



Learning Community Two

Cultivating Vision

**20-30
minutes**

Personal Check-in:

Facilitator Instructions: Read Nehemiah 1:1-4 as a group and spend some time discussing the questions listed below. After the discussion, spend some time in pairs praying for one another.

Sharing Questions:

1. What impresses you about the strength of Nehemiah's emotional reaction as he heard about the state of his people?
2. What are some things that "really bother" you at a heart level?
3. Nehemiah led with deeply held convictions. What deeply held convictions do you have about ministry that keep you "building the walls?"
4. What risks or threats are you currently experiencing that are challenging you as a leader? How can we help you in prayer?



15-30
minutes

Homework Debrief:

Instructions: Below is a list of the homework assignments from the last meeting. Ask each pastor to update the group on how they responded to each of the items. After everyone has checked in regarding the homework, take some time to talk about lessons that are being learned so far. Capture the discussion on a whiteboard or a flipchart.

1. Over the next few weeks be intentional with resistance. Go out of your way to spend time with some of the difficult people in your ministry area. Look for opportunities to lean into resistance rather than avoid it. Follow through on the reflections you generated on the “Me and Resistance” exercise and act on them. Be prepared to report in next time about how you handled your resistance opportunities.
2. Make it your goal to pray daily for a few people in your sphere of relationships who need Christ. Come prepared to discuss how you are personally engaging the community and how you are overcoming the ongoing challenges you face in being outreach oriented. Fill out the “Me and the Harvest” worksheet prior to the next meeting.
3. Read Andy Stanley’s book *Visioneering* and come prepared to discuss the Book Review Questions (see next page).



30-45
minutes

Book Review Debrief:

***Visioneering* by Andy Stanley**

1. In what ways do you agree with Stanley's claim that "Visions are often born in the soul of a man or woman who is gripped by a tension between what is and what should be"?

2. With this tension in mind, what's bothering you? What is the solution?

3. In what ways are you inspired by Nehemiah's visioneering capabilities?

How can you grow to be more like him as a leader?

4. What will you need to give up in order to pursue your vision?

5. What are the possible risks of you pursuing your vision?



6. What criticism or backlash might you get from others?

7. What distractions (good and bad) are you susceptible to that could cause you to lose momentum?

8. What actions could you take that, if done consistently, would provide the greatest potential for the vision's success?

9. Of the 20 "vision building blocks" listed on page 16, which are your top five and why?

10. What are the three most important insights from the book that you would like to implement?



45-60
minutes

Case Study Interaction:

Instructions: If a pastor is lined up for this meeting, give him 10-15 minutes to talk about his church. With the remaining time, ask the group to give feedback on the following questions and to spend time interacting with the pastor about the following:

- 1. Please share the prescriptions you received from the Weekend Consultation.**

- 2. What progress have you made toward implementing the prescriptions?**

- 3. What are the most significant challenges you are facing in implementing the prescriptions?**

- 4. Have you done your time study? What did you learn about your use of time? What are you doing to make changes in your use of time? How are you getting these changes rooted in your life for the long term?**

- 5. What leadership skills are you focused on developing? Share your sense of progress and your challenges.**

- 6. Have you built new bridges into the community? If not, why not? If so, how? What are the results so far? How can you improve your vision casting for reaching the community?**

- 7. What are you doing each week to create a sense of urgency? Are you seeing an increase in Sunday worship attendance?**

- 8. What are your plans for the next three months?**



15-20
minutes

Learning Activity:

Facilitator Instructions: You have two choices for opening up this module on vision. Option #1 is Martin Luther King's "I have a Dream" speech which you will ask the group to read. Option #2 is from the movie *Miracle*. Both options will impact your group. You simply need to choose the one that works best for you. After debriefing the speech or the movie clip pair people up to discuss the sharing question.

Option #1: Martin Luther King speech.

Facilitator Instructions: Have the group turn to pages 12-13 of this module to read the speech. After reading the speech spend a few minutes debriefing the experience by asking everyone to respond to the discussion questions.

Discussion Questions:

1. What did reading the speech stir inside of you?
2. What impresses you about this speech?
3. What are some principles about Vision that we can apply in our own lives?

Option #2: Movie Clip: *Miracle*

Facilitator Instructions: The clip is entitled "This is your time" which starts at 1:36:15 and ends at 1:41. (If you have time, watching the whole game against the Soviet Union is a lot of fun...you'll need about 20 extra minutes though!)

