several major obstacles to following through with their plans to rebuild and relocate. In the face of mounting problems, Cotten asked himself if they should forget their plans, sell the land, and stay where they were.

He took his staff to a minister’s conference in Kansas City. One morning while he was really burdened about what to do next, he sent his staff off to the conference and stayed behind at the motel to pray. He went outside and began to walk and pray, which is the way he loves to pray.

During his time of seeking God, he recalled something that had been said to him two weeks before. While speaking at a pastor's conference in Portland hosted by New Hope Community Church, he was included in a group of about ten pastors who ate breakfast with Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho, pastor of the world's largest church, the Full Gospel Central Church of Seoul, South Korea. Cotten shared his present dilemma with Dr. Cho and asked what he should do. Cho looked at him and simply said, "get started." Cotten didn't know what to do with Cho's comment, because at that point, he "was having difficulty with faith, to believe that we could do it. I had plenty of people tell me we couldn't do it. So I had a lot of good negative reinforcement that it could never happen."

Cotten walked and prayed, "Lord, unless I hear from You, unless I know it's You, I'm not moving--it's off." While he was praying "the Lord took a Scripture and burned it into my heart. It was the Scripture, 'All things are possible to him who believes.'" Even though he had preached this verse and heard it hundreds of times,

it was like all of a sudden, that Scripture was mine. All of a sudden it had an insight that I'd never seen before. And I realized that if God was calling me to relocate and build, that if I would just believe, that it could happen. The faith really mounted up in my heart. It was like I

was a different person. I was ready to go back and get started. I believe that was a definite word from the Lord.

Cotten went back to Wichita and “got started.” Amazingly, the church was able to come up with all the finances they needed. The construction project took eighteen months to complete. “The first Sunday we were open--it seated six times what our old building seated--it was full. It was really an affirmation from the Lord.”

Cotten’s story is just one of forty-four stories told to me during my interviews with thirty visionary pastors and church leaders. Although it is more dramatic than many of the others, it introduces the myriad number of ways by which God speaks to pastors and leaders today. This chapter reports the data gathered from the interviews which were conducted with visionary pastors and Christian leaders. The chapter’s findings begin to pull back the curtain to enable us to see more clearly how God speaks in the leadership lives of those he calls to direct his kingdom work.

Profile of Participants

The purpose of the interviews was to discover how visionary pastors and Christian leaders hear and/or discern the voice of the Holy Spirit in their lives in the formulation of vision for their ministries. Over the course of one year, from May 24, 1995, through

May 21, 1996, the author interviewed thirty different individuals. The author conducted twenty-four of these interviews in a face-to-face meeting and six over the telephone.

TABLE 1
Profile of Participants

| Variable | Characteristic |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Age | 52 Years |
| Education | Master's Degree |
| Ministry Experience | 27 years |
| Gender | Male |
| Present Ministry | Senior Pastor |
| Race | Anglo-Saxon |
| Spiritual Gifts | Preaching, Teaching, Leadership |
| Theological Persuasion | Reformed or Pencentostal/Charismatic |
| Worship Attendance | 1830 |

Age and Education

The average age of the participants was fifty-two. The youngest person interviewed was twenty-nine years old while the oldest was sixty-eight years old. In regard to their educational training, thirty participants had earned bachelors' degrees, twenty-four had earned masters degrees, and nine held earned doctorates.

Ministry Experience

Their ministry experience was wide and varied. On the whole they averaged twenty-seven years in ministry (from a low of seven

to a high of forty-six years). Their combined ministry experience totals 810 years!

Forms of Service

Over the course of their ministry careers, these thirty participants have been involved in the following forms of service: children's work, youth pastor, associate pastor, executive pastor, co-pastor, senior pastor, church planting, college campus ministry, professor, college president, seminary president, school administrator, consultant to local churches and denominations, denominational executive, seminar and conference speaker, president of a Christian organization, chaplain, and editor of a Christian magazine.

Current Ministry Status

At the time of the interviews, twenty-two (73 percent) of the participants were functioning as senior pastors, three as denominational executives, one as the president of a Christian organization, one as a college and seminary president, two as seminary presidents, and one as the president emeritus of a seminary.

Size of Churches

The average attendance of the churches pastored by the twenty-two senior pastors interviewed for this study is 1821. They range in size from an average weekend worship attendance of 100 to 6500. Together these senior pastors and their churches represent 40,060 people.

Theological Persuasion

A number of theological persuasions are represented by the thirty participants. On their Respondent Background Questionnaire each participant was asked which of the following theological persuasions would most accurately describe them: Reformed, Dispensational, Wesleyan, Pentecostal, or Charismatic. Of the participants, twenty-nine could be classified as mainstream evangelicals. The thirtieth pastor falls into the category of what is called New Thought theology.

The Respondent Background Questionnaire asked each participant to indicate the particular nuance of his or her evangelical theology. Of the thirty respondents, four left this question blank, while three indicated that none of the choices described them. Of the remaining twenty-three respondents, seventeen indicated their theological position by marking one of the five choices, two

respondents marked two choices, one marked three choices, two marked four choices, and one marked all five choices. The results of the Respondent Background Questionnaire reveal that a large number of the study participants evidenced some difficulty in accurately pinning down their theological stance within evangelicalism.

Of the twenty-three people who marked their theological persuasion, six of whom marked more than one choice, the Reformed position was represented by eleven people (48 percent); next came the Wesleyan doctrine with nine (39 percent); then the Charismatic persuasion with seven (30 percent); followed by Dispensationalism with seven adherents (30 percent); and lastly, by Pentecostalism with three representatives (13 percent).

There appears to be a healthy sense of theological balance represented by the respondents in this study. The overall theological composite of the twenty-three visionary pastors and Christian leaders who gave witness to their theological position portrays the full spectrum of evangelicalism.

Spiritual Gifts

The Respondent Background Questionnaire also asked participants in the study to share what spiritual gifts they employ in

their ministries. A total of thirteen different gifts were mentioned. The gift of preaching and teaching received the highest number of responses with twenty-five (83 percent). Next came the the gift of leadership (63 percent). The gifts of faith (9/30 percent) and administration (7/23 percent) ranked fourth and fifth out of the thirteen gifts mentioned on the questionnaire.

The rest of the gifts listed by the study participants are as follows: exhortation (n=6/20 percent)), pastoring (n=6/20 percent)), evangelism (n=5/17 percent)), prophecy (n=3/10 percent), helps or service (2), leading worship (2), discernment (1), healing (1), and hospitality (1).

Although there is no spiritual gift of vision, per se, in the New Testament teaching on spiritual gifts, vision is certainly part of what leadership is about and what leaders are expected to formulate and cast. Some gifts seem to lend themselves to vision more than others, gifts such as leadership, faith, preaching and teaching. These comprise the highest ranking spiritual gifts of the visionary pastors and Christian leaders interviewed for this study.

Ecclesiastical Representation

Fourteen different churches and denominations are represented by the participants of this study: Christian & Missionary

Alliance (n=12/40 percent), non-denominational (n=5/17 percent), Baptist (n=3/10 percent) and one each from the following churches-- Foursquare Gospel, Vineyard Christian Fellowship, Church of God, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Christian, Friends, United Methodist, Bible, and New Thought.

Geographical Representation

The thirty study participants are residents of nine states (California, Colorado, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Jersey, Ohio, Oregon, Washington) and two Canadian provinces (Alberta and British Columbia).

Gender and Race

The last component of the participant profile concerns gender and race. Twenty-nine men were interviewed. The author had hoped to interview more than one woman but he had difficulty finding women within his ecclesiastical circle of contacts in pastoral or leadership positions with recognized visionary strengths. The same situation is true with regard to race. Twenty-nine of the participants are Anglo-Saxon and one is an African-American.

How the Holy Spirit Communicates Vision

How does the Holy Spirit customarily communicate to visionary pastors and Christian leaders in the process of formulating vision for their ministries?

Research Question One focuses on the participant's experience of hearing from God in the process of creating vision. Respondents were asked if they had observed a pattern in their ministry experience that God seemed to follow in granting them visionary thoughts and ideas. They were given nine vision routes that God might possibly use: circumstances, scripture, still small voice/divine hunch, other people, an audible voice, dreams and/or visions, angel, reading/study/thinking, prayer, and other. The author created this list by combining the avenues suggested by Dallas Willard (see chapter 2) with three other possibilities: circumstances, reading/study/thinking, and other. Each of the participants received this list before the interview for their meditation and thought. The list was not meant to be exhaustive as much as it was meant to stimulate the respondents in their reflection and responses.

None of the thirty participants in the study spoke of any experience with angels. Some brought up the possibility that if God had used angels to guide them during vision formulation, they were

not aware of his doing so. During the interviews two (7 percent) pastors mentioned experiences with hearing an audible voice. For the first pastor this was a single occurrence while for the second pastor an audible voice has been heard twice. They heard the voice as the voice of God speaking to them at critical times in their exercise of leadership for their churches.

Interview participants added five additional avenues of the Holy Spirit's speaking to the suggested list: adversity (1), attending seminars and conferences (3), employing common sense (1), listening to music (1), and the input of one's wife (3). Although attending seminars and conferences and listening to the input of one's wife involve God speaking through other people, I have chosen to make them categories of their own because they were specifically mentioned as carrying great influence in a number of instances by those who cited them.

Every participant shared that the Holy Spirit seemed to speak to them through more than one avenue to guide their formulation of vision. The majority spoke of four to six different agencies. Nineteen participants (63 percent) named one primary pattern as the most important or substantial avenue that God seemed to follow in revealing vision to them (see Table 2). God speaking through

scripture and a still small voice were the two most frequently mentioned avenues.

TABLE 2
Primary Pattern God Uses To Reveal Vision

| Means | “N” | % of 19 | % of 30 |
|--------------------|------------|----------------|----------------|
| Adversity | 1 | 5 | 3 |
| Circumstances | 1 | 5 | 3 |
| People | 1 | 5 | 3 |
| Prayer | 3 | 16 | 10 |
| Reading | 1 | 5 | 3 |
| Scripture | 7 | 37 | 23 |
| Still, Small Voice | 5 | 26 | 17 |

Following is the complete breakdown of every response to the first research question (see Table 3). Scripture, a still small voice, people, prayer, circumstances, and reading/studying/thinking were the most popular responses given by the interviewees. These patterns clearly emerged during the course of the interviews among all of the pastors and leaders interviewed.

TABLE 3
Observable Pattern Used By God to
Impart Vision

| Means | “N” | % of 30 |
|---------------------------|-----|---------|
| Adversity | 1 | 3 |
| Angels | 0 | 0 |
| Audible Voice | 2 | 7 |
| Circumstances | 16 | 53 |
| Common Sense | 1 | 3 |
| Dreams/Visions | 2 | 7 |
| Music | 1 | 3 |
| People | 18 | 60 |
| Prayer | 18 | 60 |
| Reading/Studying/Thinking | 16 | 53 |
| Scripture | 20 | 67 |
| Seminars/Conferences | 3 | 10 |
| Spouse | 3 | 10 |
| Still, Small Voice | 19 | 63 |

God Speaks Through Scripture

God speaking to visionary pastors and Christian leaders through scripture receives the highest ranking in both the overall response of participants (n=20/67 percent) and in those who said it was their number one means of hearing from God (n=7/39 percent).

As one of those who ranked scripture as the most important avenue of God’s communication with him in vision formulation, Ted Roberts of East Hills Foursquare Church in Gresham, OR, shared his conviction that “God speaks through his Word.” Roberts used the term “pivotal words from God” to characterize how God communicates with him as he reads scripture. Over the course of his

life he has learned how to recognize God's speaking voice through trial and error. According to Roberts, this recognition is a skill that one learns over a period of time as an important part of his or her spiritual maturing process. "Pivotal words from God" are those sharp and defining messages that come through scripture to set Roberts "on a certain track." He may obtain as many as ten of these words in one month or he may go months without receiving any at all.

Joe Aldrich, President of Multnomah Bible College and Seminary, ranked scripture at the top of his list as well. Instead of speaking of "pivotal words," Aldrich shared the importance of a "biblical database" that plays a critical role in the forming of vision:

I think scripture plays a large part in it. To the degree that there is an understanding of an acquiescence to that database, there is vision. If we have some idea of what God's redemptive purpose is, then vision is rather simple. How do we best mobilize the resources that we have been entrusted with to be most effective in fulfilling and extending God's kingdom.

For Aldrich this means that he must "increase the database by inputting all the time." Therefore he has followed "a pattern for years of reading through the scripture once a year."

One more illustration of the role of scripture comes from Francis Grubbs, past president of Simpson College. He conscientiously reads God's Word looking for visionary direction. He does this

because he firmly believes that “the Holy Spirit’s illumination is there and present.” As he faces leadership or visionary decisions, he fully expects the Holy Spirit to speak through God’s Word, written long ago, to his present situation. Grubbs begins with his “study and contemplation of scripture,” undergirded by his belief in the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit, and then adds prayer in order to work out any visionary scenarios he may be facing.

