Darrell Bock: Welcome to The Table, where we discuss issues of God and culture, and our topic today is strategic planning in the church, and I have with me someone who’s been a friend for a long time, we were seminary colleagues, Aubrey Malphurs, and so we’ll probably drop the formal designations of Dr. Malphurs and Dr. Bock because we’ve been Aubrey and Darrell for years. And so, Aubrey, I’m really glad you could come in and be a part of this today with us.

Aubrey Malphurs: It’s good to be a part of it, Darrell, and I don’t know if you recall but we all were Greek majors and you and Dan Wallace used to copy off my exams.

Darrell Bock: That’s right, that’s right, and I’ve been learning ever since. So it is a joy to have you in here and it’s been fun to watch what God has done in your life. Why don’t you tell us a little bit about how you managed to get to where you ended up, going from being a Greek major to being a strategic planner.

Aubrey Malphurs: Well, I would be what Bill Hybels refers to as an unchurched type seeker, and that was really true of me. I didn’t come to faith till I was in college.

Darrell Bock: Mm-hmm, I’m the same.

Aubrey Malphurs: I was 19 or 20, and two guys confronted me and eventually I came to faith in Christ. But it was at a tragic time – not a tragic, it was at a strategic time in my life. I was trying to figure out what am I going to do, and when I came to faith it was, I know where I’m going from here on out. So finished at the University of Florida, got married, had to go off and do some time with Uncle Sam, did that. But my dream and some of that was to come to Dallas Seminary, because I had been influenced by Dallas Seminary grads like so many other people.

Darrell Bock: Right.

Aubrey Malphurs: And it was seven years before we made it here. I taught school for seven years, planted a church.

Darrell Bock: And you never shed the commitment to the Gators, I noticed that.
Aubrey Malphurs: That’s right, I have a tattoo, a Gator tattoo on my shoulder. Anyway, it’s been exciting to be here at Dallas. We’ve been here now 32 years.

Darrell Bock: Yes, I’m the same length. And what happened after you got out of seminary, how did you end up in strategic planning?

Aubrey Malphurs: Well, when I got out of seminary I decided to go on into the Ph.D. program, because I felt that if we leave then we will not come back. And so Dallas Bible College hired me and I went on for the PhD and it worked beautifully. Then I came back to the seminary and they hired me and I was in field education, internships, that type of thing, which I really enjoyed but I had not discovered my passion in life, what I really want to do with my life.

Here I was a PhD on faculty and two of our graduates came on campus one day at a brown bag and they challenged me in this area. One of my students in church planting challenged me to listen to a fellow named Rick Warren, some kind of Saddleback Church out there somewhere.

Darrell Bock: Saddleback. I go out there when I speak and I say I like this church, it has a name a Texan understands.

Aubrey Malphurs: But anyway, it was like the whole world opened up to me and I was just fascinated with this. And so immediately I began to pursue it, read everything I could get my hands on, and there wasn’t a lot. Listened to tapes, that type of thing.

Darrell Bock: So you’ve done several books in this area and the one we’re going to focus on today is called – now it sounds like a class, Advanced Strategic Planning. I guess there’s a Strategic Planning 101 and this is like 401 or something?

Aubrey Malphurs: Well, Paul Engle said we want to get this book out there and we want people to see it before anything else, so if we put the A in the title, as in Advanced, it will bump ahead of the other books on strategic planning.

Darrell Bock: So not only do we have deep content but we’ve got marketing strategies very much involved in this.

Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly, you can’t lose when you have those together.
Darrell Bock: That’s great. Well, what we want to do is kind of systematically work our way through some of the key concepts in the book. This is the third edition of it, is that correct?

Aubrey Malphurs: Yes, yes.

Darrell Bock: So you originally wrote this – it could be a bad question to ask, but you originally wrote this when, when was the first edition?

Aubrey Malphurs: That’s a good question, probably 15 years ago.

Darrell Bock: Okay, all right. And it’s in the third edition now, and we’re just in the process of releasing the third edition.

Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly, and it’s done real well, probably one of my best-sellers.

