

# Homerun Vision Casting

Becoming Effective at Casting the Vision for Small Group – A Small Group Resource

Without a vision the people perish.

Proverbs 29:18

**Whether it is the sports world, business, education, or family, all successful teams must understand and buy in to the vision.**

TC small groups are disciple-making teams! Each team has an intentional leader - a team captain - that helps move the team in the right direction. Effective team leaders understand that grasping and living out the vision is a matter of life and death for the group; that's why they see vision casting as a critical part of each small group meeting.

There is an art to effective vision casting. Thankfully, vision casting is a skill that can be developed through training and practice. This article provides two helps for the group leader who wants to become more effective at casting the vision for their small group:

1. An overview of *how* vision casting impacts teamwork and culture AND
2. A strategy that outlines *what* the vision is and gives helpful ideas for communicating the vision

This should not be understood as an all-encompassing guide for effective vision casting... there's always more to learn! But this is a great resource for group leaders and disciple-makers!

## Index

How Vision Casting Impacts the Team	Page 2
What Vision Do We Cast?	Page 3
Conclusions and Applications	Page 9

# #1: HOW Vision Casting Impacts the Team

## Rounding the Bases

***Effective vision casters know how to lead the team to round the bases...***

**First Base:** Knowing It

**Second Base:** Sharing It

**Third Base:** Hearing It

**Homeplate:** Living It

**First Base** - The most common challenge group leaders face to casting the vision is really understanding the vision for themselves. We cannot teach others what we do not know ourselves! The best way to learn the vision is through discipleship relationships with your group leader and/or your group coach. There is no substitute for real-life relationships and on-the-job training! Additionally, the second part of this article is a dedicated resource to help you know and share the vision more effectively.

**Second Base** – The second most common challenge group leaders face is being able to share the vision effectively with others! It is one thing to know something in your head, it is another thing to be able to articulate what you know to another person! It has been said that we really don't know something until we are able to teach it to others. The best way to learn to share the vision is by practicing in a place where a more experienced disciple-maker can hear you. That place could be in your group, at a meeting with your coach, or at a training event like 400. The important thing is that you speak the vision while a more experienced vision caster is listening. After you share the vision, you and the more experienced leader should "debrief" and talk about how it went. What was clear? What could have been clearer?

**Third Base** – You are talking, but is anybody listening? This goes back to the classic "my part, their part, God's part." We cannot do their part and listen for them, but we can do our part to help them hear the vision. What is our part in helping them hear it? Our most important part is to share the vision every week. There is a tendency to think, "They've heard this before!" We must resist that feeling. Most people need to hear the same thing many, many times before they really get it. Even people who get it will tend to forget it or lose sight of it. Guests who visit our group have never heard it before, so we have to start back at square one. Most importantly, casting the vision every week shows our commitment to the vision for our group!

**Homerun** – The team won't score until we have led them to round the bases. It is only after consistently rounding the bases of knowing, sharing, and hearing the vision that the vision will begin to impact the way the team functions and lives! Culture eats strategy for breakfast. Part of developing culture in a group of people is keeping the vision right in front of them at all times. When we start to evaluate our thoughts, beliefs, words, choices, and behaviors through the lens of the vision, watch out! That team is going to develop a powerful culture that God will use to change hearts and lives!

So, we round the bases in vision casting! That's HOW vision casting impacts culture in a small group. But WHAT is the vision we need to know and share? This question brings us to part two of this article...

## #2: WHAT Vision?

### ***What vision are we casting at small group?***

Simply put, our vision in small group is to work together as a team to make disciples - to become like Jesus and to help others become like Him. It isn't hard to understand this vision generally and to get active in participating! At the same time, there is a lot of depth to this vision when we start asking how to practically live this out in light of the example of Jesus. The second part of this resource is dedicated to helping you deepen your understanding of this vision so that you can know it, share it, help others hear it, and live it out with your team.

To help you understand the flow of this list, think of this list as starting with a very broad vision and then narrowing down into certain critical aspects that define, refine, and clarify the vision for the group. Each of these have been written like mini-script prompts. They have been written in short sections. Each section represents the vision casting for one week at group...

### **Identifying the Purpose of Our Group**

Churches all over the world form small groups with different purposes in mind. What are some of the types of small groups churches might form?"

- Bible Study Groups – we study the Bible every week, but we are not a Bible study group.
- Fellowship Groups – we love to fellowship, but our purpose is not a fellowship group.
- Care Groups – we take good care of each other, but we are not a care group.
- Prayer Groups – we pray together at every meeting and pray for each other throughout the week, but our purpose is not to be a prayer group.

"What is the purpose of our group? We are a disciple-making group! Our goal is to make disciples of Jesus who can make more disciples of Jesus. We all have a part to play in making disciples as part of this team. Let's do our best to listen to God and do our part during our time together today.

