



## **Episode 109: Part 1 – Mission Vision Method**

**Featuring:** Mingo Palacios & Robert Cortes

<https://thepodcast.com>

### **Transcript:**

Mingo Palacios:

This conversation is a two-parter where Robert and I talk about hitting the milestone of lead pastoring for 18 months. We're going to go over the idea of mission, vision, and method and how understanding each of these uniquely will help you set your sights on the future better. I hope you enjoy the episode.

Hey, everybody; welcome to the PD Podcast. My name is Mingo, and as always, hosting our way through great conversations around ministry and best practices. Today, I don't know what time it is that you're listening to this; tonight for us, it's way past the time when you put your kids to bed. All the dishes are done, I hope you got all your studying complete, and now here we are in Robert's studio – Robert across the table from me. As always, the RebelFish studio providing a great place to record and have a conversation.

Robert, welcome to the podcast.

Robert Cortes: Hey, hey. I'm happy to be here.

Mingo Palacios: This is a little bit more in line with these self-reflections. What I realized today, as I was doing some basic calendaring, I realized this month is my 18<sup>th</sup> month being the pastor here. That's kind of a milestone number. They always say your first month, your first 6 months, your first 12 months, 18 months. Those are the –

Robert Cortes: Milestones.

Mingo Palacios: Yeah, the milestones that you go, there's some significant things you should be learning right around these zones. I'd love to set a few episodes aside where it would just be us, not necessarily interviewing somebody else, but really reflecting backwards on some of the bigger things that have really made the 18 months' worth of ministry so memorable at Torrey Pines.

Robert Cortes: Yeah.

Mingo Palacios: Here's my thought. I'll tell you what we're going to talk about and then we'll get into it. This conversation is all going to be around the ideas of mission, vision, and methods, and how valuable and how important it is to know the difference between those. Because if you understand each of those clearly, they help serve one another in a way that it won't trip you up trying to identify what they are.

So in this episode I'm going to give you a clear perspective and definition on all three of those things, and then tell you how we're discovering how it's actually helping us get better.

A little backstory on Torrey Pines Church, just in case you didn't know. It's a part of a revitalization mission. Torrey Pines Church is a 60-year-old congregation who at a certain point in their life decided that it would be better to be merged in with a growing church network. That network is called EastLake Church Network. EastLake Church Network is a daughter

church or an expression of the Purpose Driven Church, Saddleback. So there's a lot of common denominators. If you're familiar with Saddleback ministry or Purpose Driven ministry, EastLake does so many of them so well.

Torrey Pines was this 60-year-old, very traditional church held in a very affluent community. Unfortunately, just over time and the pass of the baton maybe one too many times, the church lost mission and it lost vision.

Robert Cortes: It lost momentum.

Mingo Palacios: Its momentum was lost, its core values got a little cloudy. Because of some great wisdom and a ton of humility, the existing leadership decides that they're going to merge with the EastLake Church Network, and it becomes the fifth of I think what's now nine churches in that network of churches.

Robert Cortes: Wow.

Mingo Palacios: Anyways, that's the backstory. If you're wondering the kind of ministry that we're speaking of, this is all of the applied learnings of coming out of Purpose Driven, being an advocate for churches and pastors everywhere, and taking all of those learnings, piling them up into my backpack, and then deploying them as we committed to being the lead pastor and lead team of this entire church.

Here's what I want to get into about mission, vision, and method. I felt this pressure – and every year that you go around the calendar, people who are disciplined and people who I would say are goal-oriented set time aside. They go away together. I know you do this with your business. You go, "What's going to be the vision for this year? What's going to be the thing that we want to see happen?"

Just honest confession, I was feeling a lot of pressure because I didn't really get a sense of vision almost the whole year last year. 2019 was my first full year as a lead pastor, and I was waiting for this "Aha, this is what we're about. These are the things that we will

make the main thing.” We had already stepped into something that had a great mission. The mission of Torrey Pines Church, the mission of EastLake Church Network, is people helping people find and follow Jesus.

Robert Cortes: Find and follow Jesus.

Mingo Palacios: That’s right. We say it enough times that you know it. It’s a great one.

Robert Cortes: Yeah, it is.

Mingo Palacios: I think it stands, it’s got enough clarity, you can work the purposes into it.

Robert Cortes: Great message.

Mingo Palacios: But when it comes to vision, it’s like, how do we accomplish that mission?

Then I read this great document stocked away in the Rick files of leadership lessons past, and he says this: “Vision is not an invisible, far out there thing. Vision is what’s right in front of you. The greatest application of vision is to discern what you see and move towards the mission accordingly.”

