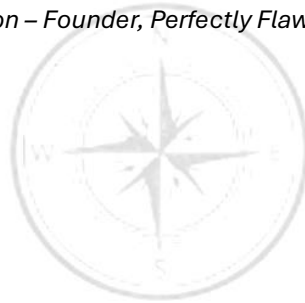




**PERFECTLY FLAWED**  
LEADERSHIP

# A Biblical and Practical Framework for Church Council Vision-Setting

*Micah Johnson – Founder, Perfectly Flawed Leadership*



**PERFECTLY FLAWED**  
LEADERSHIP

## The Theological Foundation

Before any practical process begins, the council needs to be grounded in a core conviction: **the vision belongs to God, not the leadership**. The council's role is discernment, not invention. Proverbs 29:18 ("Where there is no vision, the people perish") is often cited in this context, but the Hebrew word *chazon* refers to prophetic revelation — a word from God received and proclaimed. This reframes the council's task entirely. You are not brainstorming a corporate strategy; you are seeking to hear from God and faithfully articulate what He is calling this particular congregation to do and be.

This is why Habakkuk 2:2-3 is so instructive: God tells the prophet to *write down* the vision, *make it plain*, and *wait for it*. Vision-setting is a spiritual act before it is a leadership act.

## Biblical Principles to Anchor the Process

**1. Prayer and Fasting Come First (Acts 13:1-3)** The church at Antioch was worshipping and fasting when the Holy Spirit gave direction. Before any whiteboard sessions or SWOT analyses, the council should commit to extended, intentional prayer — individually and corporately. Consider a season of fasting leading up to the discernment process.

**2. Elders Lead, But the Body Participates (Acts 6:1-7)** The apostles provided leadership and direction, but the congregation had a voice in the process. A vision that is handed down without congregational input often dies on arrival. The council should build in meaningful listening opportunities with the people they serve.

**3. Scripture Shapes Everything (2 Timothy 3:16-17)** The vision must be rooted in and accountable to Scripture. Any direction that cannot be grounded in biblical mandate — the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40), the nature of the church in Acts 2:42-47 — should be questioned.

**4. Counsel and Wisdom (Proverbs 11:14; 15:22)** God works through the counsel of many advisors. This is why the council exists. No single elder or pastor should drive the vision unilaterally. Diverse perspectives within the council are a gift, not a threat.

**5. Humility About the Future (James 4:13-15)** Vision must be held with open hands. The council is making its best, prayerful discernment — not a prophecy set in stone. Building in regular review and willingness to adjust is biblical, not faithless.

## **A Practical Framework: Five Movements**

### **Movement 1 — Preparation (1-3 Months Before)**

This is the spiritual groundwork. Assign council members to pray through specific scriptures related to the church's calling. Preach a sermon series on the nature and mission of the church so the congregation is spiritually prepared. Survey the congregation with open-ended questions: *What do you sense God is doing among us? Where do you see unmet need? What gifts and resources do we have that are underused?*

### **Movement 2 — Listening (Council Retreat or Extended Session)**

Gather the council away from the church building if possible — a change of environment signals that this is a different kind of meeting. Begin with extended worship and silence. Share what has emerged from prayer and the congregational survey. Ask three core questions together: *Who are we? (Identity)* — *Who are our neighbors? (Context)* — *What is God calling us to? (Mission)*. Listen more than you talk. Resist the urge to solve or decide in this session.

### **Movement 3 — Discernment (Drafting the Vision)**

A smaller writing team — typically two or three people with gifts in language and theology — should take the raw material from the listening phase and draft a vision statement. A strong church vision statement is theological (rooted in Scripture), specific (not generic enough to fit any congregation), memorable (short enough to be internalized), and actionable (it points somewhere). It should answer: *What will be different about our community because we exist?*

### **Movement 4 — Testing and Confirmation**

Bring the draft back to the full council for theological and practical scrutiny. Ask: *Does this align with Scripture? Does it reflect what we actually heard from the congregation and from God? Are we genuinely willing to organize our resources around this?* Then share it with a broader group of trusted congregational leaders before final adoption. This is not a vote to dilute leadership — it is wisdom-seeking.

### **Movement 5 — Proclamation and Embodiment**

A vision that is announced once and filed away is useless. The council must commit to a communication and implementation plan. The senior pastor should preach the vision into the congregation with theological depth. Council members should be able to articulate it personally and naturally. Every major decision — budget, staffing, programming — should be evaluated through the lens of the vision. Build in an annual review: *Are we moving in this direction? What needs to change?*

### **A Few Cautions**

It's worth the council being honest about several common pitfalls. Vision can become a branding exercise rather than a spiritual act if the process is driven more by leadership books than Scripture and prayer. A vision that is too broad ("reach our city for Christ") gives no actual direction, while one that is too narrow can make the congregation feel excluded. And vision without the trust of the congregation — earned through relationships and demonstrated integrity — will not take root regardless of how well it is crafted.

### **A Summary Statement for the Council**

The council's job in vision-setting is to pray deeply, listen widely, discern carefully, articulate clearly, and embody consistently. You are not building an organization — you are shepherding a people called by God, for God's purposes, in your particular place and time. The vision should make that calling concrete enough that people know what they are giving their lives to.