### **What is Disciple-Making?**

We have established that we are a disciple-making group. What does it mean to be disciple-makers? We have a simple way to say it at Together Church: a disciple-maker is someone who is becoming more like Jesus and helping others become more like Him.

Jesus is the greatest disciple-maker of all time. He disciplined twelve guys and changed the world. Because Jesus is the master disciple-maker, we want to make disciples the way He did it. How did Jesus make disciples? 1) He loved people. 2) He recruited a small group of people. 3) He created a safe place for people to hear His stories and teaching and to ask and answer questions. Let's aim to be like Jesus in this group. Let's love people, let's make disciples as part of a team, and let's create a safe place for people to hear God's Word, ask questions, and discuss what they are learning.

### **Discipleship is a Team Sport**

Jesus is the master disciple-maker. When Jesus made disciples, His primary strategy was not one-on-one. Jesus recruited a small group for discipleship and most of His disciple-making happened in that group setting. This tells us that discipleship is a team sport!

Our small group is a disciple-making team. I may be the leader, but that doesn't mean that I am the only disciple-maker. Just by being in the group and participating, we are all being disciple-makers! When you share an insight about the story, you are discipling us. When you get transparent about what God is doing in your life, you are discipling us. When you encourage us and serve us, you are discipling us. Discipleship is a team sport!

The church is not supposed to be a group of people sitting in rows once a week. The church is called out by God to be His army! We are His agents in this world! We are the salt and the light! We are a force of good for the Kingdom of God! There is a part for all of us to play in God's plan for His Church. Our job is to get out of our seats and get into the game! Let's practice that during our meeting and throughout the week in real-life relationships.

### **What is a Disciple?**

We have established that the purpose of our group is to make disciples and that a disciple-maker is someone who is becoming like Jesus and helping others become like Him. The goal of disciple-making is to make disciples of Jesus. What is a disciple of Jesus? How do we define it?

At Together Church, we turn to Jesus for the definition of a disciple. Jesus provides a simple definition in Matthew 4:19. Is there someone who could quote this verse from memory? (If not, ask someone to look it up and read it.)

We see three parts to what Jesus said about being His disciple in this verse: 1) A disciple is someone who is following Jesus (follow me), 2) a disciple is someone who is being changed by Jesus (and I will make you), 3) a disciple of Jesus is someone who is on mission with Jesus (fishers of men).

### **Branching Our Group**

We established that the goal of our group is to make disciples who can make disciples. We have a strategy to do this! We like to say disciple-making is better caught than taught. You will learn a lot of the strategy just by being in group with us. Over time, I will also share the strategy with you when I cast vision for our group at the beginning of our meetings.

One critical part of our strategy is that we are determined to branch this group. Branching the group means raising up new leaders who can start a new group. This is one of the most important ways that we make disciples who can make disciples! We never branch a group just for the sake of branching. Our goal is to raise up qualified new group leaders who can branch and lead a healthy disciple-making group. Currently, \_\_\_\_\_ are our apprentices. We are discipling them to be group leaders. There will be times that they lead this group as they train to branch.

Every time we branch a healthy group, new people step up to the plate to lead and serve in new ways. Every time we branch a healthy new group, God has been faithful to connect new people to those groups. Every time we branch a healthy new group, there is another place in another area of our city for followers of Jesus to gather to be discipled and to do their part to disciple others. Let's pray about God's timing for branching this group!

### **A Disciple with my Head, Heart, and Hands**

Let's review the definition of a disciple that Jesus gave in Matthew 4:19 (ask someone to quote or read it). A disciple of Jesus is someone who is 1) following Jesus, 2) being changed by Jesus, and 3) on mission with Jesus.

Let's connect this definition to us in a memorable and personal way. We must be fully engaged to be disciples of Jesus. Disciples of Jesus are all in with their heads, their hearts, and their hands...

1. Following Jesus – we follow Jesus with our heads. Responding to the call of Jesus to follow Him is a choice we make with our minds. It means we are no longer following our own ideas or the ideas of this world; instead, we surrender our will completely to the will of God.
2. Being Changed by Jesus – Jesus changes us in our hearts. He gives us new desires. His Holy Spirit comes to live in us so that we are literally new creations in Christ! His life is in us."
3. On Mission with Jesus – Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God and to love others. Following Jesus with our heads and hearts naturally leads us to follow Him with our hands. That means using our time, money, energy, homes, talents, skills, giftings, and lives to love and serve God and others. Our ultimate aim is that others would trust in Jesus and choose to follow Him!

Let's review...

"A disciple of Jesus is someone who is \_\_\_\_\_ (following) Jesus – we follow Him with our \_\_\_\_\_ (heads)."