That’s so basic and so smart. I felt this crazy pressure release. I was trying to come up with some Titanic-size vision that everybody could see, like the Goodyear blimp, and I’d go, “There it is. I see it. It’s wonderful.”

Robert Cortes: Some of the backstory for that is that this Sunday is...

Mingo Palacios: Vision Sunday. [laughs] That’s right.

Robert Cortes: I got the email. [laughs]

Mingo Palacios: Exactly. Talk about pressure; we say what we’re going to have and then I’m like, “What am I going to say?”

So this great idea that vision isn’t predicting the future, but it’s seeing what’s right in front of you. Great

leaders can see and focus on what's right in front of them, they can make decisions, and they can move their organization or they can move their ministry or they can move their business through those obstacles, utilizing discerning vision.

Now, there's more to this. That's vision, but mission is the thing they say you want to marry. If you're out there somewhere and you're listening to this podcast, you probably work inside of a ministry, and the church has a larger mission probably painted somewhere on the church walls.

This is what the saying goes concerning mission and concerning methods: mission is the thing you're always going to be about. You should have a life mission. I'm sure that your business has a mission. Your church ought to have a mission that's clearly stated. The mission rarely, if ever, should change. It should be like your life thing.

Robert Cortes:

It's interesting you say that, because in business, the mission statement is something that's so broad that if you were to walk into most companies and ask an employee, "What is the mission statement of this company?", they wouldn't remember anything.

Mingo Palacios:

Is that right?

Robert Cortes:

Maybe 1 out of 20 things. So simplifying your mission statement in your guiding principles and your characteristics of what your team does is really critical. They have to remember it and they have to learn how to do it.

Mingo Palacios:

It's got to be made memorable.

Robert Cortes:

Yeah. Great marketing, at least on the business side, is memorable.

Mingo Palacios:

I think that's why I really love ours. The mission has got a bunch of repeating words in it, but Jesus is right in the middle of it. People helping people find and follow Jesus.

Robert Cortes:

It's the first time I've ever memorized, because it was presented in a way that I could actually remember it.

Mingo Palacios:

Yeah. Kudos to whoever wrote it. We've rallied around it. But I really love this concept, if you imagine the visual image of when you hear a mission, whether it's for the church that you're taking a job at or whether it's the organization that you're about to give the better part of your best talents and abilities to, you have to ask yourself, are you willing to marry the mission?

Are you willing to marry the mission? Are you going to put a ring on your finger and say "I am for you and I'm believing you're for me, and we're going to go through thick and thin, for richer or poorer, for better or for worse, in sickness and health; this mission is going to be central to what it is that I'm going to make my life about"?

That sounds like an overdramatized way to look at mission, but I think it's imperative because out of mission comes methods: all the things we're going to do to see the mission accomplished.

Here's the catchphrase, here's the learning as I've been thinking about vision, mission, and method. If you marry the mission, they say you ought to date the methods.

Robert Cortes:

That makes sense.

Mingo Palacios:

Don't get too attached to the things that you do in order to see the mission accomplished because things change. You've got to stay fast, you've got to stay fluid, you've got to stay flexible, or you find yourself breaking. Either your momentum breaks, your belief breaks. The way that you anticipate what's coming loses steam because you're not able to flex and ebb and flow with the way that your church or ministry is postured in the place it is.

Rick wraps this whole analogy around catching waves in the Purpose Driven life. The Purpose Driven Church, it's Chapter 1, and he says so much of ministry in church is like surfing. You've got to come

fully prepared. You go paddling out and you wait for the waves. The waves represent the ministry that God is doing, the movement of God right in front of your face. He said if you're in a ministry trying to make waves, you waste your time. It's only God that can create the movement of ministry, the opportunity for change and His spirit doing something unique.

Robert Cortes: So we're supposed to catch the wave?

Mingo Palacios: You're supposed to catch them.

Robert Cortes: That makes sense.

Mingo Palacios: You're supposed to be aware and see them and be prepared for them, and not be carrying an anchor of things that would keep you from being able to rightly catch and ride those waves. He says that so many churches try to manufacture a movement instead of being diligent to look and see where God is moving.

Robert Cortes: That's a different perspective.

Mingo Palacios: Yeah. He says what's really sharp are people who understand that the mission and the purposes never change, but the methods always do. So they say marry the mission, but date the methods. Swipe right on the methods. Just keep going if they don't work.