Darrell Bock: Okay, well that’s good. Well, let’s get started. The first obvious question, and in one sense it’s obvious but I think we need to just get it out on the table: Why plan strategically? Or maybe the best way to ask this question is what does strategic planning look like versus what often happens?

Aubrey Malphurs: Well, in a sense, most pastors will go into churches, at least this has been my experience, because they want to teach the Bible, they’ve fallen in love with the savior, they’ve fallen in love with his word and they want to teach the Bible and pretty much love on people and that’s not working very well out there unfortunately. Teaching the Bible is and loving people but they’ve missed leadership and the importance of leadership.

And a part of leading a church is helping it to know where it’s supposed to be going, what its mission is, what its vision could be, what its core values are and coming up with a strategy to accomplish those.

Darrell Bock: And actually being able to execute that vision.

Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly, to implement it. Probably the most difficult part of this, Darrell, is the implementation side, and I have a consulting group, we go out and work with churches, and we’ve found that that has been the most difficult for them, implementing that. So we have a process for implementation; whether or not they follow it is up to them.
Darrell Bock: So you can have a marvelous plan with all the right goals, et cetera, but if you have no clue how to actually get from point 1 to point 2 to point 3, then you’re in deep trouble.

Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly. And you can know how and still not do it because it’s like a rubber band, while we’re with them we stretch them, but once we’re gone, then the rubber band begins to relax a little bit. So it’s up to the pastor and the leadership to make sure that they move ahead with this. And of course, a lot of that is accountability. We ask them to meet monthly and have their team leaders who are working on the implementation of the process to report as to how they’re doing.

Darrell Bock: Yeah, and the difficult part of this, it struck me in reading the book, was you’re dealing – every location is unique, every team – strategic leading team is unique and you’re dealing with multiple personalities and mixes and in some cases, sociologies that have been established about how these people have interacted with each other long before the team starts to do strategic planning.

Aubrey Malphurs: Yeah, families.

Darrell Bock: Yeah, they’re families in a corporate sense if I can say it that way. And all those dynamics make the management of not just the execution of the plan but the encouragement of the group to move ahead with the plan, two aspects, two almost essential aspects to making it work.

Aubrey Malphurs: Yeah. Well, one of the things we do going in is we have them do a ministry analysis, and a lot of the churches that we work with are usually – they used to be 300 and above, now we have some down around 100 that are bringing us in regardless. And what we will do is an analysis to see how they’re doing and most of them are not doing very well, and we look at the decline in attendance, worship attendance and we can come up with a percentage of decline so that we can predict if they continue to decline at their current rate and if they don’t do something to intervene, they will have to close the front doors in three or four years. And that gets their attention.
Darrell Bock: Yeah, that does get their attention. And there’s a curve about the life of a church and lets it renews and plans and that is you get its establishment assuming that it does take hold and it goes up and then there’s kind of this plateau level which I imagine is a tricky level, because when think about – even one of the churches that I’m very involved with, I would say that that church has been plateaued for a very long time. We haven’t gotten over the plateau, we aren’t sliding down, we aren’t skiing yet. But we’re sitting here kind of on hold, we’re not going up, we’re not going down, but most churches, they’ll get here and then they’ll begin the slide and unless they do something they’re headed towards closure, is that –?

Aubrey Malphurs: Well, you may have enough people coming into the front door to offset those going out the back door, and so you stay at that plateau, but you – and it may be the same group or it could be a whole new group eventually. But another sign too here is the aging of the existing members.

Darrell Bock: Right, that’s another thing we very much have been dealing with.

Aubrey Malphurs: So they’re getting older and they’re not getting any younger and we’re losing too many of our young people right now. The statistic that I heard was something like 16 to 29 percent of our young Christians, young people 20 to 30 years old are leaving the church.

Darrell Bock: Yeah, yeah. No, it’s actually a topic for its own podcast. I mean it’s a major, major concern and I think we sometimes set ourselves up to do that, by the way. One of the things that I see, and you can tell me if I’m spotting something that’s actually a trend, is as a church grows older and as it keeps the forms that that age group identifies with as it moves up, the danger is you lose this group at the bottom because they don’t connect with how – if I can just say it, with how you do church.

Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly, exactly. It’s interesting, back when texting came on strong I got a little tape on that showing a lot of young people texting, and I would show it to a mostly older group and they had no idea, they had no clue as to what was going on there, and I said these are the people that are in your church and how are you going to reach them, are you reaching them, you don’t even have a clue what they’re doing, and most of the people would say you’re right, and I said that’s how far off you are from this culture.
Darrell Bock: Well, and this is actually also another conversation but the whole role about how technology impacts itself in relationships is different between generations.

Aubrey Malphurs: Huge. An iPhone, what’s an iPhone?

Darrell Bock: Yeah, exactly. I’m on boards where I tell people you can’t assess how you experience technology with someone who’s grown up with it all their life. You know, that we came into technology, we learned it on the fly, so to speak, but my kids have grown up with technology from the get-go, and my grandkids really have grown up with it from the get-go.

Aubrey Malphurs: My 2-year-old granddaughter now has her own little iPhone, the computer, 2 years old.

Darrell Bock: Well, AT&T is really glad to hear that.

Aubrey Malphurs: Can we talk about grandkids now, I’ve been waiting?

Darrell Bock: Yeah. So – well, we’ve sort of set the table. So you’re in a church and you sense that something needs to be done, that you’re either level or you’re on the way down and what you’re doing isn’t connecting and good leadership senses that, they sense it when it happens, so how do you enter into the process of strategic planning and who are the key players, generally speaking?
The Table Podcast Strategic Planning in the Church

**Aubrey Malphurs:** The key players are usually the pastor, and here again I have to fall back on my experience with the Malphurs Group, our consultant group. Usually the first person that we hear from is the pastor, and we will usually ask them how did you hear about us and they will have read a book, maybe the strategic planning book and they’ll comment on that and they’ll say we sure could use your help, would you come do that with us, and that’s almost how we got started as a consulting group; people started calling as a result of the printed word, the books.

And so we like to talk to the pastor and we try to get a little assessment of what’s going on. And then they want to know what we do and so we explain the program to them. And they already know that they need to do strategic planning because basically we live in strategic times. We need to be able to think and act strategically. And this really isn’t anything new because I think we see leadership in the New Testament leading strategically, certainly the savior did when he gave us the mission for the church.

**Darrell Bock:** Right.

**Aubrey Malphurs:** We’ve got Paul in the missionary journeys, and when you and I graduated there was a gentleman with us, I cannot recall his name, but he went on the mission field and he did his thesis on the missionary journeys of Paul and the strategy behind them, why he went where he did when he did it, and it was all strategic – Paul wasn’t just out taking a walk.

**Darrell Bock:** Right, right.

**Aubrey Malphurs:** He had thought through what he was doing. And so the same thing holds today, I think. We live in strategic times, perhaps worse than in a long time, where we see our churches dying, our pastors getting discouraged and walking away from the church, and so we need to think strategically if we’re going to begin to see this thing turn around.

**Darrell Bock:** So the pastor is a key player. I would assume that – most churches have some type of a board or deacons or something like that, I’m assuming that they’re also an important level of a player in terms of building the strategic plan, planning leadership team.

**Aubrey Malphurs:** Just agreeing to do it.
Darrell Bock: Yeah.

Aubrey Malphurs: First of all, we have what we call a process that we take churches through, but we talk about preparation for the process. If you don’t prepare it’s not going to happen more than likely. It’s sort of like football teams and sports team, they get out there and they have a build-up period of time in which they’re preparing before they start the season, and we say the church has to do the same thing. And the very first step in that prep process is to find out where the power people in our church are on this because if they don’t vote for it, it won’t happen.

Darrell Bock: So we could use two metaphors here. The book uses the metaphor of navigating a ship through waters; the other metaphor I think is kind of your spring training metaphor, you’re really planning for the season that’s ahead.

Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly, and if you don’t plan you’re going to get tripped up. But we found, in general, my comment on the power sources there, usually the pastor may be the power source, it could be a patriarch, and even in some cases a matriarch that may run the church.

Darrell Bock: Right.

Aubrey Malphurs: It could be a family, it could be board members. So I ask them, I say will these people support what we’re doing, and if they won’t then it’s not time yet.

Darrell Bock: Yeah, yeah, you have to bring them onboard. Okay. So we’ve got the structure of the way the book proceeds is to deal with the need for strategic planning, talking about what that is and the building of this team that meets, but the core of what I want to discuss are some of the central things that these teams do, what they think about and what they wrestle with. And the categories that you talk about are mission, vision, values and then the strategic plan itself, the strategy.

Aubrey Malphurs: Yes, exactly.
Darrell Bock: So I want to go through these one at a time, that’s really what we’re going to spend our core amount of time on, and I want to start on mission because obviously that’s important, and I’m sure most people have walked into – I think of places like Chik-Fil-A and those kinds of places, where you walk in and the corporate mission statement is there in the stores. I mean you see it, it’s very, very visible. But the interesting thing is – what I found fascinating about the chapter was your distinction between mission and purpose. And that many people confuse those two things, so let’s talk about that difference a little bit. What’s the difference between mission and purpose?

Aubrey Malphurs: Well, you seem to – if you remember, every time I see you I keep saying clarity, clarity, what is your definition of this, and so I think we have to define mission and purpose. Interestingly enough, the business world in general does not distinguish between those two, they make them one, but I think our theology says there is a difference between the two.

We have a mission, Christ has given us that mission, it’s the great commission, and then we have to figure out what the great commission is, but that is our mission, that’s what we’re supposed to be doing. I see purpose as why we’re doing that. And so for the church, I’m going to punt here but I would say it’s the glory of God is the purpose for why we’re doing what we’re doing, ultimately, to glorify God. And of course, we being dispensationalists, that would be a big point for us.

Now, what is the glory of God, that’s what I’m punting on right now, we don’t have the rest of our time to talk about that

Darrell Bock: No, that’s a whole other podcast. We’ll talk about God’s honor later.

Aubrey Malphurs: But that’s – I see that as the difference. What are we supposed to be doing and why are we doing it.
Okay. So most churches, if you look at their mission statements, they understand that they’re fundamentally involved, and probably – I’m going to oversimplify this a little bit, but they’re fundamentally involved in two things, they’re fundamentally involved in growing believers to maturity on the one hand and they’re supposed to be involved in what we would call mission in its formal sense, which is outreach, bringing people into the church who don’t have a relationship with God, what we sometimes call evangelism. Those are the two biggies. Fair?

Yeah. I would say that the mission of the church is evangelism and edification, I see it as both, see people come to faith and then to move those people on in their faith with maturity is the goal.

Right, that’s right, okay. So that’s the goal, but – so as we think about those two things one of the things that happens to churches, I think, that gets them off track if I can say it that way, and sometimes they’ll major in one or the other and they don’t have both working together in any kind of symphonic way if I can say it that way. That’s one way in which – I mean some churches probably not to do either very well but that’s rarer.

Then we are in trouble. Edification usually wins the day. It’s easier, I don’t have to go out and risk being bludgeoned emotionally by someone by asking them to accept the Savior. So in our experience, today, again, we work with churches from coast to coast and border to border and we’re finding that evangelism as a value is dying.

Yeah, and I agree, and I think there are many factors that cause a church to in effect to turn inward and part of it is their own sense about – oftentimes it’s the sense about where society is as a whole, they try and create a hermetically sealed community to some degree although you can never completely hermetically seal it off, and you certainly can’t hermetically seal it off if you’re going to be engaged in the process of evangelism. But the tendency is to turn inward in such a way that you actually disconnect from the other part of your biblically given mission.

Exactly.
The Table Podcast Strategic Planning in the Church

**Darrell Bock:** And then any effort to go there to a person who has come in in an insular way it gets – can get characterized not as evangelism but as somehow compromising with the culture or something like that. And so the problem then becomes how do you get these communities that have turned inward to begin to think about moving in a more outward direction and balancing their mission.