God Speaks Through a Still Small Voice

The receiving of the Holy Spirit’s direction through a still small voice ranks second in the overall response of participants (n=19/63%) as well as in those who said it was their number one means of hearing from God (n=5/28%). In the overall response, scripture and a still small voice are separated by only one respondent (n=20 vs. 19). They are separated by just two respondents in the category measuring the number one way in which the visionary pastors and leaders hear from God (n=7 vs. 5). These numbers suggest that there is almost a tie for the number one ranking, an insignificant difference when considering whether to make an issue of their standing. Both carry considerable weight and at times seem to be two sides of the same coin, as we shall see below.

Bob Thune, pastor of Christ Community Church in Omaha, NB, said that the still small voice is God's normal pattern for communicating to him. He links the still small voice to learning how to listen to the Lord. He classifies himself with those evangelicals who are good at talking to the Lord but need to learn how to listen to him: "The whole idea of listening to the Lord is a foreign concept (for evangelicals). It was a foreign concept for me. I've had to grow into it." When asked how he discerned the still small voice, Thune replied, "I don't have a good answer for the question. I think that there are times when the Lord by his Spirit impresses things on your mind and heart. It is a little bit hard to define or describe but it is pretty clear." Thune makes a point of spending time with the Lord in a listening mode. He tries to be sensitive for any "impressions that come, that seem to be the Lord saying this or that."

Someone else for whom the still small voice is preeminent is Morris Dirks, pastor of Salem Alliance Church in Salem, OR. He refers to the still small voice as a "sense of conviction" that builds over time "into a passionate response from my inner being about what needs to be for my church and for my life personally." Dirks continues by saying, "For me it's always a felt experience coming in the passionate,

emotive side of my being, the conviction side of who I am, that drives me to say ‘I’d be willing to make sacrifices for this.’”

Dirks places a high value upon scripture, prayer, and reading, all of which he views as secondary to the still small voice that often comes to him out of these disciplines. The same thing can be said of Dale Ebel, the founding and current pastor of Rolling Hills Church in Tualatin, OR. The still small voice is the most common way in which he discerns God speaking to him. For Ebel, it works like this: “God gives me an idea or a thought. It comes usually out of study, reading, thinking, scripture, or just in talking to another person. God gives me the idea. I’ll write it down. I won’t necessarily jump on it but I’ll think about it.”

One issue that surfaced in talking about the still small voice was how to discern the voice as being one’s own or God’s. Such discernment appears to be a highly subjective exercise. Bob Morehead of Overlake Christian Church in Kirkland, WA, commented that he finds it difficult to talk about the still small voice for just this reason: “I have a highly creative mind. So I have to check that out. God, this is not my baby, create it. This is your dream to drop on me the vision that you want. If I have to create a vision, it’s going to fail.” Morehead continued this line of thought by saying,

When we talk about (having) the mind of Christ, I think the Lord does speak clearly through the mind. I know it's happening when I grab my notepad and start writing and it continues to come and continues to come and the things that are coming I know I couldn't have created. I'm not talking about the nuts and bolts. I'm talking about the big picture.

Through years and years of experience Morehead has come a long way in learning how to differentiate between his ideas and the still small voice of God.

God Speaks Through Prayer

In the interview results, prayer, as well as people, registers as the third most likely pattern of how God speaks. Only three (10 percent) out of the thirty respondents placed prayer as the primary vehicle of God's communication with them, yet eighteen (60 percent) of them referenced prayer as one of the most influential avenues God uses to get their visionary attention.

As one of those three, Ray Cotten, the pastor of New Hope Community Church in Portland, OR, calls prayer the "biggest part" of how God reveals himself with regards to visionary ideas: "It's out of prayer that a still small voice speaks or one experiences a definite word from the Lord." For Cotten, the practice and disciplined stance of prayer comes first and is what opens him up to hearing from God. "The real motivating vision that's going to motivate your life and

motivate other people is going to be that vision that comes from the heart. There has to be that time, that season of the heart, that season of prayer.” Cotten continues by lamenting the fact that society, and even the church, does not see the value of prayer, “I think that one of the problems people have with prayer is that they are interested in the bottom-line, getting the work done, and they see extended prayer as a waste of time.” If prayer is not valued enough by society and the church, then neither is “waiting on the Lord.” “I don’t know any other way that God is going to speak to us unless we ‘wait on the Lord,’” says Cotten.

The study participants spoke of prayer not only in the sense of speaking to God their concerns, problems, and petitions, but also in the sense of cultivating an awareness of God’s presence in one’s life. Mary Manin Morrissey, another one of the three participants who shared that prayer is her number one way of hearing from God, said that in her prayer life she seeks to establish communion with God at the beginning of each day and then attempts to maintain that connectedness throughout the day. She has been deeply influenced in this vein by both the example of Jesus, who often went off by himself to pray and commune with his Father, and by Brother Lawrence’s small book, Practicing the Presence of God. If she can

become aware of the presence of God in her life and then cultivate that awareness during the day, Morrisey believes that she will be in a better position to discern God's guidance upon her life and ministry.

Well known author and pastor Gordon MacDonald speaks for a number of other respondents when he highlights his experience of God directing him through prayer:

Prayer plays a great role in my own sense of vision. There have been countless times when I have felt like we were at an impasse in one thing or another and took time to really plead with God on my knees about things and to get some other people to pray with me, to just relax in the notion that God in His right moment would reveal the right alternative. I just need to say that the older I get the more I realize God never lets me down in this area.

Francis Grubbs, like MacDonald, relies upon prayer for elucidation, "Through prayer I ask God to clarify for me in my own thinking, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the direction and decision that should be made."

God Speaks Through People

God has a pattern of using people to relay visionary features. Even though eighteen (60 percent) participants rated people as an important way God speaks to them, only one, David Allan Hubbard, President Emeritus of Fuller Theological Seminary, said it was the

most important. As he talked about his thirty years as President of Fuller Theological Seminary, Hubbard dropped name after name of key people whom God used in his life and in the life of the seminary to give it a visionary focus. For example,

A lot of what Fuller is now is related to the influence of Bob Munger. The extension program was Bob's idea, (as were) certain things in spiritual formation and discipleship, a good bit of the Doctor of Ministry program, and making the curriculum a little less classical and a little more oriented to pastoral ministry.

To conclude his discussion of the importance of key people in his visionary dreams for Fuller Seminary, Hubbard said, "you don't develop vision by talking too much; vision comes best by listening." Listening to people was a bedrock value in Hubbard's visionary role as President of Fuller Theological Seminary. Bottomline was that he believed God spoke to him through the lives and words of other people.

Pastor Martin Berglund of Fellowship Alliance Church in Medford, N. J., like Hubbard, has had visionary direction come to him from others, "Sometimes I have to admit that God gives me great visions through another person. Somebody says something and it's just like a huge light goes off--this is it!"

In my interview with Dale Galloway, founding pastor of New Hope Community Church in Portland, OR, and the present Dean of the Beeson International Center for Biblical Preaching and Church Leadership, Galloway passionately spoke of the visionary influences of Robert Schuller and Paul Yonggi Cho upon his life. Down through the years he made it a habit to visit Schuller in southern California and Cho in Korea as often as he could because God used the visions and dreams of these two men to give Galloway greater vision and dreams for his own ministry.

God has used people to inspire Don Jensen of Village Baptist Church in Beaverton, OR with new vision as well, “You hear how God is leading (other people) and you think and start processing it. You have godly people who are saying things, so you listen to them.”

God Speaks Through Circumstances

Circumstances, along with reading/study/thinking, come next as a pattern of how God reveals himself to visionary pastors and Christian leaders.

Jim Gwinn of Crista Ministries in Seattle, WA, views circumstances as the vehicle through which God tries to catch his visionary attention: “I would say a lot of it is need. God brings needs to our minds or brings needs to us. Circumstances, I believe are our

big thing, knowing the right people, being in the right places, all of those” are how God imparts vision to Crista.

Don Bubna, Pastor-at-Large with The Christian and Missionary Alliance, views open doors as God’s use of circumstances to direct vision. Bob Morehead views circumstances “that keep occurring and keep saying to me that there’s a need here” as the voice of God rather than what some may call happenstance. Francis Grubbs shared that for him circumstances are the “environment of life” that play a key role in vision and must be understood in this manner because of God’s pattern of working through circumstances.

Gordon MacDonald links circumstances to “studying the environment in which you are operating.” According to MacDonald, “I’m one who looks at the circumstances and says, ‘What does the circumstance require of us and what does it make possible?’” As a self-avowed problem-solver, circumstances are what shape and mold many of MacDonald’s visionary ideas. Pastor Keith Taylor of the Beulah Alliance Church in Edmonton, AB takes seriously “the environment that I’m in, which is a time-space locale in which God has placed me. This is saying, ‘in 1996 in Edmonton at the Buelah Alliance Church, what is God calling us to do and to be here?’”

In summary, what Gwinn, Bubna, Morehead, MacDonald, Grubbs, and Taylor are saying is that one's locality must be taken into consideration when formulating vision or else a visionary will be left with a high-sounding dream that lacks connection to space and time reality.

God Speaks Through Reading/Studying/Thinking

Sixteen participants (53 percent) indicated that part of God's pattern of dealing with them in visionary matters occurred while they were reading, studying and/or thinking.

Ron Kincade, who pastors Sunset Presbyterian Church in Portland, OR, was the lone participant who ranked reading as the number one means by which God relays visionary motifs to him. Says Kincade, "I'm always reading. Reading gives me ideas for this and that. I'm always looking for new information and inspiration." As an example of how much he reads, Kincade shared that "I read fifty church growth books between 1978-1984" during a time in his pastoral leadership when he wanted to learn all that he could about church growth for his ministry. Kincade ranked reading and study ahead of prayer, other people, scripture, and the still small voice, but he does not intend to put books ahead of scripture because he says

that scripture “is the textbook for everything we do. It’s the foundation.”

For Rick Porter of Seven Oaks Alliance Church in Abbotsford, B. C., reading/studying/thinking “seeds” all the other ways in which God talks to him. They plant in his mind and heart visionary ideas and inputs that may come to the surface later on by other means. Dick Colenso, District Superintendent of The Pacific Northwest District of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, finds it “very pleasurable to read books on Christian theology, and all kinds of other Christian disciplines, (in order to see) how they relate to me and what I do. (By reading) I think God helps me to understand my abilities and expand them.” His pursuit of knowledge via reading/study/thinking plays a prominent role in his visionary thinking.

According to Asbury Theological Seminary President Maxie Dunnam, “reading and study and thinking are very, very essential for the development of vision” for his life and leadership. These are disciplines that he deliberately follows in vision formulation. One last illustration comes from Steve Sjogren, who pastors the Vineyard Christian Fellowship Church of Cincinnati, OH. He observes an active discipline of reading, but for him, “I think books tend to follow rather

than precede biblical application. They confirm what I've thought and what God has laid on my heart."

Placing Yourself Where God Speaks

Are there proven steps, habits, or routines that, if followed, seem to help pastors and Christian leaders hear or discern the voice of the Holy Spirit?

If Research Question One focuses on how the study participants recognize the leading and voice of God in their work of formulating vision, Research Question Two focuses on the steps these same participants have followed over the years in order to place themselves in a frame of mind and spirit where they can more readily hear from God. Research Question One comes at the vision question from the Godward side (this is how God speaks to me) while Research Question Two comes at it from the human side (this is what I do to put myself in an environment where God speaks to me).

The participants were asked to share the process, steps, or routines that they normally follow to discover God's vision for their ministries (see Table 4). A total of sixteen different processes, steps, and/or routines were shared by the participants. Interestingly enough, the responses to Research Questions One and Two share some overlapping: both are concerned in part with scripture, prayer,

people, and circumstances. However, scripture, prayer, people, and circumstances are approached and experienced in a different manner for Research Question Two than they are for Research Question One, as we shall see.

TABLE 4
Steps Followed To Discover God's Vision

| Steps or Routines | "N" | % of 30 |
|--------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Asking Questions | 1 | 3 |
| Evaluation | 1 | 3 |
| Fasting | 1 | 3 |
| Journaling | 2 | 7 |
| Live in God's Presence | 2 | 7 |
| Need/Opportunity | 10 | 33 |
| People | 14 | 47 |
| Prayer/Listening | 20 | 67 |
| Retreat/Solitude | 13 | 43 |
| Scripture | 16 | 53 |
| Seminars/Conferences | 7 | 23 |
| Spouse | 1 | 3 |
| Visiting Places | 1 | 3 |
| Write Down Ideas | 8 | 27 |

All of the respondents named more than one action they cultivate in order to discover God's vision for their ministry. In contrast to Research Question One, seldom did any of the respondents specify that one particular practice was more important than any of the others. Instead, the participants talked about a grouping of activities that they found to be crucially important for the formulation of their ministry vision.

As a related side note, a recurrent theme that surfaced during the interviews was that the nature of vision formulation is not a “point in time” (Elliot) experience for most pastors and leaders. According to Pete Schwalm, who pastors Fairhaven Alliance Church in Dayton, OH, vision is “developmental, it’s evolving, it’s a process. (Vision is) not static.” Therefore, the participants seemed to be saying throughout the interviews that because vision is a developmental process, as opposed to a static, point-in-time experience, then a cluster of steps follows because the vision, as it is broken down into various parts, comes at different times and through different means.