"A disciple of Jesus is someone who is being \_\_\_\_\_ (changed) by Jesus – He changes our \_\_\_\_\_ (hearts)."

"A disciple of Jesus is someone who is on \_\_\_\_\_ (mission) with Jesus – we use what God has given us to love and serve God and others."

### **Laying Down My Opinions**

We have learned that a disciple of Jesus is someone who follows Jesus. That's a decision we make with our heads. There is an obvious challenge to this decision... there are times that God says things and I do not initially agree!

In my lifetime, there have been many times that I have read God's Word or heard God's Word taught and my initial reaction was that I didn't agree! Maybe I didn't agree because I liked my current comforts. Or I didn't agree because it wasn't how I was taught or trained. Or I didn't agree because I just didn't like how it made me feel. There are all kinds of reasons why we might not initially agree with God.

Do you know what I have learned? When I encounter God's Word and there is something that I don't agree with, I have learned to start by assuming that it is right, and I am wrong.

We all need to grow in a knowledge of God's Word. But even more important than the knowledge is our hearts. God's Word says that knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. If we love God and others more than we love our own thoughts and opinions, we will be well on our way to growing as followers of Jesus and creating a culture of love and disciple-making in our group! Let's put God's Word front and center today and see what God wants to teach us.

### **Disciple-Making Culture & LOVE**

There's this saying: culture eats strategy for breakfast. We have a strategy in small group for team discipleship. The strategy is important! But what is even more important is our group culture. Can anyone tell me what the biblical foundation for disciple-making culture is? (LOVE!)

(Take time to celebrate! Point out someone in the group who has invested in a culture of love. Ask others to join you in celebrating and thanking people in the group for ways they have felt loved by others. We often call this "giving props" in everyone groups or "brag on a bro" in men's groups.)

Love is the biblical foundation for disciple-making. Jesus said that the world would know we are His disciples by our love for one another. Let's keep building this culture of love both during our group meetings and throughout the week as we share life together.

### **Disciple-Making STRATEGY**

Love is the biblical foundation for disciple-making culture. Culture eats strategy for breakfast. If we don't have the right culture, our strategy won't matter. However! When the culture is right, a good strategy is essential. Without a good strategy, it will be very difficult and highly unlikely for us to make disciples who can make disciples.

What is the strategy for our group? Over the next few weeks, we will talk about three key ingredients to our disciple-making strategy. You will notice that all three of these ingredients are part of our weekly meetings. The strategy is so simple that anyone can learn it! In fact, most of you will realize that you already know the strategy just from being part of this group – you just need to learn to put it into words. So, what are the three ingredients to the strategy we have for our group?

1. An intentional leader
2. A relational environment
3. A reproducible process

We will look at these three ingredients over the next few weeks.

### **STRATEGY: An Intentional Leader**

The first ingredient in a disciple-making strategy is the intentional leader. Jesus was the intentional leader of His small group of disciples. Effective disciple-making groups have an intentional leader.

What is an intentional leader? An intentional leader is a more mature disciple of Jesus. They shoulder the responsibility of cultivating a culture of love in a disciple-making group and leading the group to live out the strategy for disciple-making. In our group, \_\_\_\_\_ is/are the intentional leader(s). We also have \_\_\_\_\_ serving as apprentices in our group. As apprentices, their job is to help lead this group and to eventually branch our small group. Their goal is to grow in their leadership to the point where they are leading their own group.

Intentional leaders are not the only disciple-makers in a group! We are all disciple-makers! The intentional leader is more like a point guard on a basketball team. Intentional leaders facilitate running the plays for the team. Just because you facilitate the play doesn't mean that you have to take every shot. A good intentional leader knows how to get the whole team involved in disciple-making.

As your intentional leader, my desire is that you would get out of your seat and into the game! That happens when you share insights and answer questions in small group. That happens when you get transparent about what's going on in your life. That happens when you see a need and you help meet that need. That happens when you pray for people in our group. That happens when you invite others to connect. I am going to facilitate our group meeting, but we all have a part to play!

### **STRATEGY: A Relational Environment**

The second ingredient to disciple-making culture in a small group is the relational environment. We create a relational environment by creating a safe place to ask questions and be transparent.

Sadly, there are many people connected to a church who never open up and share what is going on in their lives. In 1 John 1, the Bible says “. . . if we will walk in the light as He is in the light, we will have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus covers all our sins”. Secrets make us sick! God wants us to walk in the light as He is in the light. To do that, we need to create a relational environment in our group where people can share transparently.

One of the most important ways we create this relational environment is through our group guidelines. Every one of these guidelines is critical to the relational environment. When one gets broken, the relational environment suffers. Let's review the guidelines together, and let's purpose that we will use them to work as a team to create a relational environment.