**Aubrey Malphurs:** Again, we challenge them, we just say look at where you are, as we walk into this church look at who you are, look at where you are. Most of you are elderly, 60s, 70s, 80s, although 60 isn’t looking all that old.

**Darrell Bock:** That’s right, younger every day.

**Aubrey Malphurs:** They are older, they’re smaller and they’re having a lot of fun but they notice that they’ve lost their young people. And what – I like to challenge them whenever I preach and I look out and I look at folks and I ask them, what would you be willing to give up, what would you be willing to change to see your son and daughter sitting next to you in church this morning. And then I pause and I say, what would you be willing to give up, what would you be willing to change to see your grandkids sitting next to you in church this morning. And the answer to that is they ain’t. And we’d give up a lot. And I’d say that’s what we’re all about and we want to help you there.

**Darrell Bock:** Yeah, and then the trouble is working with the instincts that sometimes take you away from going there and helping people to see that – sometimes it’s – they believe they have a biblical value in terms of a forum that actually is not a biblical value it’s just a forum, it’s a way of delivery.

**Aubrey Malphurs:** Yeah, the functions are more the values and the forums are how that is delivered. So evangelism should be a function of the church but there are different ways to do evangelism. And that would be of course your forums.

**Darrell Bock:** Okay. So the first thing is for a church to understand its mission and to develop that idea of mission.

**Aubrey Malphurs:** And to sell people on it and then to come up with a mission statement that is short and simple that everybody can remember what it is. That’s very important.
Darrell Bock: Okay. So the goal is to – the way you get everybody on the same page is to have a clean statement of who you are and what you’re about.

Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly. Memorable, short. We say you need to be able to put it on a business card. To present Christ as savior, to pursue Christ as Lord, one of my students came up with that, one of our church planters. I gave him an A for the course, no – but I thought that would be –.

Darrell Bock: The fewer words the better, yeah.

Aubrey Malphurs: Yeah, to know Him and to make Him known.

Darrell Bock: That’s right. And then for people to appreciate the depth of what that represents.

Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly, because it takes them a long time to arrive at that. It ain’t easy.

Darrell Bock: That’s right, that’s right.

Aubrey Malphurs: Can I say ain’t on this show?

Darrell Bock: Yeah, you sure can.

Aubrey Malphurs: Thank you.

Darrell Bock: Let me go through some distinctions in here that you talk about in relationship to mission. You talk about conscious and unconscious, you talk about personal and organizational mission, you talk about shared and unshared, correct and incorrect, that’s the biblical basis, I take it. And then actual and aspirational, the difference, I take it, between where you are and where you’re going.

Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly. We usually use those distinctions too with the values, that’s where we really hit aspirational and actual hard, the values.

Darrell Bock: Okay. Well, let’s talk about the comparison of the mission and the values, because I think one of the values of your book is the clarity with which you are distinguishing these categories and helping people to think through what it is that they’re doing. So let’s talk about – what’s the difference between vision and mission?
Aubrey Malphurs: Yeah. Well, the mission basically is a statement of where the church is going, it’s something that you would use in strategic planning, whereas the vision is the picture or a snapshot of what that looks like when you get there. And whereas the mission statement might excite you a little bit, the vision statement, the idea behind that is it should excite you so that you want go there. The mission statement we know where we should be going, that’s clear.

Darrell Bock: We know what road we’re on.

Aubrey Malphurs: We know what road we’re on but the vision is what gets us moving in that direction, and when you hear the vision and when it’s cast there should be a certain amount of excitement that builds up within the congregant that says I want to be there, I want to go there, I want to be a part of this.

Darrell Bock: So let me try it this way. The mission statement is in one sense a broad statement about where you’re going, but the vision is the actual portrait of what you want to see, I’m going to say, as you’re getting there, because you never completely arrive.

Aubrey Malphurs: Right. It’s always in progress.

Darrell Bock: Exactly. But you’re headed in a direction and you know if we’re really doing what our mission is talking about then we’re going to see these kinds of things.

Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly. And I’ll tell them – there are a lot of different contents of a vision but let me just give an example, community outreach. That’s really big right now in the missional church movement. And so one of my questions is what will your community look like five years from now, describe that to me, what do you want it to look like and does that excite you. So that would be one way to approach it.

Darrell Bock: And when we ask a question like what does your community look like, people could go well are we talking about what our church community looks like or are we talking about the way in which the church is impacting the larger community in which we live in. We have to actually specify which community we’re trying to impact.

Aubrey Malphurs: Yeah. And we’re talking normally about the latter.

Darrell Bock: Okay.
The Table Podcast  
Strategic Planning in the Church

_Aubrey Malphurs:_ Because I agree with the missional church movement, and I know you don’t want to chase that one but I’m not against still inviting people to church, but I think the missional church movement has really emphasized our need to get out into the people around us and have impact.

_Darrell Bock:_ Well, actually I would love to go there because I think that’s part of the point of what we’re talking about here, and that is a model for how to do your mission is you invite someone into your church to hear the pastor, but what you have in mind and what missional churches are about is actually where the people in the church initiate and actually go out where, if I could say it this way, evangelism doesn’t happen in the pew, evangelism happens, I’m going to say it, in the pub. And the point that I’m making is, is that they’re not in a church building but they’re out in the community where people are.

_Aubrey Malphurs:_ Involved, usually, in some type of social activity, feeding the poor, maybe even washing cars, young people going out washing cars for free, being involved in schools, public schools, going in and painting the teachers’ workroom, cleaning up classrooms, cleaning up the grounds in the name of the church, in the name of Christ. There are just a tremendous number of projects that they get involved in.

_Darrell Bock:_ So let’s talk about vision from a biblical standpoint this way, if you were to talk about the kind of direction that a vision should take, that a church should have, that might help it to see that it’s maybe a little too inward. What would that look like? And I suspect that you’ve worked with numerous churches who have been in that place and you’re trying to take them to another place. What are you encouraging them to see?

_Aubrey Malphurs:_ Well, I’m encouraging them to take a photo or a snapshot of that community and see their involvement. Now, some will already have some involvement, and I’m talking a little bit more about Anglo churches right now because the African-American churches have been missional for 15, 20 years.

_Darrell Bock:_ Absolutely.

_Aubrey Malphurs:_ And I have to remind my Anglos of that because this is so new to Anglo churches. But what does it look like to go to – if I understand your question, what does it look like to go into a public school and get involved there with helping kids, tutoring kids.
Darrell Bock: Exactly, yeah, that’s exactly what I had in mind.

Aubrey Malphurs: What do you see up here in your head when this takes place, and right now I can see that taking place. I have no problems at all, and that’s the idea, to give –. And to some degree it’s safe. We can go in and nobody’s going to attack us, we’re not going to have to defend our faith, we’re there just to build into people’s lives and help them.

Darrell Bock: So the idea here is that ministry really is something that doesn’t happen just inside the walls of the church, real ministry is taking place in the community in the places where the community is and in some cases needs to be served.

Aubrey Malphurs: By the people in the church, not the pastor only.

Darrell Bock: That’s exactly right. That’s a whole other issue, is to not – the tighter the ministry – how could I say this, the tighter the ministry wall, the more inward the church becomes.

Aubrey Malphurs: Yes.

Darrell Bock: So – okay. So vision is helping people to see what it actually looks – or to imagine – I guess vision is kind of – when you’re casting vision, it’s helping people see what could be that isn’t, and also encouraging them with the reality of we can get there.

Aubrey Malphurs: Yeah, yeah, and we want to get there.

Darrell Bock: That’s right.

Aubrey Malphurs: I’m excited because I – wow, I can see myself tutoring that child, that gets me excited, I want to be there, I’m fully supportive of this, let’s go, why haven’t we don’t this before.