Give some background on the clip:

"The film *Miracle* chronicles the improbable true story of the 1980 U.S. men's ice hockey team. In this scene, Coach Herb Brooks, played by Kurt Russell, gives an inspiring pre-game talk to his team before they meet the vaunted Soviet Union team that had not lost a game in international competition for years. Many of the Soviet players had been skating together for over a decade and were being opposed by a U.S. team made up of mainly college players who had only been playing together for a few months."



After the clip allow the discussion questions to guide the interaction on the scene. Debrief the movie using these questions and then break the group up into pairs for the sharing question.

Discussion Questions:

1. What dynamics did you see in this scene?
2. What was going on inside of Coach Brooks?
3. What was going on inside of the players in the locker room?

Sharing Question:

In pairs, share about a time or an experience when you worked hard on something, had a dream, met a need, accomplished a goal, or took a risk to make a difference. What was that experience like for you?

5-10
minutes

Learning Activity: Vision Quotes

Facilitator Instructions: After the sharing ask folks to turn to the Vision quotes. Prompt discussion by asking, "Which quote grabs you and why?"

"Every person has only enough strength to complete those assignments that they are fully convinced are important." -Goethe

"If a man knows not what harbor he seeks, any wind is the right wind."
-Lucius Annaeus Seneca

"A 'no' uttered from the deepest conviction is better than a "yes" merely uttered to please, or what is worse, to avoid trouble." -Mahatma Gandhi

"The soul never thinks without a picture." -Aristotle

"Goals can be energizing when you win. But a vision is more powerful than a goal. A vision is enlivening, it's spirit-giving, it's the guiding force behind all great human endeavors. Vision is about shared energy, a sense of awe, a sense of possibility." -Benjamin Zander, Conductor, Boston Philharmonic Orchestra



20
minutes

Learning Activity: Understanding Vision

Facilitator Instructions: After the discussion on the Vision quotes draw everyone's attention to the article below entitled "Understanding Vision." Encourage everyone to read slowly, highlighting ideas that grab their attention. After the group has read, discuss the article by asking a few questions.

Understanding Vision

Stephen Covey in his bestseller, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, popularized the phrase "begin with the end in mind." In today's "time poor" world, the notion of vision for our lives can get lost somewhere between the bills, household chores, children's activities, and the pressures at work.

Here are some principles to consider.

George Barna puts it this way: "Vision is a picture held in your mind's eye of the way things could or should be in the days ahead. Vision connotes a visual reality, a portrait of conditions that do not exist currently...It is not somebody else's view of the future, but one that uniquely belongs to you...Vision is about stretching reality to extend beyond the existing state...To create a better situation you can either rely upon random circumstance and hope that the result is better than what has existed, or you can assert control over your environment, based on God's empowerment and direction, and make a better future" (*The Power of Vision*, 29).

Vision is the ability to see God's preferable future. It captures in a word picture what God wants to accomplish through the unique contribution of our lives. He has a unique purpose in mind. It is a purpose that is greater than just experiencing life. His purpose extends to shaping your life to have a significant impact for His Kingdom.

Andy Stanley has this to add: "What is a vision? Where do they come from? Visions are born in the soul of a man or woman who is consumed with the tension between what is and what could be. Anyone who is emotionally involved frustrated, brokenhearted, maybe even angry about the way things are in light of the way they believe things could be, is a candidate for a vision. Visions form in the hearts of those who are dissatisfied with the status quo...Vision carries with it a sense of conviction. Anyone with a vision will tell you this is not merely



something that could be done. This is something that should be done” (*Visioneering*, 17).

Consider the Vision Cycle for a moment. As you look around you, there are any number of “needs” that you could seek to meet. However, as you move through life, God may plant a “concern” in your heart for only a few needs - perhaps only one need. As that concern is nurtured through prayer, time, and activity on your part, that concern could grow into a “burden.” As God gives you opportunity to minister to others through your sense of burden, a true sense of “passion” is born. And that passion becomes a “flame” as you minister to the need and grow in your conviction about the need.

Case Study: Angel Tree

Mary Kay Mahaffey was released from prison after serving more than five years as a convicted bank robber. She soon married ex-prisoner Don Beard and joined the Prison Fellowship ministry as an area director for Alabama.

One of Mary Kay’s first jobs was to come up with a Christmas project. Her churches and volunteers asked which prisons they would visit and what gifts they would take. “I said, ‘Everyone does that. Let’s do something different.’”

