

## Vision and Goal Setting

### Summary:

Why is planning important?

1. If you don't plan then you will squander your time doing nothing.
2. If you don't plan then someone else will plan for you.
3. If you don't plan then you may do something you later regret.

Vision – A vision is what we want in the future.

It is not a wish.

A vision needs to reflect your values.

Goals – Goals are more specific than a vision.

1. are written
2. are clear
3. have deadlines
4. are specific
5. are measurable
6. are achievable
7. are challenging
8. help us accomplish our vision

All of us should have goals.

Objectives – Objectives are more specific than goals. Goals tell us where we want to go while objectives tell us how to get there. Goals tell us *what*; objectives tell us *who*, *when*, *where*, and *how*.

Discipline – A disciplined person does non-urgent, important things.

Things that keep us from accomplishing our goals:

1. letting others “pull us down.”
2. Having a “give up” attitude.
3. Always seeking pleasure.
4. Being “like others.”
5. Having bad habits.
6. Making poor decisions
7. Getting sidetracked

It is okay to change your goals from time to time.

It is okay to rest (watching television, hanging out with friends, loafing, etc.), just don't do it too much.

Why is it important to have a vision and goals in your life. Well, first we will ask what will happen if you don't. What happens if you have no plans for your life? Three things will probably happen.

**First**, if you do not plan then you will squander your time doing nothing. For example, let's say you have nothing planned for tomorrow. What will you do? You may awake and eat some breakfast. Then what? Maybe you will watch some television or listen to the radio. After a while you may talk to a family member. Maybe you will walk around aimlessly. You will eat some lunch and then watch some more television. Maybe you will spend some time talking to some friends. The whole day will go this way and you will retire to bed having done virtually nothing worthwhile.

**Second**, if you do not plan then someone will plan for you. For example, if you don't anything to do then your mother may ask you to do something for her. She may ask you to clean the house, run an errand, or watch small children for her. If you do not plan then someone else may plan for your time for you.

**Third**, if you do not plan then you may end up doing things you later regret. For example, many times people get into trouble, not because they planned it but because it "just happened." Without a vision and without goals we may end up doing things we wished we had never done. At best we will end up wasting our time. Without a plan you will never do anything worthwhile with your life. Remember:

**Failing to plan is planning to fail.**

### **Visioning**

Why is it important to have a vision? What exactly is a vision?

A vision is what we want in the future. It may not be totally clear and, in fact, may be somewhat vague. That is okay. A vision is what you think about. It is what you daydream about. Your vision is what you are excited about. It reflects your values. It reflects who you are and what you want to become.

It might be noted that all great leaders have a vision. Think about some great leaders. They each have a vision. You may not agree with their vision, but they have a clear vision and they live it out.

We might say what a vision is not. It is not merely a wish. For example, we all may wish to be the wealthiest person in the world. We may wish to be the most valuable player in the world cup soccer finals while scoring a hat-trick in the final game. We may wish to be the most beautiful super-model in the world. We may wish to own ten luxury automobiles and a R100 million home. These are not visions, these are merely "wishes."

Often when we "wish" we don't consider the cost. For example, if we want to be a star soccer player we only think about scoring lots of goals. We don't think about the hours and hours of hard practice. We don't think about focusing on soccer and pushing other things out of our lives. We don't think about the sacrifices it takes to be a great soccer player. Doing anything great always requires lots of hard work. It always involves strong dedication and commitment. It always requires overcoming difficulties. It always involves overcoming criticism, sometimes from family and friends.

Above we said that your vision reflects your values. Let's explain that. How do you know what your values are? Well, your values show up in your behavior. If you value something you will: (a) do it on a regular basis (You don't do it every now and then, but regularly.)

(b) you will think about it often (It is often in your thoughts)

(c) it will be part of a pattern in your life (You set time for it and you do it regularly. It is part of your life.)

(d) you will be proud of it (You are not ashamed of it at all.)

(e) you will tell others about it

(f) you feel good about it (What you value makes you feel good about yourself.)

Sometimes we do things because others are doing them. Your vision has to be yours. You have to own it. It cannot be your mother's vision for you. It cannot be your father's vision for you. It cannot be anyone else's vision for you. Your vision has to be yours.

Examples:

(1) What are some examples of a good vision. John wants to be a repair watches. Ever since he was a child, he has enjoyed fixing things. He started fixing things for his mother when he was just a child. He remembers fixing his mother's clock when he was just 13 years old. He still gets excited remembering that experience.

