

Aligning Your Ministry and Work to the Overall Vision of the Church

Victor was a retired CEO of a hospital supply company in our town, and when he agreed to be a deacon, I was absolutely thrilled. He'd bring so much insight, wisdom, and acumen to our team. He attended our first meeting as we discussed and prayed about the work of our leadership team. From the outset, there was an issue. A huge one. He wanted to singlehandedly change the vision and values of the church. For the next year, it was a push-and-pull affair rife with counterarguments and proposals that seemed to come out of nowhere. Perhaps he missed the thrill of boardroom takeovers or the ability to singlehandedly change things.

We had recently worked across our entire church organization to prayerfully create a mission statement and a long-range plan that stretched our people's view of the church. Adding Victor's force of personality and motives almost cost us three longtime leaders to resign simultaneously. Victor, as gifted as he was, just couldn't align to the plan, and he left everyone frustrated, including himself.

You can't minimize the importance of alignment when it comes to vision and effectiveness in a church leadership team. Misalignment will sabotage the tread life of any team.

Here is an easy way to remember, measure, and evaluate your alignment as leaders. I'd call it the **P.L.A.N.**

Purpose

Purpose reflects the important question: **“WHY.”** Everything in your church needs to run through this filter. If you have a program or a practice which has no purpose, you are wasting everyone’s time. There are many things that knock churches off their purpose. Sometimes it’s a shadow mission of a member or a leader. A leader can press others to do something or decide on an initiative because there is something else going on. It could be a personal desire, a resentment, or an unshared agenda.

In other words, a leader may say, “We need to do this program” because of a need they have, or to make themselves look good, or to right a wrong from five years ago. Every leader, whether they are a pastor, staff member, deacon, or volunteer team leader, needs to ask this soul-searching question: **“Why?”** When you lose your “why,” you lose your way.

Leadership

John Maxwell nailed it when he said, **“Everything rises and falls on leadership.”** For a vision to be realized, every leader needs to think of themselves as a champion of that vision. Our goal as leaders shouldn’t simply be to make more followers but rather to develop new leaders. Being a leader doesn’t mean that you’re going to make all the decisions. Leadership means that you will champion the overall vision of the church through your initiative and enthusiasm. That’s what makes a great leader.

Some leaders believe that their role is simply to filter or inspect the actions of the pastor or other leaders. Although we do need to assess where we are, it’s easy for us to get into an analytic mindset that sabotages the overall vision and

purpose of the church. Anyone can stand back and offer opinions, but blessed is the pastor who has leaders that get in the game.

One of the greatest leaders I've ever worked with had a simple phrase. Every time there was a consensus for our church to move in a certain direction, he'd simply say, **"Let's go."** If he texted it, there would be three or four exclamation marks after the sentence. There was no "How will this affect me?" or "Why was I left out of the decision?" His job was simply to encourage and cheer on the entire team.

If he ever had a concern or disagreement, he would always come to me first before bringing it to the entire group. But usually, when it seemed right to the entire leadership team, he was my "Let's Go" man. He was never the chairman, but he was always a leader.

Attunement

Dr. Dan Siegel defines attunement this way:

"When we attune with others, we allow our own internal state to shift, to come to resonate with the inner world of another. This resonance is at the heart of the important sense of 'feeling felt' that emerges in close relationships."

If you are aligned to the overall mission of the church, you'll want to be attuned to your team. Leaders who are attuned can read the cues of their team members. They pause to think about the "why" questions but not just the "why" question. Attuned leaders are not only group-aware but are also self-aware. In other words, they don't dominate the discussion but know how to listen, empathize, and ask important questions.

The opposite of attunement might be best described by what the

Gottman Institute calls **the four horsemen of the relationship apocalypse**: criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling. If you've been a member of any church or organization for any amount of time, you've probably experienced these four horsemen.

If you align your ministry and work to the vision of your church, make sure you stay away from these four horsemen. (They are headless!)

Nuance

Along with purpose, leadership, and attunement, an aligned leader also understands the power of nuance. They understand that no person or vision is crafted by cookie cutters or led by robots. A successful plan in one church or with one team doesn't guarantee the same amount of success in another environment.

Many pastors and leaders know their Bibles—that is paramount. But secondarily, we need to understand our community and adapt our vision to provide strong biblical solutions in the context of our surrounding environment. We must learn to nuance our vision so that our church understands the objectives and ministries.

Shepherds don't drive their sheep; they lead them. That's what we should do. And we should do it with a winsome heart and nuance. It will allow you to customize, improvise, and strategize effectively.

If a church's alignment is off, the tread-life will be short. To be in proper alignment, we must know our **PURPOSE**, practice healthy **LEADERSHIP**, **ATTUNE** our minds, and adapt with **NUANCE**.