She remembered the six Christmases she had spent behind bars. “Some Christian groups would come to the prison, and they would bring little trial size tubes of toothpaste, bars of soap, and bottles of shampoo. I noticed that women who never went to chapel or did anything Christian always went to those programs.

“I thought they were just greedy, but I saw them bring the items back to their cells and start organizing the stuff and trading with each other. And then they would divide the items up into piles and I realized that each pile was for one of their children. They would gather bits of colored paper and would wrap those items. That’s what they would give their children as Christmas gifts because it was all they had. And I thought, ‘Just because she’s a thief or a drug addict, or possibly even a murderer, doesn’t mean she doesn’t love her children. Doesn’t mean she’s a bad Momma.’”

“The week before Christmas, the children would come to the prison for their annual visit with their mothers, and they would receive these little gifts. The children would tear the wrapping off and barely glance at the gift but would throw their arms around their mother and say, ‘Oh, Momma, thank you, thank you.’”



“You see, children don’t care about things if they know they are first of all loved.”

That Christmas, Mary Kay went back to the same prison where she had spent several years and gathered names and addresses of children. Then she, her sister, and a handful of volunteers put up Christmas trees at two malls, one in Montgomery and one in Birmingham. “And we made paper angels—red for girls and green for boys—and on each angel we wrote the name and age of a child. And then we put them on the tree, an Angel Tree! That’s how we got the name.”

“And I submitted an article to the newspapers about how children are the real victims of crime, they are not responsible for what their adult parents do and yet they suffer. Children who have one adult in prison are six times more likely to get into trouble themselves than other children. So we advertised for the public ‘to come by and purchase a Christmas gift for an angel.’ I hoped that we could get Christmas for two or three hundred children. I had no idea what God would do with that project.”

“Within six days we were out of names and I had to go back to the prison to get more. At the end of that first Angel Tree in 1982, 556 children had received up to four different gifts each.”

Then Mary Kay saw something else happen. “In January, all of my Bible study groups at that prison doubled or tripled. The newcomers were the inmates whose children had received gifts. They said, ‘Anyone who would get my child a gift is something special, so I decided to come and listen to this Bible study.’”

“Well, many of those men and women came to Christ because you, the Body of Christ, the Christians on the outside, bought a gift for a child. You may never go inside a prison and yet the gift you purchase for a little child may be the very thing that God uses to touch a stony heart and redeem it for eternity.”

“So the seed was planted at that county jail, where I was first incarcerated, Christmas, 1972, when I thought about Christmas away from home. I was in prison and yet it was the church that remembered me. The Church is the only one to have the message of redemption, we are the only ones to have the answer to crime, we are the only ones who can reach people for eternity. You don’t necessarily have to go to a prison. Sometimes it is just going out to the mall and buying a few gifts, but it can have eternal consequences.”



She saw another result, too—families reuniting as children who had not heard from their fathers now received gifts from them. “Angel Tree was not my project, it wasn’t even my idea. It was God’s idea. He just allowed me to be the instrument that He used to plant the seed. It was the church, the Body of Christ, who came along to water and to nurture it.” The program branched to 12 states the following year and was soon restructured as a church-based program. Nearly 600,000 children were reached at Christmas, 2000, bringing the cumulative total to more than five million children served by Angel Tree since Mary Kay Beard first thought about those little tubes of toothpaste.

Discussion Questions:

1. What stood out to you from the article?
2. What impressed you about the way Angel Tree got started?

15-20
minutes

Learning Activity: Vision Through the Life of Nehemiah

Facilitator Instructions: After the discussion about the article, break the group into pairs for this opportunity to apply the Vision Cycle to the book of Nehemiah.

Remind the group about who Nehemiah was:

“Nehemiah continues the history of the Jews upon their return from exile in Babylon. Nehemiah was commissioned to go to Jerusalem to lead the people in repairing the protective walls around the city. He was a spiritual leader who led with vision and passion. Look through these passages and reflect on how the Vision Cycle played itself out in the life of Nehemiah and those around him.”

Passage

What do you notice about Vision?

Nehemiah 1:1-4
Nehemiah 1:11-2:5
Nehemiah 2:11-13
Nehemiah 2:17-18
Nehemiah 2:19-20, 4:1-3
Nehemiah 4:12-21
Nehemiah 6:15-16



“I Have a Dream” by Martin Luther King, Jr.

