

From Burden to Vision

Turn What You're Noticing into a Clear Starting Vision

What This Tool Helps You Do:

- Use this tool to move from a burden you feel or a need you see to a simple, clear vision for a new church or faith community.
 - You don't need to have all the answers yet. This tool will help you put words around what you are noticing, who you feel drawn toward, and what you believe God might be inviting you to do.
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When to Use It:

- This can be used by an individual planter or a small group discerning the future.
 - Use this tool early in the dreaming and discernment process; before you develop a ministry model, gather a launch team, create a budget, or make detailed plans.
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What You'll Need:

- 15–20 minutes
- Something to write with
- An open mind and a willingness to listen before you plan

STEP 1: Name the Burden

Vision often begins with something we can no longer ignore.

What are you seeing, experiencing, or noticing that keeps getting your attention?

COMPLETE THIS SENTENCE:

I can't stop thinking about...

NOW, GO ONE STEP DEEPER:

Why does this matter to you?

STEP 2: Name the People

A vision for a new faith community isn't primarily about starting a program or holding a worship service. It's about people.

Who specifically comes to mind when you think about this burden? Be as specific as you can.

Instead of “people who don’t go to church,” consider people like:

- young families in a particular neighborhood
- people recovering from addiction
- college students disconnected from Christian community
- immigrants building a new life in your community
- people who have been hurt by the church
- people who work weekends and cannot participate in traditional church rhythms
- another group of people who come to mind who are often not reached in a conventional church setting

COMPLETE THIS SENTENCE:

I feel especially drawn toward people who...

Can you picture actual people? Write down 1–3 names if you can.

STEP 3: Name What You Long to See

*Instead of, "What kind of church should we start?" begin with,
"What do I hope God does in the lives of these people?"*

Imagine this community three years from now. Because this new faith community exists, what is different?

People are...

Relationships are...

The Community is...

People's relationship with Jesus is...

STEP 4: Name the Possibility

Connect the burden to the possibility.

Complete this sentence without worrying about making it sound polished:

What if there was the presence of a faith community where/in...

Don't describe the building, worship style, staffing, programs, or schedule. Describe what becomes possible for people in that area/location/situation.



TAKE A BREAK!

- Sit with what you have for the moment.
- Continue to reflect on what God is moving in your Spirit.
- As you reflect over a series of days/weeks, come back to this document and change/refine your answers until something more clear emerges.
- When you begin to sense God is moving you in a particular direction, move on to **Step 5**.

STEP 5: Write Your Starting Vision

Bring the pieces together.

We sense God may be calling us to...

create/start/build

for/among

so that

Now turn those pieces into one sentence:

We sense God may be calling us to _____

among _____

so that _____

That is your starting vision. It doesn't have to be perfect. It just needs to be clear enough to pray about, talk about, test, and explore.

Ask yourself if this vision describes:

- **People:** Can I tell specifically who this is for?
- **Purpose:** Can I tell why this needs to exist?
- **Transformation:** Can I imagine what might be different because it exists?
- **Possibility:** Does it invite exploration rather than lock us into a predetermined model?
- **God's Activity:** Does this sound like something we are discerning with God rather than simply something we want to build?

Try This Next:

- Share your one-sentence vision with three people who know the community well.
 - Don't ask, *"Do you like my idea?"* Instead ask, *"When you hear this, what resonates with what you are seeing in our community and what might I be missing?"*
 - Record the responses you hear and spend time in prayer before changing your vision.
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Adaptations

- **Rural Communities:** Think beyond demographic categories. Consider relationships, gathering places, community rhythms, geographic distance, and groups that may be socially disconnected even when everyone seems to know one another.
- **Urban Communities:** Get specific about neighborhood and population. A vision for an entire city may be too broad to guide your first steps.
- **Culturally or Ethnically Diverse Communities:** Don't develop a vision for a community without listening to people from that community. Invite cultural insiders into the discernment process early.
- **Digital or Hybrid Communities:** "Community" may be defined by shared identity, experience, need, or relationship rather than geography. Name the people you hope to reach as specifically as possible.
- **Lay-led Beginnings:** Don't assume your vision requires a pastor, building, budget, or traditional worship service. First discern what God may be calling you to cultivate. The form can emerge later.