(2) Susan wants to be a help people get and stay healthy. She has always dreamed of helping people who are hurting and in pain. She took a first aid course once and enjoyed it so much. Whenever people in her neighborhood are sick, she is often there to help them. She reads about diseases and keeps up with what is going on in the area of health. She has talked to health care professionals and has learned a lot from that. One of her mother's friends is a nurse and she often talks to her about her work.

(3) Bob wants to be a husband and father. He wants get married and have children. He likes working with children. He sees children who are neglected and it breaks his heart. He teaches a Sunday School class of children and enjoys it a lot. He wants to have a home and share it with his wife and children.

(4) Mary wants to be a wife and mother. She wants get married and have children. She dreams of being a mother. She enjoys being around children and often watches small children for neighbors. She has read numerous books from the library on both child care and marriage. While she does not have a boyfriend she often thinks about building a home for herself, her husband, and her children.

What if you don't know your vision? What if you don't know where you want to go? Don't worry about it. But during this course, we invite you to explore what you want to do with your life.

One other word about vision. Do you think about being something or doing something? There is a difference. Look at the examples above. They involve being, not merely doing something. Your vision should be what you are, not merely just doing something. It involves all of you.

Activity: for small groups (three to five people)

1. What are some things you value? (Hint: family, learning, cleanliness, honesty, creativity, good health, neatness, nice clothes, singing, playing football)
2. Have your values changed in the last few years? If so, how?
3. Do you think you have a vision in life or merely a wish?

**Goals** After you have a vision, you need to set goals. How does a goal differ from a vision? Let's look at some characteristics of goals?

1. Good goals are written. This is very important. In fact, it is probably more important than any other thing.
2. Good goals are clear. Part of the reason for writing goals is to make them clear. Anyone should be able to read you goal and know exactly what it means. Writing helps you to make it clear.
3. Good goals have deadlines. For example, a goal isn't just to read a book but to read it by next Friday.
4. Good goals are specific. For example, a goal isn't just to make good grades, but to make five B's and two A's.

5. Good goals are measurable. This is part of being specific. You will know exactly if you accomplished your goal. For example, “being popular” is not easily measurable. You don’t always know if you achieved it or not. A good goal is one in which you know exactly how well you have done.
6. Good goals are achievable. This means it is possible to achieve the goal. It doesn’t help to make goals that you can never meet. If you have a reasonable chance of achieving your goal, then it is a good one.
7. Good goals are challenging. Most people set goals that are too low. There is a saying, “if you aim for the stars, you might hit the treetops; if you aim for the treetops you might get off the ground.” Challenging goals make us work harder. Of course, you should not make your goals so challenging that they are not achievable. However, if you have a challenging goal and you get close, then you may have accomplished a lot. For example, your goal is to make all A’s in school. Well, you may make five A’s and two B’s. That is still good.
8. Good goals help us to accomplish our vision. A goal may be good but if it doesn’t lead us toward our vision, then it is like taking a trip and going the wrong way. We may enjoy the ride but we won’t get to where we want to go.

You may now see the difference in a vision and a goal. Goals are much more specific. We should point out that many people have no goals in their lives. They also have little vision if any. This is like someone getting in a car and traveling aimlessly around. It is important that you make your life one that has a purpose. Remember a person who does not plan, will probably live a life of little significance.

Some goals are long-term, some medium-term, and some short-term. You should have all of these. These terms are relative. For example, if your goal is to become an engineer, then is your long term goal. You may also have a medium goal of making good grades this semester. You may also have a short goal of making an “A” on next week’s test.

Activity: Have each person write out a personal goal. Does it meet all the eight criteria listed above?

**Objectives** After you make goals, you need to make objectives. What is an objective and how does it differ from a goal. A goal is the final destination. The objective just helps you reach your goal. For example, let’s say your goal is to make an “A” in history class. How is that accomplished? Well, you have to study. Your objective may be to spend one hour, thirty minutes per day studying history. If so, then that is the objective. Your goal is not to study, that is the means (objective) for accomplishing the end (goal) which is an “A” in history.

Another difference is that goals tell “what.” Objectives tell “who,” “where,” “how,” and “when.” But only you can answer the question “why.” Let’s look at an example in the following table.

Let's say your **goal** is to make an "A" in history. Your **objective** is, "I will study by reading and taking notes in the library Monday through Friday from 15:00 to 17:00 each week.