Prayer and Listening

Prayer and listening were the most frequently listed steps from all of the participants (n=20/67 percent). I have linked prayer with listening because prayer and listening were often uttered in the same breath by those I was interviewing. For example, Stephen Elliot, pastor of Foothills Alliance Church in Calgary, AB, speaks for a number of participants:

I think what it comes down to for me are things like cultivating the habit of being in the presence of God, cultivating your relationship with God through listening prayers, walking, living, breathing in the presence of God and listening for what God is saying in the midst of the

church that you're leading. There's all kinds of impulses that come out of the body itself that speak into that process while you are listening to God.

Elliot attempts to live his pastoral life in this prayerful, listening mode on a daily basis. On the other hand, every two months he takes a retreat for a day of prayer and fasting where he spends the day in silence "reflecting and listening to what God is saying."

Morris Dirks places the same kind of stress upon prayer and listening. He observes a weekly discipline of solitude where he goes away for a period of time. Of this time he says, "The whole thing is listening and it will involve reading, walking, sitting, pondering. God speaks to me through nature, or the book I'm reading, or the verse or the problem I'm gnawing on, or as I'm writing in my journal. The whole day is listening."

President David Le Shana of Western Evangelical Seminary in Tigard, OR ranks listening as his first priority in seeking God's will for the creation of vision, "You have to be a good listener to the Lord, first of all. I think that's where it must begin, to be willing to bend, willing to be open to whatever it is that God has planned. (There must be) a willingness to listen to the Spirit of God."

Scripture

Scripture (n=16/53 percent) follows prayer and listening in those steps taken or routines followed by visionary pastors and leaders in their attempt to catch God's vision for their ministries. Often this overlaps with their reading of scripture in their private devotional times. "I try to maintain a close walk with God through prayer and the Word. I think it's like Jesus said, 'I am the vine and you are the branches.' So it's out of those convictions that if I'm in the Word and I'm praying, that things are going to happen," shared Bud Makus. "I start with the scriptures," says Pastor Chris Widener of Oasis Christian Fellowship in Issaquah, WA, "because there is no use praying about something that is not in the scriptures."

Scripture has been the primary component in Morris Dirks' working concept of "principled vision." By his careful study of scripture, Dirks applies biblical principles to visionary inputs that come to him from a variety of sources. His intent is to ensure that the vision is rooted in scripture and not in culture or passing fads or trends:

In a lot of visionaries I look at their vision and I go, '(This) is not a principled vision.' It seems to be co-opted by the culture in order to get done what needs to get done. They seem to be bought off by vision before principles, by success before biblical priorities and

values of what God wants his church to be like. So for me, I have not been a faddish visionary or a success builder. Success is not the goal for me. For me the principle is very important.

Dirks views his concept of 'principled vision' as the grid through which all visionary concepts, dreams, and inputs are run. And it begins with a serious and critical evaluation of what role scripture plays in keeping vision on track.

Interaction with People

A little less than one-half of the respondents interviewed (n=14/47 percent) brought up the relevance of other people's input for their creation of vision. One of these was Don Bubna. He shared his practice of valuing very highly "the input of others. I found very early in my life (that) I learned the most from other people." As a young man Bubna developed a habit of

going to people that I respected and asking (them questions). I always had mentors. I gravitated towards men I sensed to be spiritually discerning in the church, whether they were on the board or not on the board, (in order) to gain their input and insights.

Bubna recognized that God could both give and guide his vision through his faithful reliance upon the input of others. Some of his best advice came from people who were not in formal leadership positions.

Another example of the importance of people in the process of giving birth to vision is found in Jim Gwinn: “I meet with (the) heads of other church organizations, trying to see what they are doing. I try to find benchmarks that we can say, ‘that’s what we want to be in this ministry.’” Gwinn does “a lot of fraternizing, networking with those kinds of people.”

Allowing other people to have influence upon the origination of vision is why choosing to “reflect corporately” is important to Rick Porter. According to Porter, “I’m very much a consensus guy. I don’t come down off the mountain and declare, ‘Here’s how it’s going to be done.’” Porter likes to find time to go away with his church board in order to think and dream through matters of vision together. When he and his leadership team go away, “I usually have an idea of where I want (the visionary process) to go, but I don’t manipulate it,” says Porter.

One practice that Gordon MacDonald likes to employ to stimulate his and others’ visionary thinking revolves around networking with other people. MacDonald shares that “I love to get a group of people together, throw out an idea that is just dangerous enough to scare people and watch them network their minds and think up new approaches.” Of this approach to the community

fashioning of vision MacDonald commented, "I think that is a process, getting minds to work and forcing them to dialogue so that they all produce an idea that's greater than any of them."

Retreat and Solitude

Retreat and solitude figured prominently in the visionary schemes of thirteen (43 percent) participants. Retreating into solitude could mean anything from spending a few hours alone driving in a car or flying in an airplane to spending a day or days away. The key to retreat and solitude is the observance of some kind of time away from the demands of one's ministry, phones, people, and the "tyranny of the urgent."

Dick Colenso calls his traveling time his "most productive pre-vision time--in the car driving, on an airplane, in somebody's home or a motel, or someplace where the interruptions of life are not happening to me." During these times "flash visions" often come to Colenso because he is "in a reflective mood." He quickly writes these "flash visions" down and refers back to them at a later time.

In a similar fashion, T. Allen Bethel, pastor of the Maranatha Church in Portland, OR, has found that "pulling away and pulling apart out of my daily routine" is imperative for the envisioning process: "When I'm away from the phones, away from the daily

routine of this ministry, I can hear God saying, ‘Now, can I have your attention for a few minutes?’” He finds himself more capable of hearing from God when he pulls away, “whether it’s been an extended period away or a short period.”

Pastor Bud Makus of the Hillsboro Alliance Church in Hillsboro, OR sets aside Mondays as a day where he leaves town and his office. He spends time reading, writing, and praying with a visionary focus. He doesn’t “care if people think that I’m wasting my time. It’s too critical.” He has discovered that there is a certain kind of reading, praying, and writing that he cannot do around the church office because of interruptions and intrusions.

For almost all of his forty years of ministry Bob Morehead has taken one day each month away from his church office to fast and pray. Some months he will take two days away. Morehead “goes off to the mountains with nothing but maybe a tape recorder, a notebook, a Bible, and a jug of water just to be alone with God and to spend a good deal of that day dedicated to the future of this church.”

He has a basic agenda that he follows:

What I normally do is I list anywhere from two to five things for the day’s prayer and fasting. It may be a personal thing or a family thing, but I usually prioritize them. My ministry in the church has always been there. I usually will designate the week before a section of

scripture that I'm just going to dedicate myself to read all day long and live in and be in all day. Apart from that it's basically walking and praying and listening, reading, meditating, writing down what I believe I'm hearing from God.

In listening to Morehead share, it was quickly obvious to the author that his days of prayer and fasting were what had driven his life vision and ministry for years.

Instead of once a month, Stephen Elliot tries to get away for a day of prayer and fasting every two months. He goes to the same place every time, a retreat center not far from where he lives.

Elliot's routine is as follows:

I'll spend the whole day out there. First thing in the morning I'll go through the stages of the cross and deal with anything that's in my life and heart. I'll spend the rest of the day reflecting and listening to what God is saying. I'll have two or three readings that I will go to during the day. I'll just put myself in silence before God and say, 'Lord, what do You want to say to me out of this?' I take my journal with me. I take notes and write those impulses down, the things I'm hearing God say. And then the next day, back in my office, I'll take my journal out and go through it and try to make some sense out of the various things I wrote down.

Elliot stressed that he's "not looking for map details" with regards to vision. He's "looking to have the direction confirmed," by which he means the macro vision of his church's ministry.

Don Jensen takes two retreats a year for personal spiritual renewal and envisioning. They are three-day retreats. He asks everyone on his pastoral staff to follow his lead. He spends his time concentrating on reading scripture and books that he feels are important for his life and ministry. He asks himself, “where is it that God wants us to move next? What is it that God is trying to tell me at this time?”

Understanding Needs and Opportunities

Ten participants explained that a pivotal step in the process of discovering vision is taking their local context and environment seriously (33 percent).

Vision is “birthed out of need and having eyes open to what’s going on around you” shared Ray Cotten. Vision comes out “of the need of the moment,” adds Cotten. He was twenty-four years old when he accepted the call to his first church:

As I came into this church, one of the things that I began to do was just to look at this church, its history, its needs, where it was at the moment, what the problems were, what the crisis were, and then (ask the question), ‘Where do we need to go from here?’ That vision began to formulate as I began to see the needs, see the opportunities in the community.

For Cotten, vision “begins to form” from a specific church or a specific setting.

When Bob Thune arrived at his present church more than ten years ago, he went on a fact-finding mission, much like Ray Cotten's: "I gathered together some information, not anything extensive. I got basic information on the city and on the church." He sent the board "a list of questions I wanted them to ponder. I wanted each of them to write down an answer to the questions. When we all got together I asked the questions and listened. I jotted down notes of their answers." His goal was to obtain an "understanding of my context in a short period of time."

Thune takes context and circumstances seriously: "You can go off and dream something that's grandiose and totally unrelated to where you are, what the realities are, but I think if you start with the realities, then you refuse to be limited by those realities." Thune likes to take those realities into consideration and then begin dreaming about what might be possible with the help of God's Spirit and allowances for the supernatural working of God in the midst of the natural. His goal is "a realistic, stretching, and visionary future."

Understanding needs and opportunities for Gordon MacDonald means that he is "always looking at parallel organizations, in the business world and in the world of education, trying to track similarities of activity and direction." MacDonald seeks to adapt

what he learns through this thinking process to his church setting: “I just find myself instinctively looking at everything in the world and asking how that’s adaptable, to make it more possible to pursue the gospel way of life.” Therefore, a specific vision for MacDonald’s church may have its origin in an institution or practice far removed from his church or even the Christian community.

Writing Down Ideas

A little less than one quarter (n=8/27 percent) of the participants alluded to the significance of either saving or fleshing out their ideas on paper. Martin Berglund will often take out a pad of paper and start writing with a prayerful perspective. According to him, “It seems to start to clarify what God is showing me more and more.” Later on it gives him “the confidence to be able to stand up and say, ‘I think God is telling us this. I think God is telling us that.’”

Writing plays an influential role for Joe Aldrich as well: “I often go up to a cabin in the mountains by myself for a day or two. I do a lot of writing, just getting it down on paper, ideas that come to mind, possible scenarios that could be in the future.” By writing, Aldrich attempts to “develop a rationale for whatever I sense the Lord is wanting to do so I can communicate that to others.”

Above, under Retreat and Solitude, the author made mention of Dick Colenso's "flash visions" that come to him when he is in a reflective mood. He writes these down: "I make notes, I scribble notes, and then I tuck them away, and when I then take a period of time when I'm going to try to flesh out that vision, then I pull those notes back out." Colenso uses these notes in the following manner:

I'll sit down with those notes and I'll just scribble more notes. I'll extend it. I'm pretty process oriented so I'll take an idea and I'll say, "Now what are the natural components of that?" And I'll do a breakdown of the natural components. And then I'll try to develop a flow-- what would have to come first, and second, and third. That's all helping me to prioritize as well, to know whether it's beyond me or something that still fits me.

Colenso "always (has) more notes than I will ever probably get to, so there's a refining process and a prioritization process that goes on."

One more example of someone who values the process of writing down ideas in the envisioning process is Maxie Dunnam. After he has talked with people about needs and opportunities, prayed about what he has heard and discovered, and actually started to shape the working vision, he then begins to write that vision out. "Eventually you not only want to have a vision that you know what it's all about, but you've got to have a vision that you can articulate," remarks Dunnam. The vision must "be understood by your

constituency.” Writing it down, “getting feedback to that, and narrowing the focus and refining it are big issues,” claims Dunnam. The verbalizing of the vision is one way to test the vision.

Spiritual Disciplines and Vision

What part does the practice of one’s personal spiritual disciplines play in vision formulation?

Perhaps of all the interview data gathered, Research Question Three is both the most simple, and the most difficult to report. First, it is simple to report because virtually everyone spoke of the value and weightiness of personal spiritual disciplines. They were viewed as a “given” to the Spirit-driven visionary process. Everybody embraced the concept and the practice. The following terms are examples of those used to describe the place of spiritual disciplines in the lives of these pastors and Christian leaders: critical, absolutely essential, great emphasis, number one, utmost importance, and cannot live apart from the Word and Spirit.

Second, the question and collected data about spiritual disciplines is difficult to report because the majority of respondents reported the “what” aspect of their spiritual disciplines (what disciplines they follow) without explaining the “how” aspect (how they impact the dynamic of vision composition in their lives). A

close reading of all the interview transcripts only identified five respondents (17 percent) who in any way addressed the “how” question.

Spiritual Disciplines Practiced

Before reporting on these five respondents, the author will indicate which disciplines are followed by these thirty pastors and Christian leaders (see Table 5). The list of thirteen disciplines mentioned by the interviewees looks familiar. These thirteen practices are the disciplines specifically talked about in the interviews. There may well be other disciplines followed by the participants that, for whatever reason, were not talked about. Each participant averaged three to four regular disciplines. The observance of these disciplines, through many years of practice, have become an invaluable part of their lifestyles.

