



DEVELOPING A LEADERSHIP PATHWAY

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Do you spend much time at the doctor's office? If you haven't, just wait till you have kids! And, if you are blessed with boys, expect to spend some time at the ER as well. Just saying...

I have four kids so I've seen a lot of waiting rooms. Waiting rooms are all pretty much the same. They usually have two sections to divide the well from the sick and a variety of things to keep both parties entertained and isolated until their time comes to move onto the next room. Next time you're there look around the room. There isn't much emotion. Each person is biding his/her time until his/her time comes to move on.

Now compare that with a launch pad for the space shuttle. The cockpit is swarming with activity. Ground zero is alive with clicking and talking. All parties are frantic to make sure every detail is secure. The ground crew is scurrying about making sure everything is filled up, topped off, and packed. There is excitement and anticipation! Every man and woman is doing their part because they know that everything they do is mission critical. It's the difference between life and death, success and failure.

This is a much different picture from your average waiting room, right? The difference? One is ready to launch into something great, the other is well... just waiting. One is passive and one is active. Both of these places serve a purpose, but only one of them changes the world and pushes us farther. **For the most part we treat college ministry like a waiting room.** We think, "one day these students will be adults and so we should keep them safe and comfortable to make sure they have a pleasant experience and don't walk away from their faith." We have no stretching vision for our ministry or for what our graduates should look like and therefore we are ok with whatever we get. Instead of launching our graduates into the mission field of their 20s, we lose them to whatever waiting room ministry will take them and keep them comfortable and entertained until they move on to the next waiting room. We lack a clear picture of what we want and a pathway to make it happen.

GET A CLEAR END GAME FOR YOUR MINISTRY AND YOUR GRADUATES

On May 25, 1961 John Kennedy announced his goal was to put a man on the moon before 1970. A little over eight years later, on June 20, 1969, a man took a small step, mankind took a giant leap, and Neil Armstrong was the first human to set foot on the moon! Leadership and vision transformed a waiting room space program into a launch pad!

Launch pad ministries have a clear end game. They have a clear picture of what they want to be and what their graduates will look like. Having a stretching, but clear, goal gives you a target to shoot at. It clears up what your ministry will do and won't do. If you don't have a clearly defined end goal then you will get off track with every Christian fad and bright idea that comes around. You will find yourself busier than any other ministry, but ineffective. If it doesn't help move your ministry forward, cut it. If it doesn't help develop the

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type of graduating disciples you want, then you don't do it. A clear vision serves as a north star as you plan events and think strategically about your ministry. If your hope is that there will be a small group on every single floor of every single building on campus, then you will orientate your ministry of developing small group leaders and spend less time trying to develop a huge, attractional worship event. If you want your seniors to be able to pioneer and start new work within different people groups then you will have them focus their energy and time on that which produces new ministries instead of a disciple now team or a nursing home ministry. Your end goal clarifies what you do or don't do. As you think about your end game here are a couple things to keep in mind:

It needs to be big.

When Kennedy said we were headed to the moon it had never been done before. He picked a spot off the map - off the planet - and said, "that's ours". I'm sure there was a group of people who said, "it can't be done." You know who those guys were? Precisely. Nobody remembers them. They didn't change the world. They tried to limit it. What is your vision? Does it make you nervous to say it in public because people might think you're crazy? Good, you're getting close. What do you want to see God do through your ministry? What do you expect from your graduating seniors? Make it big! Those who strive for mediocrity are seldom disappointed, but they seldom make a difference either. Even if it takes you a decade or two to get there you are constantly doing more than you thought you could! Shoot for the moon! Even if you miss you will still be farther than you were when you started.

It needs to be specific and measurable.

"I want my seniors to leave my ministry loving Jesus and their church more than when they came in." That is a great sentiment and the start of something great, but it's hard to measure. How do you know when you've reached it? Not only that, but what does that mean when your sophomore says, "I love Jesus and I love his church, what's next?" It's not only vague, but depending on your point of view, it can be accomplished in a semester. It's selling the gospel a little short. Find some ways to measure it. If "a particular heart attitude or Christian discipline" is the goal, then what is the fruit of it? Jesus said the way you know a good seed in is in good soil is that it produces multiplying fruit. As the leader of your ministry you are called to be the fruit inspector. You have the vision and end goal in mind. Is the fruit coming out of your ministry the fruit you set out to produce? If not, you need to course correct. As a friend always says, "you don't get what you expect, you get what you inspect!" Find ways to have a specific, measurable end goal in mind.