**What** – goal (make an "A")

**Who** – "I"

**Where** – "in the library"

**When** – "15:00 to 17:00 Monday through Friday each week"

**How** – "reading and taking notes"

**Why** – (This is not covered in the goals and objectives. Only you can determine the **why** of your life. This is part of visioning.)

Activity: Have each person write out an objective to go with the goal (s)he has already written earlier. Does it tell who, where, when, and how?

**Discipline** If you are like many people, making goals and objectives is the easy part. The hard part is actually doing them. That is where discipline comes in. Discipline helps us to develop and maintain good habits. Only you can make yourself disciplined. Only you can develop good habits. No one else can do it for you. Look at the following and consider the importance of good habits.

	important	not important
urgent	1	2
not urgent	3	4

In the above table, successful people do most of their work in quadrant 3 (important, not urgent). Many people work in quadrant 1 (important, urgent). Sometimes we all have to work in quadrant 1. For example, in emergencies we have to work in quadrant 1. However, successful people work most of the time in quadrant 3.

Example:

Let's give an example. Your goal is to make an "A" in history. The first day of class the teacher says you will have a test in three weeks over the first 500 pages. Well, what does a unsuccessful person (undisciplined person) do? Maybe something like this: Hey, my friends are having a party tonight. I think I will go to that. I am tired of sitting all day so I think I will go play some football. I think I will watch some television. I have three weeks to study and prepare for the test. I will start next week. This goes on until a few days before the test. Then it is quadrant 1 (important, urgent). The person will study, study, study until (s)he is sick and tired of history.

What does the successful person do. (S)he has a goal (make an "A") and also objectives (I will study Monday through Friday at the library from 15:00 to 17:00. Then (s)he will be disciplined to do it. (S)he doesn't put off studying. This is quadrant 3

(important, not urgent). By studying every day, this person actually puts in lots of hours and does not have to work in quadrant 1.

**Things that keep you from reaching your goals** We can have the best goals and objectives but if we don't actually do them, then they are worthless. There are several common distractions that will cause a person to not reach their goals. Below are listed some of the more common distractions.

1. Letting other people (sometimes friends) "pull" you down to their level. If you want to do challenging things, then someone will try to discourage you. Some people may be jealous of your accomplishments and try to "mess" you up.
2. Having a "give up" attitude. You will encounter obstacles and difficulties. No one every did anything great without great difficulties to overcome. Think about Nelson Mandela and all the things he had to overcome. Think about any person who has done something great and you can find many difficulties the person had to overcome. If you easily "give up" then you will not succeed. If you are easily discouraged whenever you get frustrated, then you may have difficulty being disciplined.
3. Always seeking pleasure. Some people do about anything possible to avoid situations that may be a little unpleasant. They always want something easy. Doing great things required some hard work. It will require foregoing some simple pleasures. If your life is merely eating, sleeping, hanging out with friends, and watching television, then maybe you need to forgo some pleasure and do some work.
4. Having a tendency to be "like others." All of us want to be accepted and feel like part of the group. No one wants to be left out. However, if we merely do what others are doing, then we probably won't accomplish much. Accomplishing great things means sometimes breaking away from our friends and going it alone. Of course, you can keep your friends, but sometimes you have to simply say "no" to them. You may have to study instead of spending every afternoon with them watching television.
5. Having bad habits. Sometimes we have bad habits that rob us of our time. For example, some people "procrastinate." This means putting things off until tomorrow rather than doing them today (now). Often we want to put off things that are difficult or unpleasant. We often want to do the easy thing. Sometimes people let their minds wander and daydream too much when they should be working.
6. Making poor decisions. Poor decisions like getting into debt, getting pregnant when we don't want to, and getting greedy will likely keep us from accomplishing our goals.
7. Getting sidetracked. Sometimes we know where we want to go but we take "detours." In other words, we start on the straight road toward our goals but then we see something that looks interesting and we take a detour. We cannot do everything. We have to stay focused on our goals and not get distracted. We cannot watch every television show, hang out with our friends all the time, play football every day, go often to the beach, and accomplish our goals. We have to stay focused on our goals and not get sidetracked.

One final word. It is okay to change your goals from time to time. Sometimes in our lives we change our vision. Obviously a 20-year-old person will not have the same vision as a 80-year-old person. While your vision should be firm and you

should be focused on accomplishing it, your vision is not “set in stone;” your vision can change.

Finally, it is okay to rest. Watching television, hanging out with friends, and just doing nothing is okay. We just can’t do it too much.