### **STRATEGY: Reproducible Process (in group)**

The third ingredient for disciple-making strategy in our group is the reproducible process. If our goal is to make disciples who can make disciples, we must have a strategy that others can learn and practice! Without a reproducible process, disciple-making stops right here. Our goal is to branch our group so we can be part of multiplying disciple-making throughout our city and around the world.

What is the reproducible strategy? There are two parts. The first part is what we do in group and the second part is how we grow in spiritual maturity. This week, we will just talk about what we do in group.

If you have been in group for a while, you already know the reproducible process we use in group! What is that process? It is simply getting God's Word in our heads and then asking questions and sharing transparently to allow God to move His Word to our hearts and our hands.

How do we do that in group each week? First, we establish the guidelines so we have a relational environment. Second, we tell the story, rebuild the story, and read the story to get God's Word into our heads. Third, we ask questions to help us discuss God's Word and get transparent. It really is that easy. Anyone can learn how to facilitate this reproducible process!

Parents, you can do this with your children. You can do this with your friends. You can do this with your siblings. You can do this with people at work. Any of us can do this at any time with other people! That's why we call this part of the strategy the reproducible process! Let's practice this strategy in our meeting today. Pay attention to the strategy as we go through it today. Then ask yourself who you can repeat this strategy with later on this week.

**STRATEGY: Reproducible Process (spiritual growth)**

The third ingredient for disciple-making strategy in our group is the reproducible process. The first part of the reproducible process is what we do in group together every week. Every aspect of group is reproducible so that anyone can learn to do it!

The second part of the reproducible process is how a disciple of Jesus grows spiritually. Just like a newborn baby must develop through phases of physical growth, a disciple of Jesus must develop through phases of spiritual growth.

Together Church offers trainings to help us learn this process. One of the most important trainings is 400 which happens every September. Another important training is the Real-Life Discipleship Training Manual. It is a big white workbook that outlines the process of spiritual growth. If you haven't been through that book, I would love to help you find someone who has been through the book that could do it with you. It is so important that we all learn how disciples of Jesus grow.

One thing I will tell you today is that the biggest hurdle every disciple of Jesus must overcome to grow spiritually is the hurdle of self-centeredness. There is no such thing as a mature disciple of Jesus who lives in self-centeredness. Sure, we all have our moments! But what characterizes us? Is it being self-centered or being God- and others-centered? In other words, do we live to gratify the desires of our flesh and what we feel or is the purpose of our life to love and serve God and others?

Even as we meet today, how could you be less self-centered and more God- and others-centered? Could it be in the way you listen more attentively to what others are saying? Could it be through being more open and transparent about your own life and struggles? Perhaps there are ways God wants to prompt you to love and serve others in our group this week. Or maybe there is someone who doesn't know Jesus that God wants you to be more intentional with. Whatever it is, will you be less self-centered and more God- and others-centered today during our meeting and throughout the week?

## Conclusions & Applications

First, it should be stated again that this resource cannot replace on-the-job training and life-on-life discipleship! Discipleship is better caught than taught. The best way to learn how to cast the vision is by experiencing it with a more mature disciple who can model it for you and give you a place to practice.

With that in mind, this resource is intended to help you go deeper and to grow in your ability to cast the vision! In the second section, each part is written in a way that you could speak it verbatim. This was intentional so that you could “hear” it modeled anytime you want to review it. But! An effective vision caster will be able to internalize the vision that want to share (know it) so that they can share it from the heart (share it and hear it). Saying the vision is not the same thing as casting the vision effectively. Casting vision happens when it is part of your own belief system. Your team needs to see that this is genuine for you before they will listen and live it.

There is more than what is written in this resource! There are ways to cast the vision through games, object lessons, celebrating, personal stories, videos, activities, and more! This resource should never take the place of you seeking God and asking Him how to best share the vision with your group.

Concerning a strategy for choosing what order to cast the vision, the second section was put together with this strategy in mind. However, you do not need to feel locked into this order. Seek God on what to share based on the needs of your group.

**What about a new person joining?** One of the most important things an effective vision caster does is they recognize new people in their group and they prioritize the guest. The first five parts under section two are what we would call “primary” vision. These are the most important to cast most often. If you have a new person in your group, go back to the primary vision before you continue on with more nuanced vision.

Finally, remember to share the responsibility of vision casting. As a group leader, you should be the primary person to cast the vision for your group. But this resource provides an excellent tool you can use to assign others to help cast the vision. One of the best ways to help others hear is to get them to learn it well enough that they can teach it! Another great way to get others to hear is for them to hear the same thing from multiple voices. Raising up others to cast the vision will pay major dividends for your disciple-making culture.