Delivered on the steps at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. on August 28, 1963

I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.” I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today. I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor’s lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers. I have a dream today. I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South.

With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day. This will be the day when all of God’s children will be able to sing with a new meaning, “My country, ‘tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim’s pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring.” And if America is to be a great nation this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania! Let freedom ring from the snow capped Rockies of Colorado! Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California! But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia! Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee!



Let freedom ring from every hill and every molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"



**15-20
minutes**

Learning Activity: You and Vision

Facilitator Instructions: Now it's time to allow folks to personally interact with the vision material. Ask people to work on their own through the following questions. Then pair them up in twos or threes to share about what they wrote.

Discussion Questions:

1. When you look at your life over the last 5-10 years, what are some needs that you have been drawn to?

2. What needs are you aware of in your community, workplace, neighborhood, and your sphere of friends?

3. Which of the needs that you've been drawn to have developed into a concern?

4. Have you ever experienced the dynamic of a need and a concern growing into a burden? How so?

5. Have you experienced the dynamics of ministering with a strongly felt passion?



6. Over the last 12-24 months, what needs and concerns have shown up on your radar screen?

7. In what ways do you feel God may be trying to nurture a burden for one of these needs and concerns?

8. What would it look like in the future (12-36 months out) if you met this concern? What lives would be touched? What would be different specifically?



**5
minutes**

Homework and Wrap-Up

Facilitator Instructions: As a way to put a wrap on the session, discuss the homework assignments. If you have time, ask the group to share highlights from the training session and then close in prayer.

Homework Assignment:

1. Since cultivating vision is a dynamic process, carve out a half-day retreat in the next month to refine the vision you have for your church. Use *Visioneering*, this module, and this question to guide what you write:

*If God could have his way with our church in the next 3-5 years,
what do I believe He would like to do in us and through us?
What will be different?*

2. Read *Breaking the Missional Code* by Ed Stetzer and David Putman and come prepared next time to discuss the Book Review Questions (see next page).



Book Review Questions

***Breaking the Missional Code* by Ed Stetzer and David Putman**

1. What are some practical ways you can begin to expose those you minister with to opportunities to break the code?

2. Write a brief paragraph on what your church would look like if it broke the code in your community.

3. From the chart on page 49, what are some of the words that best describe your church currently?

4. What would it look like for your church to transition to a more missional posture?



5. Which of the values named in Chapter 6 are most challenging to you and your church, and why?

6. Based on the definition of “indigenous” on pages 91-92 what does it mean for you to be an indigenous church?

7. What specific people living in your community may best be reached by the starting of a new congregation?

8. What kinds of things do you think an honest, first-time guest might say about your church?

9. What are three of the most important insights from the book that you would like to implement and why?



LC Evaluation:

Date:

Location:

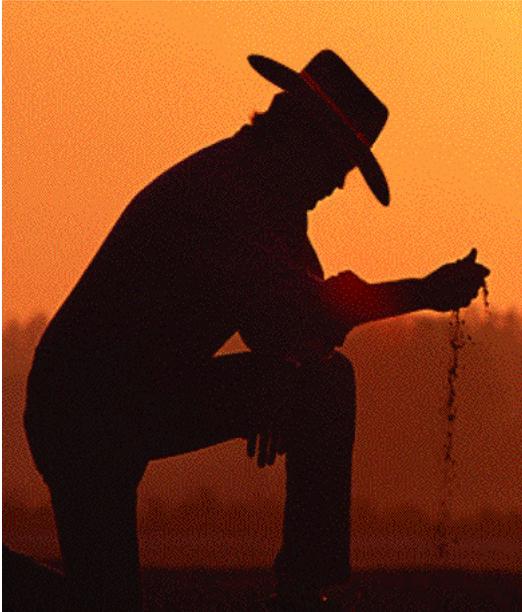
Questions:

1. What did you like most about the homework from the last Learning Community?

2. What did you like least about the homework from the last Learning Community?

3. How could we improve today's Learning Community experience?

4. How can we give you additional support for developing leadership skills in your own life and helping your church turn outward?



Me and the Harvest

1. How committed have I been to praying for people who need Jesus?
2. What have I done in the past month to help someone move closer to Christ?
3. What changes do I need to make in the next month to find time to be more outreach focused?
4. How did I keep the fire burning for outreach in our church this past month?
5. What have I learned about the community needs in this past month that our church could be poised to meet?
6. What's the most important outreach oriented action step I can take in this next month?