



OUR VISION

Often we are told that a compelling vision statement brings necessary clarity to an organization. However, a vision statement's value comes not from the statement itself, but rather from the stories that it inspires. A short, memorable statement is good as it provides a filter for direction and decisions, but the ultimate goal is to see the vision made tangible in the lives of real people.

The Table Network, an organization made up of disciples, has a vision statement which reads: ***we long to see everyone experience the freedom and family found at the table Jesus has prepared.*** But what does it actually look like to give everyone—every man, woman, and child— the opportunity to live in the freedom and family found at the table Jesus has prepared?

As we sought to answer this question, one of our leaders was reminded of a woman a friend introduced him to recently while standing in line for coffee. Vicky asked about what he does for a living, and after hearing his response, readily shared her thoughts on Christianity and the church. From her experience, she believes that the church offers nothing but long-winded calls to a life she can't live and a community of self-righteous people who think they can. As he listened to her story and thought about the good news she needs to hear, he realized that she's one of over 200 million people in America (70% of the population) who has no interest in attending a church service or gathering of any kind.

So if Vicky (and millions like her) won't come to anything the church offers in order to learn about the Person and work of Jesus, we have to ask ourselves some questions:

- Who slows down to meet her where she is and takes the time necessary to disciple her in the freedom found in Jesus alone?
- Who equips, shepherds, and frees up the disciple who will disciple Vicky?
- What does the church look like that provides Vicky and her friends with a family to belong to on their way to belief and involvement in the things of Jesus?

Questions like these help us move our vision—"to see everyone experience the freedom & family found at the table Jesus has prepared"—from a statement we hold in our heads to a reality we pursue in our lives. We in the Table Network believe that the pursuit of



FIRST:

We are keeping the reckless love and scandalous grace of God at the heart of the message we carry to others.

Vicky's need, like yours and mine, is perfection. Apart from it, we cannot dwell in relationship with God. As flawed and foolish people, we are grateful for the work of the cross where God replaced us with His perfect Son (Rom 7; Gal 2). We are in awe of the fact that our lives are hidden in Him... in His righteousness (Rom 4; Col 3). What Vicky doesn't know yet is that her only need, like the tax collector in the temple, is to admit her death and faith in Jesus alone as her only hope (Lk 18). Only in that can she drop her mildewed performances and leave the exhausting madness of trying to hide the junk of her life. Only there can she find freedom from the tyranny that says she needs to bring something else to the finished work of Jesus on her behalf. It's this love, this grace, this "kindness that leads us to repentance" (Rom 2:4). In a world living in pride and piety due to their love of performance and progress, we carry a message of freedom that invites everyone to the party of rest (Mt 11). It's here, in this rest, we trust Jesus to bear fruit when and how He chooses... just as He promised (Phil 1:6).

SECOND:

We are championing a bi-vocational approach as a viable option to help leaders pursue the 70% who aren't interested in attending a church gathering.

When leaders who are planting new works obtain employment in the marketplace, a few opportunities come to the surface. Leaders find relate-ability and accessibility to the "Vicky's" of the world. Disciples in the church find a model for what it looks like to be an everyday missionary in the places where they live, work, and play. Both leaders and disciples find freedom from the need to quickly become a self-sustaining church through weekend services. As a result of all three, time and focus can be spent on making disciples of Jesus who make disciples. With a scattered foundation of the church in place, further elements that support the gathered church can be established. And since a gathered expression appeals to the other 30% of society—the people open to attending a church-hosted event—the hope of the Gospel going to "everyone" can really mean "everyone."

THIRD:

We are equipping the Church in the timeless functions of discipleship and leadership to see the Gospel spread to every context.

With a phone in every hand and a screen in every place, people are hit with a constant flow of messages fighting for their affection. The result is a society of people that long for human interaction but only give a listening ear to those they know and trust. Discipleship today demands relational capital. Building relational



capital takes time, and in a day where people have such limited margin in their lives, every disciple needs to know how to take the little bit they have to connect, listen, love, and disciple those around them. It's a task which requires the leaders of the church to live as disciple makers first, and then as equippers who empower others for the work of the ministry through their unique voice. It's a task which requires the church to be a family that provides ongoing care, encouragement and connection to disciples as they make disciples and work together to serve others. If we focus on developing the timeless functions of discipleship (i.e., loving, listening, sharing, inviting, teaching, sending) and leadership (i.e., connecting, equipping, releasing) we can see disciples, leaders, communities, and churches multiplied in any and every context.

LASTLY:

We are helping new church families form in a way that is fitting to their unique context.

In a day of limited margin, most people are doing life in tribes (i.e., groups or circles of common interest and/or need). We believe the church families that are conducive to those interests, and the rhythms of life found in them, play a key role in seeing others experience the freedom and family found at the table Jesus has prepared. The New Testament shows us how the form of ministry followed the function of ministry, not vice versa. The early church didn't establish ministry forms, hoping to get the functions of discipleship out of them. Instead they allowed ministry forms to take shape around the functions of discipleship in a way that was fitting to their unique context. Gatherings of the church entailed teaching, meals, prayer, communion, songs of celebration and times to connect and care for each other. These expressions were adaptable to any place and time that was conducive to the tribe to which they belonged. We believe the same is true today. Allowing each context to serve as a filter for the functions of the church (as well as the times, days and places they happen) provides us with a way to meet people where they are and to see them and their friends naturally join into the rhythms of the church.

Like a carpenter who takes raw materials and turns them into beautiful works of art, Jesus is the One who makes all things new. As a network, we have found rest in knowing we do nothing more than carry the raw materials of truth, love, and discipleship into our unique contexts. And as leaders focus on modeling and equipping disciples in these timeless functions, new families of disciple making disciples begin to form. These families, living and declaring the message of freedom, are an expression of the scattered and gathered Church in their context. In it's most simplistic form, this is how we believe our vision—***“to see everyone experience the freedom and family found at the table Jesus has prepared”***—turns into reality.