Darrell Bock: Okay. So it’s a different way of thinking about ministry. Again, you make some distinctions here, vision is not purpose, it’s not goals, it’s not objectives, it’s not mission, it’s what the ministry looks like versus what it is doing, which I think is an interesting distinction. So elements of this are, just as the mission statement needs to be brief and concise, a vision statement, you say, needs to be clear, compelling, a picture, what we seek to create. So you’re really – you’re almost painting a portrait for people, aren’t you?
Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly, or taking a snapshot. It’s a picture. I like to use that picture in there or snapshot because they really pick up on that. And so use that as the question of what will it look like around here five years from now if we begin to value evangelism and do it. So what picture, what snapshot would you take, what do you see.

Darrell Bock: Okay. So you’re in this committee and you’re starting and you raise these kinds of questions and of course you have a committee of say, 10, 12 people, I don’t know how large they normally are, it probably depends on the size of the church.

Aubrey Malphurs: Yeah, 20, 25 people max.

Darrell Bock: Okay. And you initially cast this vision and I imagine one of the things that happens early on in a strategic planning thing when something like this happens is I may have 20 people and I may have 30 visions. You know, because some people are schizophrenic. And so what’s that process like of taking all these various snapshots that people might have and pulling them all together, what does that involve?

Aubrey Malphurs: Next to implementation this has been one of the most difficult things for us to communicate and to get across, and the way we’re approaching this now is we have certain teams and each team will take a portion of the strategy and try to implement it and plan it and develop it. So, for example, we take the strategy community outreach is the first point we cover. The second thing is making disciples. The third is mobilizing our people for ministry. And we have a committee, or actually a team, I didn’t use the word committee did I? We have a team for each one of those and they are responsible to come up with a vision for their group and they work on that together and they hammer that out together.

Darrell Bock: So this vision that we’re talking about is actually, if I can describe it this way, a corporate vision as opposed to an individual, this is the difference between organizational vision and individual vision.

Aubrey Malphurs: And it’s really interesting because in a blue collar situation they’re used to looking to the pastor to come up with a vision and we may do it that way, but in a white collar group they want to have their fingerprints on the vision and so they have a part of developing it. And then guess what, they’re a little more into supporting it when they have that involvement in it. So again this is our way of thinking through this, how can we get these people to really buy in and do it and agree to do it, and that’s to get them involved in it.
Darrell Bock: So another thing that you’re saying here is that advanced strategic planning is not the pastor saying here is the plan and this is what we’re going to do and now I’m going to enlist the hundred people that are going to make me able to pull this off.

Aubrey Malphurs: Exactly, and yeah, we’ve got those people involved in the process and when they’re involved in the process, again, they’ve got their fingerprints on it, they want to see it happen and that’s exciting to watch that take place. And I’ll have them write it down, I’ll have each group – we’ll pull together and meet and they will write it on poster paper and we’ll put it up around the walls and have the people read it off and talk a little bit about it.

Darrell Bock: And I think I remember this correctly, that whereas a mission statement is usually very brief and memorable, you can put it on a business card, your vision description can be very involved and more detailed, is that correct?

Aubrey Malphurs: Yes. That’s an interesting observation that you make and I had one of my students here, Matt Stone, do research on this for me. We were looking at the length of vision statements and what we discovered is the older generation, the boomer generation, the saddlebacks, the Rick Warrens, their vision statements were a little longer. If you look in Rick’s book, it’s about a one-page vision statement. But what seems to be taking place today, Andy Stanley, is that they’ve gone down to a one-sentence vision statement. So what happens on the length of these things is that they vary anywhere from one to two pages down to one sentence.

Andy McQuitty, one of our graduates here, out at Irving Bible Church, his was one page, one-page vision statement, very well done but they’re not as long, and for a lot of younger people today they seem to be shortening those.

Darrell Bock: Yeah, well that’s part of our digital age coming at us.

Aubrey Malphurs: Isn’t it.

Darrell Bock: The people who are in the production room listening to this who are all young are sitting there going, come on, don’t give us this, don’t take a shot at us.

Aubrey Malphurs: Give them equal time.
Darrell Bock: Exactly right. Well, rebuttals coming.