TABLE 5
Spiritual Disciplines

| Discipline | “N” | % of 30 |
|-------------------|------------|----------------|
| Confession | 1 | 3 |
| Fasting | 5 | 17 |
| Journaling | 6 | 20 |
| Listening | 8 | 27 |
| Meditation | 2 | 7 |
| Memorization | 2 | 7 |
| Prayer | 28 | 93 |
| Private Worship | 5 | 17 |
| Retreat | 9 | 30 |
| Scripture | 29 | 97 |
| Simplicity | 1 | 3 |
| Solitude | 3 | 10 |
| Spiritual Reading | 3 | 10 |

Five Testimonies

Since the purpose of Research Question Three is designed to throw light on how the observance of spiritual disciplines affects or impacts the process of creating vision for these thirty pastors and leaders, I now want to present the insights of the five respondents who linked the “what” of their spiritual formation with the “how” of their visionary endeavors. I will share these responses in the order in which the interviews were conducted.

First, Bob Thune expressed that the practice of his spiritual disciplines (scripture, prayer, retreat, and listening) “have a very definite bearing” upon his visionary thinking:

It's hard to quantify because it's spiritual in nature. But certainly as the Word comes through your mind and your heart, God uses that to teach you and impress things upon you. So you get ideas, you get impressions and thoughts from time to time in the Word and then prayer. I find that the Lord more often seems to bring clarity to give us that sense of direction in our prayer time. When I say prayer time I'm talking about an extended time (of prayer).

In the past, Thune would take a couple of hours every week where he would go out into the country to pray in this manner. Thune appears to be saying that through reading scripture and immersing his mind and heart in God's Word, that God gives him thoughts and impressions. These thoughts and impressions are then defined and clarified in prayer, especially by means of an extended prayer time away from his daily routine where he is better able to listen to God.

Next we move to Ray Cotten (scripture, prayer) whose spiritual disciplines "play a big part in catching the vision, but I think they play a bigger part in keeping the vision on track." The totality of Cotten's comments were targeted toward the last part of his statement above, that of keeping the vision on track. According to Cotten, his own experiences with spiritual disciplines impact the visionary process in the following manner:

The spiritual disciplines are those things I think that help weed out selfishness. They help to shape and influence (the visionary process), to keep it on track so that it

doesn't get off onto an ego thing. The disciplines keep you steady, they give you an anchor when you're going through those times when really you'd just as soon give up. (They become) that spiritual base, that spiritual power for you to just stand and persevere. They keep the energy. But if you don't have that spiritual energy, then it's (vision formulation) going to lose the thrust and momentum.

Cotten seems to be saying that his spiritual disciplines hold his visionary thinking accountable as well as provide him with the spiritual power and energy to keep going when times get tough. "I really think that nothing significant happens in ministry unless it's empowered by the Holy Spirit," says Cotten. This empowerment of the Holy Spirit is predicated upon the faithful attention given to one's spiritual formation.

Thirdly, we hear Dick Colenso (scripture, prayer, Christian community) saying something that sounds very close to what Bob Thune shared earlier. For Colenso, the faithful practice of his spiritual disciplines:

qualify me to do more than just dream. (They) give me confidence that what my vision is has God in it. Because we have the mind of Christ, (this) means that God communicates with us not just through mystical things but in an on-going way day by day. If I'm qualified as a Christian person, the thoughts I think are the thoughts of God. (Therefore) for me and my style, it's very important that I be faithful to all of the disciplines.

As Colenso reads and studies scripture, as he prays, as he seeks the affirmation of the Christian community and submits himself to other people, he becomes “qualified” to engage in visionary thinking.

These disciplines put him in touch with the mind of Christ so that he can have confidence to follow the thoughts and impressions that come to his mind and heart.

Moving on to the fourth respondent who addressed how his spiritual disciplines affect his visionary thinking, Maxie Dunnam (scripture, spiritual reading, prayer, silence, listening, confession) issued a word of warning concerning how it is possible for many leaders to operate without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. He shared:

I think it's very easy for a natural leader, or a person who has gifts of leadership, to lead a church and to have excitement going on, but still miss the intention (of the Lord) for that congregation. Why? Because of operating out of our gifts and our own ability to influence and our own natural charisma rather than charisma in the spiritual sense.

Dunnam does not think that the will of God can be discerned apart from keeping one's spiritual disciplines. He allows for the fact that sometimes God does intervene “when we're far from Him to give us some direction, but when it comes to the direction of our life and the vision that is ours for ministry, it's just so important to be involved

in (personal spiritual formation) in an on-going kind of way.” As with the previous respondents, Dunnam views the practice of spiritual disciplines in the life of a leader as the underlying bedrock and foundation of his or her life and ministry.

The last pastor to address this issue is Gordon MacDonald. He began his comments with a rather shocking statement, “I have never been one who has seen a simple, clear, one-for-one connection between whether or not a guy was praying from day to day and whether or not God was blessing him.” He offered the personal illustration of experiencing a week of utter frustration and failure in his personal devotions followed by going into the pulpit and preaching one of his finest sermons. On the other hand, he has had weeks where he’s prayed and prayed and felt close to God and gone into the pulpit and bombed. “The correlation between spiritual discipline and immediate effectiveness rarely shows itself,” believes MacDonald.

Next came a disclaimer to his first statement:

But I just have absolutely no doubt that over a period of time, God anoints the mind of a woman or man who’s regularly on their knees and saturating their lives in the Divine Scriptures and doing a lot of meditative and confessional work. I think as we sharpen our souls in that way, God provides the kind of seminal vision-stuff

we so badly need. I think that it's very connected but I'm not sure how.

MacDonald's point is that a lifetime of actively seeking spiritual formation builds the infrastructure for all visionary thinking and impulses. Meditation was highlighted by MacDonald as the most important discipline for vision formulation. According to him,

There's a centerpoint in life that's supposed to be very quiet. If you properly maintain it, then most likely the Spirit of God is going to speak to you there and it will be translated into thoughts. You'll begin to come up with conclusions and insights you never thought you had, re-arrangements of facts and truth and observation.

The interior speaks, says MacDonald, and speaks visionary material.

"It never shouts, it always whispers," shared MacDonald, "and visions often come from (it)."

All five respondents seem to be saying the same thing but in different ways. Spiritual disciplines provide not only the foundation and bedrock of vision, they provide accountability, energy, and sometimes the actual content of the visions themselves.

Safeguards and Guidelines for Vision

What safeguards or guidelines can be followed for testing or confirming the visionary input that one receives as coming from the Holy Spirit?

This question is designed to pinpoint what steps or avenues the thirty participants of this study follow in order to test out or corroborate their visionary leanings. Do these pastors and Christian leaders lead as “visionary lone rangers” who come down from the mountain, so to speak, and issue edicts by saying, “Thus saith the Lord,” or do they submit themselves and their visionary aspirations to a group of selected others for the purpose of being held accountable? If, as the New Testament teaches, the Holy Spirit indwells both the individual believer and the church as the Body of Christ, is submitting one’s vision to the Holy Spirit, via the instrumentality of the church, non-negotiable for the pastor or Christian leader who desires to function as a Spirit-driven visionary?

None of the thirty participants interviewed could be classified as a “visionary lone ranger” (see Table 6). All of them appeared to carry a clear and forceful sense of the danger of creating vision in a vacuum without any accountability. A total of fourteen safeguards for visionary confirmation materialized during the interviews from the thirty participants. Church boards, elders, pastoral staffs, and spouses ranked as the highest sources for visionary safeguards.

TABLE 6
Safeguards For Testing Vision

| Safeguards | "N" | % of 30 |
|---------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Administrative Assistant | 1 | 3 |
| Church Board/Elders | 21 | 70 |
| Denominational Leadership | 2 | 7 |
| Holy Spirit | 1 | 3 |
| Lay People | 5 | 17 |
| Other Pastors | 2 | 7 |
| Pastoral Staff | 15 | 50 |
| Respected Peers | 5 | 17 |
| Scriptures | 7 | 23 |
| Self-Knowledge | 1 | 3 |
| Sociology | 1 | 3 |
| Spouses | 9 | 27 |
| Time | 1 | 3 |

Church Leadership

More than two-thirds of the participants shared that they make it a priority to bounce their visions off of their church boards and/or elders (21). This translates into Chuck Roluffs, pastor of Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church in Portland, OR, running his visions by his "church council," a group of about eighteen to twenty representatives of all the ministries in his church. Roluffs shared that "I believe strongly that each one of us is limited in our perspective and understanding and we need to rely upon others." When Roluffs senses that God is giving him direction for the church, he takes it to the church council where his idea is batted around amongst the members. At this level Roluffs' ideas either die an

honorable death or they are fanned into greater life by Roluffs and the council members.

Jeff Smith, who pastors Indian Trail Community Church in Spokane, WA, holds high regard for the feedback and mutual ownership of the leaders that surround him in his church situation: “(Vision) is checked against the leadership of the church. Are we in this together? Am I the only one seeing this, or are there other people? Is anyone following?” Rick Porter gladly chooses to work with his church leadership:

I think you work with your leadership. The people I’m leading. Are we jointly together in where I’m going with this? I really want to be a consensus guy. So for me that (working with church leadership) is a safeguard. Sometimes I think if anything I’m not dictatorial enough. So in other words, safeguards and guidelines are kind of the way I operate.

T. Allen Bethel always seeks “confirmations from leadership and elders, (the) people I trust in to be able to sound things out, sharing with them and seeing if they can say, ‘Well, I’m not sure,’ or ‘We did something like this and when it came up, this is what happened.’”

One last example comes from Stephen Elliot. Because his leadership style is “collaborative in character” and he tends “to work at building and discovering consensus,” safeguards and check points are naturally built into the process he follows for formulating vision.

When he comes up against conflict or differences of opinion regarding something he feels strongly about, Elliot shared that he does one of two things:

I find a detour, and if I can't find a detour, I wait until a detour shows up. A detour would be something that I can have consensus with to get you to the same place. Sometimes it's a matter of painting the picture in a different color. Instead of the picture appearing to be bright red flags that are waving in everybody's face, modulate down to yellow flags and find some measure of compromise. Bottomline is I know where we need to go, I sense where God wants us to go, so let's find the most palatable path for getting there.

Because Elliot has a strong degree of confidence in where he believes God wants the church to go, he is willing to compromise and take detours if that is what it takes to cross the finish line together.

Pastoral Staff

After church leadership, the pastoral staff (n=15/50 percent) is where the participants turned to next to test or confirm visionary ideas. "I listen to my staff," shared Morris Dirks. "A lot of the vision that I have for the church comes out of the staff." After mentioning a number of different ways in which he relies upon his staff and their particular vision for the church, Dirks concludes by saying, "I know God has given them to us for this reason. And now this (staff

vision) is my vision. In my heart, I'm ready to pour myself into it. This is not a one man visionary show."

A careful reading of the whole of Dirks' comments reveals that he carries an over-arching, macro vision for the church that his staff must embrace. What he is saying is that he allows his staff members freedom to work out their vision for their segment of the total church vision. What Dirks has created is a healthy staff atmosphere where they hold each other accountable for vision.

Chris Widener says, "I have a leadership team that consists of my two co-workers and we keep each other accountable." Keith Taylor oversees a staff of ten people but not all of these are privy to his visionary ideas in their beginning stages: "Often I will bring things up to my senior staff and say, 'Interact with me on this one.' And we pray about it and get some feedback to know we're going in the right direction."

Steve Sjogren is responsible for a staff of fifty-three people but only five of them directly report to him, of whom he says, "I'd listen to any of these (five top level pastors) people very seriously. Probably two of those I'd really, really, really listen to a lot more than the other ones because we have more of a relationship and are more on the same wave-length." Ron Kincade concurs with both

Taylor and Sjogren and their selective approach to testing initial visionary motifs with their staff. He begins by sharing his vision with certain staff members but later on will share his thoughts with the whole staff.

Church leadership and pastoral staff are the two most important sources of feedback and accountability for the thirty participants of this study. From the responses of those interviewed it is clear to see that they occupy places of solid testing and accountability and are a source of the Holy Spirit's work in birthing and endorsing vision.

Spouses

Spouses ranked as the third highest choice for testing vision. A total of eight (27 percent) respondents identified their spouse as a reliable source of feedback with regards to visionary ideas and dreams, although only a couple of them elaborated upon how this works in their lives. David Le Shana mentioned his wife, Becky, throughout his interview. His forty-plus years of leadership have been years of partnership between the two of them: "God speaks to both of us, and our decision-making has been, in fact, always together and it's been a joint sharing of a vision." Le Shana went on to add that "I've been most fortunate that I have a wife who is far

more sensitive to the Holy Spirit than I am. Together we make the team, so it's not just me making decisions."

Jeff Smith referred to his wife, Glenda, as "sort of a silent witness." Says Smith:

Her opinions are extremely valuable to me but I don't know that she has ever in twenty-one years of marriage had to say something like, 'I think you're off on this.' There have been times when I've been off, but we had already discovered it. Somehow, somehow through our temperament mix and match and how God has led, we've always been not too many steps behind each other, which I thank God deeply for.

