



TOPIC 2, EPISODE 2—VISION

CHAMPION THE VISION

- A vision without a leader to champion is just a dream. Each church needs a leader who will champion the vision even when it's hard. This leader will be the point person that encourages the congregation to embrace a ministry with people with disabilities as a ministry of the church.
- In the last episode we talked about the importance of being in ministry with our friends with disabilities. It is not about bringing the love of Jesus to our friends out of pity, but with a heart to grow closer to Jesus together with our friends who have disabilities.
- “Ministry with” is the primary goal of the Connection Ministries’ mission; a mission that finds its origin in our vision.
- **James 1:5**; “If we need wisdom, we should ask God, who gives it generously...”
- Quote from Joel Barker; “*Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world.*”
- The term “champion” used in this episode is not a champion of a competition. It is an action verb that means the act of taking responsibility for advancing a vision.



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CHAMPION THE VISION CONTINUED

- Not every leader starts out championing a vision willingly. God in His mercy wanted to save the people of Nineveh (**Jonah 1**) and called Jonah to go to the city and preach repentance. Jonah instead got on a boat going in the opposite direction.
- But God pursued Jonah. His ship was caught in a big storm and Jonah was thrown overboard to save the ship. He was then swallowed by a big fish, and in the belly of the fish he had plenty of time to pray (**Jonah 2**). He vowed to go to Nineveh. God commanded the fish to vomit Jonah onto dry land.
- God again tells Jonah to go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim His message. This time Jonah obeys God (**Jonah 3**). He told the people; “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.”
- It was through God’s power that the Ninevites believed God and a fast was proclaimed for everyone, from the greatest to the least.
- These were not the events of Jonah’s choosing. It was God’s plan. The people of Nineveh did not repent by Jonah’s power, but by God’s power.
- When it comes to advancing a disability ministry in your church, like Jonah, you may feel reluctant. But it may be God’s plan that will become reality by His power.
- A God inspired vision to include people with intellectual disabilities in Christian community needs God’s power. There needs to be a leader or several leaders to champion the vision.
- People with disabilities and their families lose heart every day for many reasons: shame, guilt, fear, rejection, etc. The one place where they should find honor and pride is in the Church.
- Indiana census data tells us that there are 193,00 people with cognitive disabilities out of a population of 6.7 million people. This is almost 3% of our population.

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CHAMPION THE VISION CONTINUED

- These indispensable people (**1 Corinthians 12:21-23**) need faith communities that will bring them to Jesus. The person who champions their cause may be a pastor, a parent who has a family member with a disability, or maybe it's you.
- What should be a church's vision for ministry with adults with intellectual disabilities?
- The vision of Connection Ministries is based off **Acts 2:42-47**. The necessary elements for authentic Christian Community included in all Friendship groups are found in this passage.
- "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." (**Acts 2:42-47, NIV**)
- It is in these verses that God gave Connection Ministries a passion to see churches become authentic Christian communities that reach out and embrace people with intellectual disabilities, their families and direct support staff, and together grow closer to Jesus.
- Be sure your vision and mission are not too broad. It is better to do one thing well than many things poorly. If you start a ministry in your church to minister with anyone with any kind of disability, chances are you will not be effective with any group.
- Connection Ministries chose to minister with adults with intellectual disabilities because this was the burden God gave us.

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CHAMPION THE VISION CONTINUED

- Adults with intellectual disabilities require specialized curriculum and teaching methods to communicate the Good News and this was where we felt we could make a difference.
- It will be important not to bypass the steps of discerning your vision and mission. It will keep you on track and provide the means for you to clearly communicate to others.

 <https://connection-ministries.org>