



**LEADERSHIP
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Leadership, Change, and Vision

Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Acts 16:6–10 (NIV)

In every successful transformation effort that I have seen, the guiding coalition develops a picture of the future that is relatively easy to communicate and appeals to customers, stockholders, and employees. A vision always goes beyond the numbers that are typically found in five-year plans. A vision says something that helps clarify the direction in which an organization needs to move.

John Kotter in *Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail*

Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained

Proverbs 29:18 (NASB)

Paul saw the vision, *we* got ready, concluding that God had called us. It is interesting to think about the members of Paul’s team as described in this verse. This was either a high-trust and trustworthy environment or a team of highly gullible folks. Only Paul saw the vision. For this team, that was enough to move them to act on the vision they had not seen.

In Kouzes and Posner’s classic book, *The Leadership Challenge*, the authors state that a core leadership competency is to “inspire a shared vision.”⁷ One wonders if this part was left out of the Acts 16 narrative. Once Paul received the vision, he likely took time to share it with his team convincingly so that the vision became their vision that they pursued with Paul. We’re not sure how this happened. Somehow, Paul, the Holy Spirit, and the team went through a process of adopting the vision, and its inherent calling became their own.

Change leadership expert John Kotter believes that the success of organizational transformation hinges on a clearly stated and compelling vision. Furthermore, Kotter insists that the vision must be repeatedly communicated using every means and medium possible.⁸ Kotter’s advice reminds us of Proverb 29:18, which says, “Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained.” Without a vision, people lose the focusing restraint needed to do mission-fulfilling things in effective ways shaped by appropriate values.

So, with Paul and his team coming around this vision and moving forward in pursuit of it, the gospel of Jesus Christ—for the first time in recorded history—moves into Europe. It all began with a vision from God, given to one man and shared with his team. The rest, as they say, is history.



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When a vision is shared, it is kept alive by ongoing remembrance of the vision with others on the team. Sometimes even the “leader” has to be reminded of it. This was the case with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as he delivered his now famous “I Have a Dream” speech at the Lincoln Memorial in August 1963. When he stood to speak that day, he had no plans to tell the 250,000 people gathered about the vision. But, seated on the podium that day was Mahalia Jackson, a gospel singer who worked with Dr. King and was committed to the vision of the Civil Rights Movement. As Dr. King delivered his scripted speech, Jackson called out to him, saying, “Tell ‘em about the dream, Martin, tell ‘em about the dream!”ⁱⁱⁱ Dr. King took her advice, departed from his prepared remarks, and told them about the dream. At that moment, a good speech transformed into a legendary rallying cry.

As Christian leaders, we must receive the vision from God. It may come to us only and is for us to share with others. Or, on the other hand, it may be a vision that God gives us and others as together we seek the future place that He desires for us to come to. We need a vision, a vision from God and the grace to pursue the vision vigorously. This is what Paul and his team did. This is what Dr. King and the Christians in the Civil Rights Movement did. And in this way, God is pleased, and the world is changed.

For Reflection

1. As you read back through the meditation, jot down answers to the following.
 - a. What is a vision?
 - b. What is the connection between leadership and vision?
 - c. In a team or organization, who is the vision for?
2. As you reflect on Acts 16:6–10, what are things you’ve learned elsewhere in Scripture about Paul and his leadership that likely helped his team to take action quickly?
3. Is there a sphere of influence in which you’re leading without a clear vision? How do Acts 16:6–10 and Proverbs 29:18 guide you on what you need to do about this?

ⁱ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z Posner, *The Leadership Challenge (Sixth Edition)*, pp. 36, 159-191.

ⁱⁱ John P. Kotter, *Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail*. Harvard Business Review Onpoint Article, pp. 1,5-6.

ⁱⁱⁱ [How Mahalia Jackson Sparked Martin Luther King Jr.’s ‘I Have a Dream’ Speech \(biography.com\)](https://www.biography.com/story/1101334-how-mahalia-jackson-sparked-martin-luther-king-jr-s-i-have-a-dream-speech)