Scripture

Next in line comes the witness of scripture (n=7/23 percent). The convictions of the seven participants who mentioned scripture are accurately communicated in this comment by Jeff Smith, "(Vision) cannot conflict with Scripture. I have a high regard for the Word, and so (vision) is checked against that, obviously."

Respected Peers

The last checkpoint to be commented on is the place of one's respected peers (n=5/17 percent) for testing out vision. These are people different from church board members, elders, pastoral staff, and spouses. In most cases they reside outside of the participant's church or ministry.

Bob Morehead's was the first interview where respected peers surfaced. Morehead made it clear that he takes all of his "big picture" visions, ones that he really believes are from God, and runs them through two sieves. First of all, "the sieve of my administrative council," and second, the sieve of "another group of three men that I respect and who are very mature and to whom I say, 'Tell me, is this from God or is this indigestion?'"

"I am a big seeker of counsel, of people whose counsel I respect," comments Jeff Smith. He has a group of three men that he regularly approaches with his visionary ideas. All three are in his denomination but not in his church. One is a peer pastor and the two others are experienced pastors twenty to twenty-five years older than he.

Maxie Dunnam suggested that visionary pastors need three groups of core people to test out their visions on: "(You need) core people both in terms of the leadership of the church and the non-leadership. But you also need a core of peer-type people as well."

Representative Stories of Vision

Throughout the interview process a number of remarkable stories of God's visionary action in the lives of the participants were shared with the author. These stories tell the story of how God

works to impart vision to his people. They illustrate where the rubber meets the road for vision formulation for the Christian leader. The author has selected ten stories to share in hopes of “picturing,” at least in part, how the visioning process has worked for some.

Relocation of Overlake Christian Church

In 1987 Bob Morehead was facing “a huge need” at Overlake Christian Church. The church was holding five services on the weekend. The sanctuary was absolutely filled. Morehead wondered what to do next. He set aside one of his monthly days of prayer and fasting away from the church office to specifically pray about finding God’s solution to this huge need he and the church were facing.

While Morehead was praying, God brought to his mind the story of Elisha and the widow’s oil from II Kings 4. According to Morehead,

What I got out of that (story) for that day was the oil didn’t stop until the containers were no more. When she ran out of containers, God stopped the oil. So God was saying to me, ‘I’m going to stop this growth because you’ve run out of containers. Until you get more containers, there will be no more growth.’

After reading and pondering this story, Morehead felt like he had been hit with a ton of bricks.

He returned to his church and gathered his elders together and shared how God had spoken to him. He asked them to take a week of prayer so that God could speak to them as well. The elders studied II Kings 4 and prayed. When they came back together they were unanimous in agreement that God was leading them to relocate the church and build bigger facilities.

This story is shaped and formed by the following visionary factors: circumstances (Overlake Christian Church had no more room to grow), retreat and solitude (Morehead observed a day of prayer and fasting to seek God's will), Scripture (II Kings 4), still small voice (God directed Morehead to investigate the story of Elisha and the widow), and people (Morehead shared his leading with his elders who confirmed God's direction through Morehead after they took time to pray and seek confirmation).

“You Will Be the Next Senior Pastor”

(The name of the pastor in this story has been changed because he would prefer to remain anonymous due to what he calls “the very personal and sacred nature of what happened to me.”) After serving First Church for four years as its youth pastor, Steve Smith sensed that it was time for him to leave the youth ministry. His senior pastor asked him to head up the adult shepherding group ministry in

the church. Steve agreed to the change in his responsibilities and transitioned into his new role in May.

His senior pastor accepted a new position at another church four months later. Steve was subsequently asked to be the interim senior pastor. He was told by the moderator of the church board that he would not be considered as a candidate for the position of senior pastor for three reasons: his age (32), his lack of experience in adult ministries, and the fact that he had been the church's youth pastor.

One day Steve was sitting in his bedroom pondering the situation at church with the search for a new senior pastor. God began to speak to Steve, "I had deep sense that I would be the next senior pastor at First Church and that God would move against all the odds, change all their thinking, and take this young, former youth pastor and I can see this packed church of 1200 people." He called for his wife to come into the bedroom where he told her, "I want to tell you something before it happens. It's going to be a very odd thing that happens and it's not pride, I don't have to have this, but I will be the next senior pastor of First Church!" From this point on God gave Steve a deep internal conviction that he would lead First Church in a way that was way beyond anything he had ever done before.

Through a series of unexpected turnarounds, Steve was asked to be a candidate and called to be senior pastor. “I entered leading that church with a sense that God has called me and God wants to do a new thing at First Church and he is going to do it through my leadership.”

The key visionary factor for Steve in this story is the divine hunch or the still, small voice. Says Steve, “It was an inner sense, a still, small voice. This did not come out of a book, this didn’t happen because I went to a conference. It just came in my relationship with the Lord.”

The Birthing of a Ten Year Plan

Shortly after Bob Thune began his ministry at Christ Community Church he felt a need for a clear sense of vision both for himself and the church. He gathered together some basic information on the church and the city where it was located. He wrote up some questions for his governing board, sent them an advance copy to ponder and answer, and then called a meeting to go over their answers. He listened carefully and jotted down notes. This gave him a good understanding of his context.

Next he got away by himself and began to think through everything he had just learned about the church and the city. He

began to pray, “Lord, what would you like to see here, what would be a good dream for this ministry?” The end result was that God “gave me a very clear vision for the next ten years and it served us well. It gave us a picture of what we were trying to become.”

A number of visionary factors appear in Bob’s story: circumstances (he collected data on both the city and the church), people (he enlisted the help and support of his governing board), study and thinking (he poured over the church and city data with a view to understanding his local context as thoroughly as possible), retreat and solitude (he went away for a few days by himself to be with the Lord), and listening and prayer (he asked for God’s direction for his ministry).

Creating a Vision the Congregational Way

In October of 1991, to celebrate the church’s tenth birthday, Mary Manin Morrissey decided to lead her congregation in an exercise to create their own vision statement (Morrissey 51). A three-by-five vision card was placed in the church bulletin each week for one month. People in the congregation were instructed to ask themselves, “What do I see in the year 2001 when the Center is twenty years old? What will happen in my life as a result?” They wrote their dreams and visions on these three-by-five cards.

Morrissey collected over a thousand cards. She read and prayed over each one. From the input of the people she wrote a collective vision statement. Included in this vision statement was a detailed paragraph describing the property and facilities the church hoped to acquire within ten years. Less than two years later the church purchased land and buildings that perfectly matched their vision statement through a series of remarkable circumstances.

Visionary factors that figured heavily in this story are: needs (the church was meeting in a theater and wanted to find a permanent home), people (everyone in the congregation was given a chance to give their input into the creation of a church vision statement), writing down ideas (Morrissey collected over 1000 cards), study and thinking (Morrissey closely examined each card and sought out the overarching themes of each), and prayer and listening (time was spent over a month-long period praying over the cards for direction).

A Backward and Forward Visionary Prayer

Ted Roberts got in touch with God's vision for his church in a most surprising manner. On the tenth anniversary of his installment as the senior pastor of East Hills Church, a special celebration was held in recognition of his ministry and leadership. During the service

a tape was played of his installment prayer by Roy Hicks, Jr. ten years earlier. As Roberts listened to Hicks' prayer, he began to cry and weep. Everything that Roy Hicks, Jr. prayed for Roberts and the church had come to pass.

After the service Roberts listened to the tape again and identified fifteen detailed points that comprised the heart of Hicks' prayer. These fifteen points described in a precise manner the ministry of Roberts and his congregation over the past ten years. Roberts realized that God was sovereignly committed to the ministry of East Hills Church and that he did not need Ted Roberts to bring it to pass. His own personal vision had been superceded by God's. God used Roy Hicks, Jr.'s installation prayer to reveal this to Roberts. As he began his eleventh year of ministry at East Hills Church, Roberts intentionally adopted the fifteen points of Hicks' prayer as the vision statement for him and his church.

The two key points in this visionary story are prayer and people. God used the prayer of Roy Hicks, Jr., in a manner beyond the understanding both of Hicks and Roberts, to reveal his vision for the church as well as to drive the church toward the fulfillment of that vision.

This story also raises the question of God's specific vision and purpose for a church's ministry: does God give some churches a particular vision that remains with the church and is not tied to a specific pastor or church leader?

Leading From a Paper Plate

One day Ray Cotten was sitting in his little apartment in Wichita, Kansas. He had just graduated from college and was pastoring his first church. His call to that church was solid but he didn't have a vision for the church. As time went on, Cotten "began to see the needs, see the opportunities in the community." He began praying for God's clear direction. For Cotten, that direction came at a time when he wasn't even seeking a direction but was just in the process of seeking after God:

I remember when the Lord really kind of laid out a vision for the future of the church in Wichita. I was in my little apartment. I didn't have any paper, but I had some paper plates. So the first vision I had for the church, I don't remember what I was doing, but I just grabbed a paper plate and I wrote the vision on the back of it.

Years later when Cotten looked back at the church's ministry he realized that what he put down on that paper plate came to pass. Says Cotten, "Of course it got refined many times from that, but the initial thrust of it and the main principles of it really were in place."

Four visionary ingredients are evident in Cotten's story: circumstances (he began addressing the needs and opportunities in the community), prayer (he sought God's direction for the church's future), still, small voice (at an unexpected moment God spoke to Cotten about the church's future), and sensitivity (Cotten was quick to realize that God was speaking and he had better pay attention even though it was coming at an unexpected time).

Vision Via Prayerful Consensus

Stephen Elliot began to cast a vision for a multiple service format when his church could no longer place everybody in one service. He asked his board to fast and pray for two days before leaving for a weekend retreat. On Friday evening Elliot laid out four different multiple service formats. The option that he was most interested in, but was the least attractive one to all his board members, involved moving all the Christian Education ministries to Sunday evenings. Elliot was careful not to reveal his bias and laid out each option as objectively as he could, discussing the pros and cons of each. After presenting all four options the board broke up into small groups and prayed for God's direction. He also asked each board member to pray privately about the decision that evening before going to bed.

The next morning he handed out pieces of paper and asked each board member to write down which service format they believed God was leading the church to choose. To everyone's surprise, the whole board wrote down the option that no one wanted the night before, that of moving Christian Education to the evening time slot. "There was absolute unanimity around the table. God gave the church immediate direction. And God really has prospered that format," shared Elliot.

This story reveals the following visionary components: prayer (the pastor and governing board prayed and fasted before the retreat and prayed during the retreat), people (Elliot included his governing board in the decision to change the service format), and retreat (the leadership team went away to focus on God, the problem at hand, and seek God's direction).

I Say "No" But You Say "Yes"

Maxie Dunnam's intention was to be a pastor all his life. He never had any dreams of being involved in theological education at an academic level. As a member of the Board of Trustees, Dunnam was appointed Chairperson of the Search Committee to find a new president for Asbury Theological Seminary.

Two finalists were selected by the committee, either of whom would have made an outstanding leader of the seminary. But, according to Dunnam, the committee “could not get unanimity on either of those.” Toward the end of the search process the other committee members began talking to Dunnam about letting his name stand for the president’s position, but he immediately resisted. He had already said an emphatic no to their inquiries before the search process began.

In a conversation with his wife after telling the committee “no” once again, “she just out of the blue said, ‘I sense that you may have said no too quickly.’” Dunnam replied that if circumstances changed he would pay attention to them. At the next search committee meeting, as they were reviewing the two final candidates and making plans for interviews, Dunnam shared this turn of events:

One of the committee members said that he had awakened at 4:00am that morning and that he’d had a vision (He never claimed to have visions). His vision was that both the candidates that we had selected should be involved in the ministry and even in the leadership of the seminary, but neither of them should be President. And that, again, he felt I should be the person to be the president.

Dunnam said that before anyone knew what was going on, people began to pray. People were kneeling, praying out loud, each

taking turns, in a spontaneous outpouring of prayer. Still Dunnam did not feel led to let his name stand, "God may be speaking to you, but He's not speaking to me. I still do not have clarity. I think we've got to move on with the process until I get clarity."

The committee continued to insist that Dunnam consider letting his name stand. Dunnam then asked for two weeks to consider their request. He and his wife went away for a week, "just to pray and reflect and discern, and felt that we should enter the interview process." He went through the process and was invited to become the next president of Asbury Seminary. According to Dunnam, "I wanted to be faithful to what I believed was a faithful people. Sometimes when we don't discern God's call directly, we do have to listen to other people who are as equally committed to discerning God's will as we are."

This story provides a number of windows into the visionary process: circumstances (Asbury Seminary needed a president), people (the search committee whom God used to reveal his plan for Dunnam's Presidency of Asbury Seminary), vision (given to a committee member for the first time in his life), prayer (by Dunnam, his wife, and the search committee), and retreat (the one week that Dunnam and his wife went away to seek the mind of God).

From Kansas to Los Angeles to Oslo

After graduating from college, Steve Sjogren did not have any clear direction for his life. He took a job as a waiter and decided to wait and see what the Lord had for him. He was newly married with a small child. He began reading scripture for four hours a day. For the first time in his life he felt “an absolutely clear communication from the Lord and it came out of this context of memorizing scripture, meditating on it, journaling, and praying a lot.” During this time God gave him Isaiah 61 as a “life chapter.” In a spirit of prayer and meditation upon Isaiah 61, he felt led to declare that he would “like to be a pastor with this group called the Vineyard.” At that time the Vineyard only had two churches (early 1980s) and he had attended one of them during college.