Some practical tips:

What is it that your ministry values? You just said Jesus, didn't you? Don't say Jesus. Think past the Sunday School answers. What is it that gets you excited in ministry? What is it that drives you? Let that be a starting place for your ministry vision. For us, we can sum it up in one word: multiplication. We want every student to be within arms length of the gospel and in order to see that happen we need to multiply on every level: individual disciples, small groups, ministries on campus, and campus ministries. Because of that, our end goal is that when a student leaves our ministry they can multiply and reproduce our *entire* ministry somewhere else. They can engage lost people, establish new/young believers, equip disciplinarians, and can export them to do the same. In short, we want every student to be able to leave our ministry and be a missionary



and start ministry in their context after graduation. So what is it that you value? Let that fuel your vision for what your ministry and your graduates will look like.

Some questions to help you in your thinking:

What is the big dream for your ministry?

What would God's goal be for where each of your graduates are at when they leave your ministry?

What is your ideal picture of your graduating senior?

WHAT ARE THE KEY ROAD MARKERS ON THE PATHWAY TO THE END VISION?

I like to play a mental game when I'm on the road heading home from a long trip. When I get on a familiar road and can turn off my navigation on my phone, I check off a box in my mind. When I cross back into Texas I check a box in my head. When I cross the county line into my county, I check off a box in my mind. When I cross the city limits I check off a box in my mind. I know that in order for me to be home I need to be in Texas, in Erath County, in Stephenville. I won't ever get home if I can't get to Texas. If I'm sitting in a house in Oregon, the view might be greener, but there is no way it is my home. My home is in Stephenville, Erath County, Texas.

Now, how does this apply to leadership development? Many times we want to say we've arrived with our leaders when we aren't even in the right state. It's like the guy who says he's home in Nashville, TN, but he is looking out and seeing the Rocky Mountains. We call them leaders, but they are just glorified door holders. We confused faithful attenders with leaders. Leaders have people following them. For some of us we live in denial saying we are creating leaders when we are actually just making devoted followers. But maybe it isn't confusion on what we are producing, it's feeling overwhelmed by the journey. How do you take a lost, flaky freshmen and turn him/her into a disciple making senior leading a ministry team, a small group network, and ready to be sent out as a marketplace missionary? I feel you! Every fall I look at our freshmen and something in me groans. This is going to be a lot of work!

Find the pathway for your students.

The first step is the next step. You find the next best step from where they are at! Then find the next step and then the next. You have to turn him/her into a saved, growing sophomore. Then you help them develop a steady routine of investing in others as a junior and then add another level when they are seniors. It's messy and not always clear cut, but if you begin to think about it in chunks of time and baby steps then it becomes easier. After all, how do you eat an elephant? One bit at a time. Do leadership development and end goals one bite at a time.

Begin to think through where the average student is at when they enter your ministry. What are 2-4 key turning points or steps it would take to get them to where your end vision is? Here is an example: They come in lost/unengaged. How do you help move them from lost to saved, unengaged to engaged? How do you help them go from consumers to servers? How do you help them move from just serving to leading and including others in leading?



After you can identify a few pivotal points in the pathway then your next step is to help them develop to the next point on the pathway. Don't feel like you have to come up with something completely original. I'm not very good at coming up with new things so our ministry is a ministry of plagiarism. It's a conglomerate of other people's ideas. When we came across Steve Shadrach's [Discipleship Ladder](#) in the Fuel and the Flame we adapted that into our discipleship and leadership pathway. We took Shadrach's content and mixed it in with Resonate Church's structure on a Salt Company format. We baptized it all in our language and our school colors and called it good. As a point of reference, here is a copy of our [Discipleship Pathway](#) and [Campus Ministry Pathway](#) that we use in our ministry and with some of the campuses in our network.

Some questions to help you get started:

Where is the average student at relationally and spiritually when they come into contact with your ministry for the first time?

What are the 2-3 pivotal roadmarks your students experience during the time they are in your ministry?

What are some tools, catalytic events you could put in place, or already have in place in order to help them move to that next pivotal place?

DISCLAIMER

The fear in something like this is that it becomes the legalist ruler we use to beat our students and ourselves up with. We become a conveyor belt ministry trying to "produce" a finished product instead of building God's Kingdom. When we fall into that trap of all challenge and no relationship our students walk away feeling used. What's the point of having a launch pad ministry if the body count of burned out students is so high? We develop students and trust God to build them. Ultimately, God makes the seed grow. We are just workers in the harvest field, not the Lord of the Harvest. However, most of us err on the side of caution by not challenging them and expecting TOO LITTLE of our students. As a result, we keep them comfortable in waiting rooms, hoping not to chance them off by over challenging them.

What could our ministry and our nation look like if as college ministries we all shot for the moon? What if we grew discontent with waiting room ministry - babysitting Christians - and began training leaders to be launched into the mission field, the marketplace, the local church, or back on the college campus? Those are the kind of Jesus followers who change the world and advance the Kingdom. That is a mission worth spending our time, our talents, and our treasure on!