And then you use vision in between those to discern what the right method ought to be.

Robert Cortes: Sounds like a hashtag I heard from you once. People over programs or something? [laughs]

Mingo Palacios: Yes, absolutely. You've always got to see people over program. But this has been something that's been really critical for me. The reason why is because I think too many people marry the methods. They get so hung up on the things that they like to do.

Robert Cortes: Invested and want it to succeed.

Mingo Palacios: Yeah, in pursuit of the mission.

Robert Cortes: They don't want to let it go.

Mingo Palacios:

Yeah, and they think that changing the method is abandoning the mission, and it's not true. You've got to be willing to flex on the methods.

When we were doing ministry in microsities years ago, we would do anything it would take to get the Gospel in front of a group of people. Sometimes we were serving pizza; sometimes we were buying out laundromats and preloading quarters into washing and drying machines. Those are methods. Does that make sense?

Robert Cortes:

Definitely.

Mingo Palacios:

Sometimes in the holiday season, we would do a family toy drive that would get people to come, and then we would share a message, share the Gospel, and get people to see that Jesus is for them.

See how each of those are different methods expressed. Sometimes in one neighborhood, one method isn't going to work or hit as hard as another one. This is the danger in copying ministry just from what you see online or what you hear works in another place. What works by method in one territory or geographic location doesn't guarantee you that it's going to work in yours. You've got to be willing to risk, use your vision to see what's in front of you, and then test and date some methods to see the mission accomplished.

Robert Cortes:

You've got to be flexible in the process, right?

Mingo Palacios:

Totally. This is what you have to really encourage your teams to see. There are so many personality types that help us fulfill ministry in all scenarios. Some people have a really hard time being flexible. If they could put every rule or every expectation down into a manual, print it, laminate it, and always have it, they would feel like "nothing changed, so therefore I've got no surprises."

Robert Cortes:

It's distinctly human. The attachment of something, it's hard to let go. I think in this life, the less attached you are to things, the more freedom you have.

Mingo Palacios: The willingness to embrace change.

Robert Cortes: Yes, that's actually it.

Mingo Palacios: I think humans, we have a hard time embracing change. Because we're creatures of habit.

Robert Cortes: True. I hate change. [laughs]

Mingo Palacios: At the end of the day, habits, things that are regularly occurring in our lives, that brings familiarity. Familiarity is comfort, and we don't want to be discomforted.

Robert Cortes: Very true.

Mingo Palacios: Here's what I am thinking inside of this whole mission, vision, and methods conversation.

The first one, you've got to understand that mission and vision are not the same. We've got to marry the mission, and we discern with vision what methods we ought to use. We date the methods, we marry the mission. Too many people get the methods mixed up for the mission. They end up marrying or committing way too big to the methods, and what ends up happening is they get heartbroken when an organization makes a sudden change of pace or direction or focus.

I've just been very keen to keep myself focused on not mistaking mission for method and vice versa. You've got to pay close attention here, because these are some of the highest-used words, and sometimes we just blur them all together. They keenly represent very specific things that, if you exchange one for the other, you can totally find yourself off of what you want to accomplish as a ministry.

Some examples here of us dating some methods and being consistently married to our mission is if we're going to be people helping people find and follow Jesus, one of the methods we use to try to track some of the numeric responses like salvations, rededications, stuff like that, prayer requests – we

have a connection card. It's inside the bulletin. You see it every single week.

It's almost like white noise. It's been done forever. People will write their prayer requests on it. It's also a way that we can get an email address, a mailing address if we're going to mail you a card if it's your first time. I handwrite cards and I mail them to people.

Robert Cortes: Do a lot of prayer requests come in every week?

Mingo Palacios: Surprisingly, yeah.

Robert Cortes: Like 50, 100, 150 a week?

Mingo Palacios: We have on average about 600-700 people a weekend. We probably have a list of about 40 prayer requests every Sunday that come through.

Robert Cortes: Wow.

Mingo Palacios: Some consistent, like let's say long-term health stuff, but lots of times it's just people kind of throwing a Hail Mary out there if they don't want to get prayed for in the back of the room after service. There's a little bit more safety or let's say anonymity.

Robert Cortes: It's like a baby step. [laughs]

Mingo Palacios: Yeah. For somebody, it's their perfect next right step, just to write that they need help. So my team prays for them diligently.

But here's what I've discovered over the years, is that, man, it sounds like white noise, and I really do believe that there are more people making decisions for Jesus maybe that aren't articulating it through that particular method.

--- END ---

<https://thepodcast.com>