Sjogren called up the Vineyard in southern California and said, “You guys don’t remember me, but I was there in college a few years ago, and I’d like to come back and train pastors to plant churches in Europe.” The Vineyard replied, “That’s funny because we just decided the last few days that we’re going to do that.” Sjogren was asked to send a letter spelling out his specific thoughts about church planting in Europe. The man who opened his letter, who later

became a mentor to Sjogren, said that as he opened the letter he sensed that “this is one of the guys.”

Sjogren and his wife sold their belongings and moved to California. They hung around the church for two years and received training but with very little encouragement from the system. “They let me do things like funerals and weddings and Bible studies,” shared Sjogren. Finally he was sent to Europe where he and his wife planted a church in Oslo.

The following key points can be discerned in Sjogren’s story: scripture (God gave Sjogren a vision for his future while spending four hours a day reading scripture), prayer (Sjogren prayed for God’s will for his life), circumstances (as God was leading Sjogren to plant churches in Europe, he was giving the Vineyard the same vision and directed the two of them together), and people (God used the Vineyard to fulfill Sjogren’s vision and Sjogren to fulfill the Vineyard’s vision).

Story #10: The Effective Father

Twenty-five years ago a frustrated father came into Gordon MacDonald’s office and said,

I have two children and I am a crappy father. My own father left the home when I was nine months of age. I’ve never been around a real man in the home. I don’t have

any ideas what fathers do for their children. I'm beginning to realize that my two children are going to be monsters if I have anything to do with it. Is there any way you can help me become a good father?

MacDonald couldn't think of anything to give this man to read.

Therefore he told him to check back with him in twenty-four hours and he'd supply him with a "check-list of fatherhood things and you can just read it through, read this check-list everyday and make sure you're doing it."

Later that day MacDonald dictated over a five to eight minute period a twelve-point check-list. He gave it to his secretary the next day to transcribe. She came back with his copy and said in a note that his thoughts were so good that he ought to expand them sometime. A day or two later he took the twelve points and wrote them into an article. He showed this to his wife, Gail, who told him that what he had there was a book waiting to be written. She promised to give him two weeks of their vacation to help him write the book and get it done. That summer he went up to New Hampshire and wrote The Effective Father in about ten days.

At the end of this story MacDonald said, "That's an example of a vision where someone confronts you with a deal, an issue, and you

build out of their dilemma. I could probably give you fifteen - twenty stories like that.”

Summary of Interviews

This completes the analysis of the interviews. Greater, in-depth analysis of the interview findings will be presented in Chapter 5. As this chapter is brought to a conclusion, the data presented above can be summarized in the following two statements.

First, the manner in which visionary pastors and Christian leaders hear or discern the voice of the Holy Spirit in vision formulation can be described as an idiosyncratic process for each person. There is no “one size fits all” formula. When it comes to this highly personal, creative, and diverse exercise, there are “no dittos” with respect to a concise method that can be universally applied. Each visionary pastor and leader, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is called upon to flesh out his or her own *modus operandi* in the visionary process.

Second, given the idiosyncratic nature of vision formulation, a common core of elements quickly emerge as foundational to the fashioning of vision. Scripture, prayer, circumstances, people, the still small voice, retreats, and reading and study are these core elements. Like single components stacked in a deck of cards, the

Holy Spirit shuffles these core elements together and deals them out to visionary leaders in a variety of patterns and sequences. Over time and experience a normative paradigm begins to emerge for each visionary.

CHAPTER 5

Summary and Conclusions

Leaders who can spark the imagination with a compelling vision of a worthwhile end that stretches us beyond what is known today, and who can translate that to clear objectives, are the ones we follow (Hesselbein, Goldsmith, Beckhard 252). Time, experience, and results have proven the thirty participants of this study to be visionary leaders and pastors who people choose to follow. In light of the purpose of this study--to identify the different ways in which visionary pastors or leaders hear and/or discern the voice of the Holy Spirit in the process of formulating vision for their ministries--the leadership experiences of the thirty interview participants proved to be a valuable source of information about the role of the Holy Spirit in vision formulation.

Major Findings

The author has identified seven major findings that provide clues for the operation of the Holy Spirit in the lives of visionary leaders. This dynamic relationship between Spirit and leader is brought into clearer focus once these discoveries are both understood and integrated into one's life and ministry. The following represents

a synopsis of what was unearthed about vision composition from the thirty interview participants.

Axiom I: Visionary Leaders Follow a Number of Different Routes Toward Catching God's Vision

As was stated in the summary of Chapter 4, when it comes to a prescription for the creation of vision, there is no “one size fits all” blueprint. The creation of vision for pastors and leaders, at best, can simply be defined as an idiosyncratic process. In a very real sense, most leaders interviewed, through trial and error over time and experience, forged out their own particular *modus operandi* of forming vision. But what works for Leader A may not work for Leaders B, C, and D. Each discovers his or her own unique visionary grooves to run in, grooves that, if tried by another leader, may in fact, stifle that leader's visionary work.

In this vein, Jeff Smith made reference to the development of vision as a “messy, artistic process.” This is confirmed by Barna who writes, “discerning the vision is neither straightforward nor predictable. Sometimes it takes a few weeks of diligent effort; sometimes it takes years” (Turning Vision Into Action 40). Though for many of the interview participants a normative paradigm of vision making did emerge over time, few of them revealed anything

of a *modus operandi* that was heavily formulaic or airtight with respect to definite steps that had to be followed in a specific order.

In fact, a number of leaders expressed a real frustration that they were not able to clearly articulate the exact steps of how they arrived at their vision. Others commented that there was no sure guarantee that what worked in the past would work again for them in the future. The instrumentality for discovering vision proves itself to be a slippery process. Part of what it means to be involved with God in this idiosyncratic process of vision formulation is to remain open at all times for God to speak in ways that are new and different from previous experiences.

Axiom II: God Uses a Variety of Elements to Impart Vision

Even though the creation of vision is an idiosyncratic process, it is not without some ingredients that are common to all. During the interviews, a core of common elements quickly emerged as those which God repeatedly used to impart vision to his servant leaders: scripture, prayer, circumstances, people, the still, small voice, and reading and study. Barna posits a similar list in his discussion of how visionaries arrive at their vision:

The process is inevitably a long-term mixture of elements, such as prayer, Bible study, analyzing information about needs and opportunities in their life

context, seeking verbal input from trusted colleagues, self-analysis and small-scale testing of elements of their developing vision (Turning Vision Into Action 108).

The idiosyncratic nature of the visionary process is determined, on the one hand, by how much attention is being paid to one or more of these elements by the pastor or leader, and, on the other hand, by how the Holy Spirit chooses to use one or more of these common elements as the conduit for his speaking voice. All of them, at one time or another, are used by God to convey his will and ways to visionary leaders, but the manner in which the Holy Spirit employs them varies in degree and changes from time and place. This, too, contributes to the idiosyncratic nature of generating vision.

The ten vision stories found at the conclusion of Chapter 4 illustrate this phenomenon. In particular, we see in the example of Morris Dirks how God utilizes these elements during his practice of taking Mondays as a day for solitude and renewal:

The whole day is listening and it will involve reading (scripture and other books), walking, sitting, pondering, walking with God. God speaks to me through the nature that surrounds me, or the book I'm reading, or the verse or problem I'm gnawing on, or as I'm writing in my journal. I tend to be active mentally but flexible in that activity to say, "How does God want to access my mind? Maybe I need to walk for a while, maybe I should read, maybe I should sit in the chapel."

Dirks attempts to situate himself in both a physical place and a spiritual frame of mind and heart where God can speak to him. Consciously or unconsciously, he lines himself up behind the core elements and waits for God to communicate to him with a strong sense of hope and expectation. For each visionary leader, this is a fascinating process that possesses a real sense of mystery as one humbly waits upon God for some kind of visionary epiphany.

Axiom III: Living a Life of Personal Devotion to God Is Essential for the Visionary Leader

The importance of a life of personal devotion to God was underscored in interview after interview. As significant as the practice of spiritual disciplines are, the incomparable message communicated by the participants centered on the formation of the soul of the person practicing the disciplines. In other words, “doing” flows out of “being”; therefore, the development of one’s person before God cannot be minimized.

The normal pattern for spiritual formation, of course, includes the lifelong pursuit and exercise of the classic disciplines of the spiritual life. The spiritual disciplines, in this light, are understood as the means to an end. Participants perceived personal practice of the spiritual disciplines as one tangible way they could play out their

part before God in seeking to establish a dynamic and ongoing personal relationship with him. The closer they drew to the heart of God, chances are, the better skilled they would become at discerning God's visionary will for their lives and ministries.

Axiom IV: Vision Is Best Created In Community With Others

George Barna emphatically makes the point that vision is entrusted to an individual, "Did you notice in the Bible that God never gave vision to a committee? In every case, God selected a person for whom He tailored a vision for a better future" (Turning Vision Into Action 75). Barna follows this statement with the clarification that "people may play a role in your comprehension of the special vision God has for you" (75). The overriding consensus of the pastors and leaders interviewed evidenced a clear congruence with both of Barna's statements. God does give vision to individuals and this vision is confirmed, refined, and enlarged through the contributions of others.

All thirty interview participants spoke of a real sense of responsibility before both God and their followers for formulating a vision of a better future that would excite and motivate people to action. At the same time, none of them believed that they stood alone. Once visionary impulses struck and began to germinate, they

freely shared them with trusted members of their leadership teams, peers, colleagues, and/or spouses. The axiomatic value they envisioned by seemed to be that vision is best created and hatched within the community of the church. Each leader recognized their need to have God confirm through others what they believed he was saying to them. The confirmation of respected peers and colleagues prevented visionary dreams that were resourced solely in one's myopic, blurred vision or pride-driven ego from becoming reality.

To illustrate how this is manifested in ministry, Ray Cotten periodically organizes brainstorm sessions for his church leadership team. During these times he tests his vision out by asking church leadership open-ended questions about the vision. According to Cotten, "What happens is, if that is truly God's vision, he's going to be placing things on other people's hearts. It's your job as the leader to begin casting that vision and draw it out, but God's working in other people's lives, too." This process helps Cotten to determine whether or not he's headed down the right path. Working with other key people within the organization to develop and refine vision is one of Cotten's core leadership values.

What about opposition? According to Cotten, even though the community may voice opposition to the vision in its initial stages,

that is not always a sign that the vision is wrong and should be dropped. “You can’t take opposition, necessarily, as a barometer that God doesn’t want you to do (something),” he says. “In fact, sometimes opposition can be a good barometer that maybe you’re doing what the Lord wants you to do.” For Cotten, though, the question still must be asked, “Does this vision click with anybody else; does this inspire anyone else?”

Axiom V: Vision Unfolds Developmentally

This was a recurring theme throughout the interviews. Pete Schwalm referred to the “dynamic discipline” of envisioning. He understands vision to be a process that is developmental and evolving rather than something that is static and given once and for all. The heart of the vision may come at the beginning, but the final shape and form may take weeks or months or years before it is arrived at.

This finding dovetails with the preceding one. What I heard leaders saying was that often they provided the initial visionary impetus, the nucleus of a visionary idea or direction. Once they shared this vision with their leadership community, then others began to come on board to expand the vision. In time the vision would grow, develop, mature and take on a life of its own that no

longer needed the careful fanning and cultivating that it originally required.

Barna has discovered through biblical exploration and prolonged observation “that vision is not dumped in people’s minds by God all at once, but is progressively revealed to them” (Turning Vision Into Action 13). He sees this process of “incremental revelation” to be an aspect of God’s love for, and protection of, his visionary leaders.

Axiom VI: Vision Is Macro In Scope

The author is indebted to Stephen Elliot for the following statement that sums up so well what other leaders were saying. The vision God reveals to his servant leaders is not only developmental, it is also a “big picture” vision that seldom comes as a complete package with all the details and minutiae present. For Elliot, vision is “a sense of God’s direction for the church. It’s more important (to know) where we’re going than how we’re going to get there.” The “how” of how the vision is going to be carried out is secondary, at least in the beginning stages, to the “what” of what the vision is. A fixation upon unnecessary details as the vision is being birthed can easily lead to the death of the vision if one is not careful.

Axiom VII: God Transmits Vision Along a Disengagement-Engagement Continuum

Extended reflection upon the thirty interviews revealed a visionary continuum that moves from disengagement from the world, on the one end, to engagement with the world, on the other end. Disengagement from the world takes the form of the intentional pursuance of solitude, silence, prayer, scripture, and listening to God by means of some form of withdrawal from one's normal schedule. The idea here is to step away from one's daily regimen and activities in order to keep company with God with one's visionary eyes and ears wide open toward heaven. Engagement with the world takes the form of embracing the needs, people, circumstances, and situations that naturally come into one's life. These encounters, then, become the avenue of God's visionary impulses if one is open and sensitive to what God wants to say through them.

Each of the visionary pastors and leaders interviewed fall into this continuum at some point. For some, God's vision is primarily disclosed to them when they step back from their ministries to take stock of what is occurring around them and reflect upon it. For others, God's vision predominantly materializes in the ebb and flow of life and in the context of active ministry itself. This is not to say

that those leaders who gravitate toward the disengagement end of the continuum never receive visionary ideas while enmeshed in ministry, or that those who gravitate toward the engagement end of the continuum never receive God's vision while observing times of quietness and solitude. Rather than being an "either/or" equation, this is more accurately a "both/and" choice. Some visionary leaders major in the disengagement mode and minor in the engagement one and vice versa.

To illustrate, the author remembers a particular day when he interviewed both Bob Morehead and Jim Gwinn in Seattle, WA. During the morning interview, Bob Morehead talked with deep-felt passion and conviction about his thirty year ministry practice of taking one day a month to go off alone to be with God for the purpose of prayer, study, and fasting with a visionary motif. Morehead clearly indicated that his monthly days of retreat were the key discipline underlying his visionary dreams and pursuits. Morehead gave the powerful impression that these "away" days were the wind that blew through his visionary sails. Disengagement from his daily ministry world for the purpose of engaging God in a retreat setting describes Morehead's *modus operandi* for vision making.

In contrast, the afternoon interview with Jim Gwinn led down a completely different route. When asked if he followed a practice similar to Morehead's, Gwinn commented, "I've tried that. It doesn't work for me. I can't sit at my desk for forty-five minutes without getting up and walking around. I'm not one of those types of guys." For Gwinn, he needs to be in his office interacting with his staff and constituency, talking on the phone, or scouting out a new ministry possibility somewhere in Seattle. Speaking with people, looking for new opportunities, and observing needs and circumstances are Gwinn's *modus operandi* for being alert to what God is doing in the community. The visionary spark for Gwinn is struck as he engages the needy world surrounding him. He sees the visionary heart of God best from "close up" rather than from "afar." Vision comes to Gwinn as he actively interfaces with his world.

Theological Reflections

I want to share four theological reflections that provide a brief summary of what my thinking upon the literature research and interview process have taught me. These four reflections, to my mind, act as the theological bedrock upon which all visionary dreaming is set.

First, *God himself is a visionary*. This universe is the fruit of God's vision. The physical and and spiritual world were called into existence by his vision. God's vision is all-encompassing. Part of God's vision included the creation of man as male and female in his image and likeness. Therefore, humanity has been created by God with visionary potentiality. Part of what it may mean to be God-like is to be creative, to be a visionary of some kind. The Spirit-driven visionary is a visionary twice over: first, by means of creation (created in the image and likeness of God); and second, by means of regeneration and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (the Holy Spirit communicates God's thoughts).

Second, *God is a communicator*. God is a speaking God. He has spoken through creation, history, Jesus, scripture, and the Holy Spirit to reveal his mind and will. And today God continues to speak by the Holy Spirit through scripture, prayer, circumstances, people, and the church to reveal his vision to the hearts and minds of his visionaries-in-process. The fact that God is a visionary who communicates his vision for his world and church, calls for pastors and leaders of faith who anticipate and expect God to reveal to them his specific vision for their church or ministry.

Third, *God is a reconciler*. God's vision for the world concerns reconciliation. In Jesus God has come "to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). Therefore, the vision of God's people should match God's own vision. Visionary pastors and leaders will find themselves closest to the heart of God when the intentionality of their vision is pointed in the direction of seeking and saving the lost. Spirit-driven vision will be God-centered vision.

And lastly, *God has entrusted his vision to his church*. Therefore, God calls men and women to be his mini-visionaries in carrying out his divine vision. He appoints them, equips them, sends them, and sustains them. The vision, calling, and gifting are God's. Spirit-driven vision will be found at the heart of God's mission for his church.

Therefore, God is behind everything in the visionary process. He gives us the potential to be visionaries by creating us in his image and likeness. He chooses to freely communicate his heart and will (vision) with us in a variety of ways. By revealing himself to us in Jesus, God has shown us that the core element in his vision is reconciliation. To bring reconciliation to the world, God has called his church to make disciples of all the nations. It would appear that God desires for his church and work to be led by Spirit-driven

visionaries, obedient men and women after God's own heart who desire to accomplish only what will fulfill God's vision and bring greater glory to him.

Limitations of the Study

Three significant limitations of this study can be identified: gender, race, and theological persuasions.

Gender

Out of the thirty interview participants, only one was a woman. How the findings of the interviews may have changed if this had not been the case, is difficult to project. Nonetheless, the author assumes that if a greater number of women visionaries had been interviewed, this may have generated some different findings or it could have provided more weight to the current ones.

Race

Once again the study suffered limitations by not crossing racial or ethnic lines. Of the thirty interviews which were conducted, only one of the participants was not a white Anglo-Saxon. Again the author assumes that if there had been a greater representation of different races, the findings might have changed to some degree or simply strengthened the current ones. This conclusion is wrapped up in the author's understanding of the formative nature that one's

cultural background plays upon the perception and practice of one's faith.

Theological Persuasion

The participants of this study classify themselves as evangelical Christians as compared to those within the Eastern, Roman, and Anglican traditions and those within liberal, mainline Protestantism. All three of these classifications have a distinct model of what the church is, how it is to function, and what role it is to play in the world. For example, evangelicals focus on conversion and the cultivation of the inner life. In contrast, the Eastern, Roman, and Anglican traditions focus on sacramentalism and correct doctrine while mainline Protestants focus on social action and social change (Oden 3:263). The author assumes that a representation of greater theological diversity among the participants may very well have spawned results with a significantly altered look.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The following topics might prove fruitful for further research and study. These subjects were touched upon either in the author's research or through his interviews.

First, the bearing of personality types upon visionary acumen. Do some personality types lend themselves more to visionary

competence? How does the function of one's intuition interface with the role of the Holy Spirit in vision making? This theme would make for a fascinating study.

Second, what is the relationship between a leader's vision and values? Is one more important than the other, and if so, which one and why? Do values determine vision or does vision determine values? Do values protect vision from becoming faddish or shallow?

Third, is the ability to function as a visionary a skill that can be learned or is it a gift from God that comes either through personality make-up or as a component in one's spiritual gift mix? If it is a skill that can be learned, what are the steps one must follow to learn how to operate as a visionary?

Fourth, what relation do personal theological convictions play upon how vision is perceived and comprehended? For example, would a group of thirty pastors from the Foursquare Gospel Church show significant differences of perception and comprehension of vision from a group of thirty pastors from the Presbyterian Church in America? Or what differences would surface on the question of vision-making from a group of Roman Catholic priests in comparison to a group of Nazarene pastors?

And lastly, what about the question of vision outliving the visionary? What happens when the pastor moves--does the vision leave with the pastor or does it stay for the new pastor? Is it possible for the vision to be faithfully implemented and refined by one or more successors (Barna, *Turning Vision Into Action* 76)? Does God give a vision to a church that lives on for generation after generation?

Implications for Existing Body of Knowledge

The subject of vision is popular right now in the business and church worlds. With each passing year, the published books and articles concerned with vision continue to multiply. Someone curious about vision, with a serious desire to increase his or her knowledge of the subject, can benefit greatly from this growing corpus of visionary literature.

The author discovered one major limitation of this expanding body of visionary literature in his research. While much has been written about the various nuances of vision, very little has been written about the topic of this dissertation, namely, how spirituality and vision interface with one another in the process of the birthing of vision in the mind, heart, and life of a visionary leader.

To no one's great surprise, the author failed to find one discussion of this topic in the business literature of corporate America. But to the author's great surprise, he failed to find an extensive coverage of this area in his examination of Christian resources. Statements were made about the importance of prayer or scripture or information gathering for the process of vision composition, but next to nothing was written in a practical or illustrative manner about what this might look like in the life of a visionary leader in pursuit of God as well as a vision for his or her ministry. The wealth of material that the author did excavate on this subject turned up in the thirty interviews that he conducted. They provided a powerful, inspiring, and educational picture of how vision is shaped and forged within the context of one's personal relationship with God.

The implication for the existing body of knowledge is that this dissertation, at least in part, attempts to address a void in the current corpus of visionary literature in the church. This dissertation seeks to build a bridge of integration between the fields of spiritual formation and leadership development. It attempts to show how the practice of one's spirituality can be, and should be, synthesized with the practice of one's visionary leadership. The interviews act as case

studies which reveal stories and illustrations that supply a missing ingredient to the statements and theory that comprise so much of what is written today about vision.

Practical Applications

Throughout the author's research, interviewing, reflection, and writing, a number of practical applications surfaced with respect to the process of framing vision as a Spirit-driven visionary. Some are highly practical in nature and reflect where the "rubber meets the road." Others supply important perspectives for approaching and working within the visionary process. Taken together, they help to ensure that visionary leaders maintain contact with the heart of God as they exercise their visionary leadership.

First of all, *laying hold of the big picture view of God's vision for his world is indispensable before pastors and leaders can successfully formulate a vision for their ministry.* God's plan of salvation history supplies the larger context within which the visionary leader's plans must be aligned and fitted. In other words, a leader must have a thorough understanding of what God is seeking to accomplish in the world before he or she can create a ministry vision that is cohesive with God's ultimate strategy for saving a lost world. This perspective was underlined by Joe Aldrich, "If we have

some idea of what God's redemptive purpose is, then vision is rather simple--how do we best mobilize the resources that we have been entrusted with to be most effective in fulfilling and extending God's kingdom." How can pastors have God's heart for their own ministry visions, if first they have not been touched and enlightened by God's heart-felt vision for his world? This transference of vision from the heart of God to the hearts of his servant leaders is a work of God that must take place in the spiritual realm.

Secondly, *pastors and leaders must approach their pursuit of God's vision with a strong sense of intentionality.* Prime time needs to be set aside in their schedules for the purpose of seeking God's heart, studying scripture, praying, listening, reflecting upon circumstances and needs, and interacting with the key people who surround them in this process. As a general rule, vision does not happen accidentally or haphazardly. Vision is created by a proactive search for a preferred future. This involves both an understanding of what must occur in the visionary process as well as the self-discipline to put this knowledge to practice.

Thirdly, *pastors and leaders must practice intentionality in their pursuit of God as well as in their pursuit of vision.* Mature spirituality requires *askesis*, a training program custom-designed for

each individual-in-community, and then continuously monitored and adapted as development takes place and conditions vary (Peterson, *Unpredictable Plant* 75). Such a practiced askesis is necessary, writes Peterson, due to the following danger that pastors and leaders are prone to fall into, “In our zeal to proclaim the Savior and enact his commands, we lose touch with our own basic and daily need for the Savior. At first it is nearly invisible, this split between our need of the Savior and our work for the Savior (114).” Therefore, a life of personal devotion to Christ is not an option for visionary leaders but the root and foundation of their visionary vocation.

Peterson suggests a three-fold askesis: 1) the Psalms prayed daily in sequence each month; 2) common worship on Sundays; and 3) recollected prayer through the day (random, unscheduled, sometimes willed and other times spontaneous recollections of what we are saying and/or doing in answer to God) (105-06). This askesis is made complete by the observance of fourteen spiritual disciplines: spiritual reading, spiritual direction, meditation, confession, bodily exercise, fasting, Sabbath-keeping, dream interpretation, retreats, pilgrimage, almsgiving (tithing), journaling, sabbaticals, and small groups. These disciplines are called up as they are needed and set aside when they are no longer needed (108). If a Christian leader is

going to find the heart of God for his ministry vision, the heart of God himself must first be found.

Fourthly, *pastors and leaders must endeavor to ascertain their own unique style of vision making.* Although they can learn from the styles of others, and should, any attempt to duplicate someone else's pattern is likely to end in frustration and failure. Imitative vision making has its limitations. The conditions of one's own life and ministry setting, inner and outer, historical and current, strengths and non-strengths, must be taken into account. Barna speaks to this concern when he writes,

Becoming a visionary is a learned process that is made possible by the way God designed the human being. We have the mental and emotional capacity. The challenge is to release that capacity and to trust that God will use our natural talents, world experiences and hearts for service to arrive at practiced and laudable conclusions (Turning Vision 109).

As Barna says, this is a learned process. As Christian leaders enter into this visionary mode, others can assist them but ultimately they must uncover what works best for them and not for somebody else.

Fifthly, *pastors and leaders must develop a way of seeing and reading circumstances in order to become effective visionaries.* This is illustrated by Robert Boyd Munger when he writes of himself, "I realized that I was a visionary. I could see the end results of events

that were still only shadowy, formative images in my mind (62).” In other words, visionaries see things differently from other people. They collect and arrange the same data we all see in ways that allow them to conceive of new and unseen phenomena (Wilhelm, *Leader of the Future* 223).

Barna believes that visionaries learn to think in a free-form, eclectic style. They mentally experiment with new combinations of data and they allow themselves to imagine unusual outcomes. This results in the unleashing of their intuition (*Turning Vision* 109). This style of thinking enables them to *see things differently* (author’s italics), and thus, give birth to new vision.

Prayer plays a key role in this way of seeing. Prayer opens a window for the Holy Spirit to enlighten the visionary leader’s perception and thinking processes. In his journal, Thomas Merton writes of his experience of “praying this morning during meditation to learn to read the meaning of events. Before one knows the meaning of what happens, he must be able to *see* what happens (*Search for Solitude* 231). Teaching oneself to think and pray in such a fashion that one develops a way of seeing as a visionary is essential for Christian leaders aspiring to be Spirit-driven visionaries.

Sixthly, *pastors and leaders must remind themselves to remain open and sensitive to God's serendipitous ways of working with them.* God cannot be placed in a box. He cannot be expected to always reveal vision in the same repeated manner. If serendipity can be defined as “an aptitude for making desirable discoveries by accident” (Random House College Dictionary 1201), and if God works in serendipitous ways, then Christian leaders will do well to acquire the habit of remaining open to whatever God is showing them, regardless of when visionary ideas come, what form they take, or how God chooses to deliver them. Part of the creative nature of God will be demonstrated in the lives of his visionary leaders by how he inventively exposes his directives to them. This harkens back to how the providence of God forms the underlay of the world in which we live. Spirit-driven visionaries should expect to be surprised by the Holy Spirit in the course of charting out vision for their ministries. Such a mindset is one component of what it means to be a true visionary in a spiritual sense.

And lastly, *pastors and leaders must be able to distinguish the differences between mission and vision.* Mission answers the “why do we exist” question and is the grand purpose for which a specific church or ministry exists. On the other hand, vision answers the

“what should we be doing” question and is that which gives focused and detailed direction for the fulfillment of the mission. Mission is more general; vision is more definite and unique. This distinction, while seeming tedious to some, must be captured by the Christian leader for true visionary thinking and strategizing to occur.

I want to bring this study to a conclusion by underlining once again the importance of Spirit-driven visionary leadership. With such leadership, the church is carried forth to realize its God-given potential. Without such leadership, the church flounders and staggers, falling far short of what God intends for it to be. I wholeheartedly agree with George Barna when he writes:

Let's get one thing straight from the start. If you want to be a leader, vision is not an option; it is part of the standard equipment of a real leader. By definition, a leader has vision: What else would a leader lead people toward, if not to fulfill that vision? Understand that to be a Christian leader, the vision toward which you lead people must not be a vision of your own making, but a vision God gives to you (Leaders 47).

My hope and prayer is that this dissertation will help other visionary pastors and leaders in God's kingdom learn better how to hear and/or discern the voice of the Holy Spirit as they seek God's vision for their ministries.

APPENDIX A

Sample Letter

May 8, 1995

Dr. Dale Galloway
11731 S. E. Stevens Rd.
Portland, OR. 97266

Dear Dr. Galloway,

I am working on my dissertation for my Doctorate of Ministry degree from Asbury Theological Seminary in the Beeson Pastor Program. My dissertation work is entitled, "The Christian Leader As A Spirit-Driven Visionary."

My goal for the dissertation process is to identify the different ways in which visionary Christian leaders hear and/or discern the voice of the Holy Spirit as they are seeking to formulate vision for their churches or ministries. I am specifically interested in their experience of hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

As a part of my research, I plan to personally interview thirty leaders whose ministries are marked by visionary strengths. Dr. Galloway, would it be possible to interview you? If so, please let me know as soon as possible.

I have enclosed a copy of the interview questions as well as a background questionnaire. If you agree to an interview, please spend some time reflecting on the questions and complete the questionnaire. Once my dissertation is finished, I will send you a copy of my findings.

Thank-you for your consideration of this request,

Pastor Tim Barton

APPENDIX B

List of Interview Questions

1. From your perspective as a leader, share your working definition and understanding of vision.
2. How important to your leadership role is the formulation and articulation of vision?
3. Explain the process or steps or routine that you normally follow to discover God's vision for your ministry.
4. Have you observed a pattern that God seems to follow in giving you vision for your ministry? How does it include any of the following?
 - circumstances
 - Scripture
 - prayer
 - still small voice/divine hunch
 - another person
 - audible voice
 - angel
 - reading/study/thinking
 - other
 - dreams/vision
5. Share what you would call the clearest and most powerful visionary experience God has given you for your ministry.

6. What part has the practice of your spiritual disciplines played in your formulation of vision?
7. Share any safeguards or guidelines you have set for yourself that you rely upon for testing or confirming visionary input that comes to you.
8. Do you have any concluding comments about how you “hear from God” in seeking vision?

Appendix C

Participant Background Questionnaire

1. Name:
Address:
Phone Number:
2. Church or Ministry Name:
Address:
Phone Number:
FAX Number:
E-Mail Address:
3. Age:
4. Educational Background:
5. Ministry Experience:
6. How long have you been at your present ministry?
7. If you are a pastor, what is your average attendance for weekend worship?
8. If you oversee a staff, how many people does this include?
9. What are your spiritual gifts?
10. What are your ministry passions?

11. If available, what is your Myers-Briggs profile?
12. What experience have you had in forming vision for a ministry?
13. What are the major responsibilities of your present job description?
14. As an evangelical, which of the following theological persuasions would most accurately describe you (choose one):
Reformed; Dispensational; Wesleyan; Pentecostal; Charismatic

APPENDIX D

Identification of Participants

Aldrich, Dr. Joe: President of Multnomah Bible College and Biblical Seminary, Portland, OR. since 1978; founder of Pastor's Prayer Summits; former pastor of Mariner's Church, Newport Beach, CA.; author of *Lifestyle Evangelism*, *Gentle Persuasion*, and *Prayer Summits*, graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary.

Berglund, Rev. Marty: founding pastor of Fellowship Alliance Church (1981), Medford, N. J., (average Sunday morning attendance of 1100); former staff member with Campus Crusade for Christ; graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary.

Bethel, Rev. T. Allen: Pastor of Maranatha Church, a racially mixed congregation in Portland, OR., (average Sunday morning attendance of 400); conference speaker; graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Bubna, Dr. Donald: Currently serving as Pastor-at-Large with the Christian and Missionary Alliance; previously he planted a church in San Diego, CA.; served the Salem Alliance Church, Salem, OR., for 23 years; and was pastor of Peace Portal Alliance Church, White Rock, B.

C., for 6 years (his last 2 congregations grew to over 1000 people); author of two books, *Building People* and *Encouraging People*; conference and seminar speaker.

Colenso, Rev. Richard: District Superintendent of the Pacific Northwest District of the Christian & Missionary Alliance; former Associate Executive Director of World Concern, Seattle, WA., Executive Vice President of the Luis Palau Evangelistic Association, Portland, OR., and Director of Specialized Ministries of the Christian & Missionary Alliance; graduate of School of World Missions, Fuller Theological Seminary.

Cotten, Dr. Ray: Pastor of New Hope Community Church, Portland, OR. (average Sunday morning attendance of 1900); former pastor of Central Community Church, Wichita, KS., staff position with Crystal Cathedral's Hour of Power broadcast, Garden Grove, CA.; workshop leader for Robert H. Schuller Institute for Successful Church Leadership; graduate of Friend's University, Wichita, KS.

Dirks, Rev. Morris: Pastor of Salem Alliance Church, Salem, OR. (average worship attendance of 2100); former Executive Director of Youth for Christ, Regina, SK.; Assistant Professor of Education,

Canadian Bible College, Regina, SK.; graduate of Canadian Theological Seminary.

Dunnam, Dr. Maxie: President of Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY.; former pastor of Christ United Methodist Church, Memphis, TN. (average worship attendance of 2100); World Editor of *The Upper Room*; author of more than 30 books, including the *Workbook of Living Prayer*, which has sold over one million copies; currently serves on the Presidium of the World Methodist Council as one of the eight World Presidents.

Ebel, Rev. Dale: founding pastor of Rolling Hills Community Church (1977), Tualatin, OR. (average worship attendance of 2300); graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary and Western Conservative Baptist Seminary.

Elliot, Rev. Stephen: Pastor of Foothills Alliance Church, Calgary, AB. (average worship attendance of 1000); Beeson Pastor (1995-96), Asbury Theological Seminary; graduate of Canadian Bible College.

Galloway, Dr. Dale: Dean of the Beeson International Center for Biblical Preaching and Church Leadership at Asbury Theological

Seminary; founding pastor of New Hope Community Church, Portland, OR.; author of 15 books, including *20/20 Vision*; conference and seminar speaker; graduate of Nazarene Theological Seminary.

Grubbs, Dr. Francis: Secretary of the Christian & Missionary Alliance, Colorado Springs, CO.; former President of Simpson College, Redding, CA., where he led a major relocation of the college, and Crown College, St. Bonifacius, MN.; Education Secretary and Director of Church Growth of The Christian & Missionary Alliance.

Gwinn, Dr. Jim: President of Crista Ministries, Seattle, WA. a multifaceted Christian service and relief organization with 11,000 employees and a yearly budget of 60 million dollars; previously served as the Vice President of Moody Bible Institute, Director of Camp Sambica, and Christian Education and Youth Pastor of Moody Memorial Church; graduate of Western Seminary.

Hubbard, Dr. David Allan: former President of Fuller Theological Seminary (1963-1993), Pasadena, CA.; author of more than 35 books, including *Old Testament Survey*; conference and seminar speaker; past member of the California State Board of Education; past President of the Association of Theological Schools;

General Editor of the Word Biblical Commentary; graduate of St. Andrews University.

Jensen, Rev. Don: Pastor of Village Baptist Church, Beaverton, OR., for the past 26 years (average worship attendance of 1350); former pastor of Grace Baptist Church of Glendora, CA., graduate of Talbot Theological Seminary.

Kincade, Dr. Ron: Pastor of Sunset Presbyterian Church, Beaverton, OR., for the past 15 years (average worship attendance of 1350); author of a number of books, including *Praying For Guidance*; graduate of Fuller Theological Seminary.

Le Shana, Dr. David C.: President Emeritus of Western Evangelical Seminary, Tigard, OR. and Seattle Pacific University, Seattle, WA.; previous president of George Fox College; Chairman of the Board of the Christian College Coalition; graduate of the University of Southern California.

MacDonald, Rev. Gordon: Pastor of Grace Chapel, Lexington, MA. for 15 years (average worship attendance of 2400); past President of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship; conference and seminar speaker; leader of business seminars; author of 10 books,

including *Ordering Your Private World* and *Renewing Your Spiritual Passion*; graduate of Denver Seminary.

Makus, Rev. Bud: Pastor of Hillsboro Alliance Church, Hillsboro, OR., for the past 14 years (average attendance of 300); graduate of Asbury Theological Seminary.

Moorehead, Dr. Bob: Pastor of Overlake Christian Church, Kirkland, WA., for the past 27 years (average worship attendance of 6500); led the planning and organization of eight church plants out of Overlake Christian Church; founder of Northwest Graduate School; author of 12 books, including *The Growth Factor*; a sought after speaker on the subjects of church growth, leadership, and evangelism; graduate of California Graduate School of Theology.

Morrissey, Rev. Mary Manin: founding pastor of the Living Enrichment Center (1976), Wilsonville, OR. (average worship attendance of 1800); seminar and workshop leader; author of *Building Your Field of Dreams*.

Porter, Rev. Rick: Pastor of Sevenoaks Alliance Church, Abbotsford, B. C. (average worship attendance of 1500); past Associate Director of Development and Executive Assistant to the

President, Crown College, St. Bonifacius, MN.; graduate of Bethel Theological Seminary.

Roberts, Dr. Ted: Pastor of Easthill Foursquare Church, Gresham, OR., for the past 12 years (average worship attendance of 4500); conference and seminar speaker; graduate of Western Conservative Baptist Seminary.

Roluffs, Rev. Chuck: Pastor of Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, Portland, OR., for the past 28 years (average worship attendance of 550); led the church through one relocation and two building programs.

Schwalm, Rev. Pete: Pastor of Fairhaven Alliance Church, Dayton, OH., for the past 13 years (average attendance of 1500); previously served as co-pastor of Salem Alliance Church and Executive Pastor of Wheaton Bible Church; recently relocated Fairhaven to 25 acres of new land and the building of 120,000 square feet of facility space; graduate of Nyack College.

Sjogren, Rev. Steve: founding pastor of the Vineyard Christian Fellowship Church (1984), Cincinnati, OH. (average worship attendance of 3500); church planter in Oslo, Norway and Washington,

D. C.; author of *Conspiracy of Kindness*; conference and seminar speaker; graduate of Lutheran Bible Institute.

Smith, Rev. Jeff: Pastor of Indian Trail Community Church, Spokane, WA. (average attendance of 360); founding pastor of Bellevue Alliance Church, Bellevue, WA.; graduate of Western Baptist College.

Taylor, Rev. Keith: Pastor of Beulah Alliance Church, Edmonton, AB. (average worship attendance of 1400); member of the Board of Trustees, Canadian Bible College and Canadian Theological Seminary, Regina, SK.; member of the Board of Managers of the Christian & Missionary Alliance in Canada; graduate of Canadian Bible College.

Thune, Rev. Bob: Pastor of Christ Community Church, Omaha, NB., for the past 14 years (average worship attendance of 2000); member of the Board of Managers of the Christian & Missionary Alliance; graduate of Talbot Theological Seminary.

Widener, Rev. Chris: founding pastor of Oasis Christian Fellowship (1991), Issaquah, WA. (average worship attendance of 150); graduate of Lutheran Bible Institute.

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