

DEVELOPING A VISION & STRATEGY

This lecture provides direction and applications for a regional leader, a local church or for personal growth

This lecture consists of 2 parts:

Part One = Developing A Vision

Part Two = Strategic Planning

Included are several applications

PART ONE DEVELOPING A VISION

*"The single defining quality of leaders is the capacity to create and realize a vision."
(Warren Bennis, On Becoming a Leader, p. 194)*

I. THE MEANING OF VISION

A. A vision is a dream of what the future could be like

1. "Vision is a waking dream." (Warren Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader*).
2. For us, *vision is a God-given dream of the future. It is a picture in your mind of what God desires to happen in the future of your ministry.*

B. A definition:

Vision for ministry is a clear mental image of a preferable future, imparted by God to His chosen servants, based upon an accurate understanding of God, self, and circumstances. (George Barna)

C. Some truths about vision

1. Leadership requires vision because leadership is about change.
2. Vision naturally leads to risk because vision involves change.
3. God normally gives vision to the leader.
 - a. Vision does **not** come through committee interaction.
"A camel is a horse designed by a committee."
 - b. A group of key leaders may help to sharpen a vision; group involvement may develop commitment to the vision. But the vision usually comes from one person.
4. The mission of the provincial supervisor and his churches is essentially the same for all provinces. But any vision, which implements the mission in the case of a specific province, is unique to that specific provincial leader and his team. God has a unique plan for each province. The same may be applied to *another ministry or a local spiritual work.*

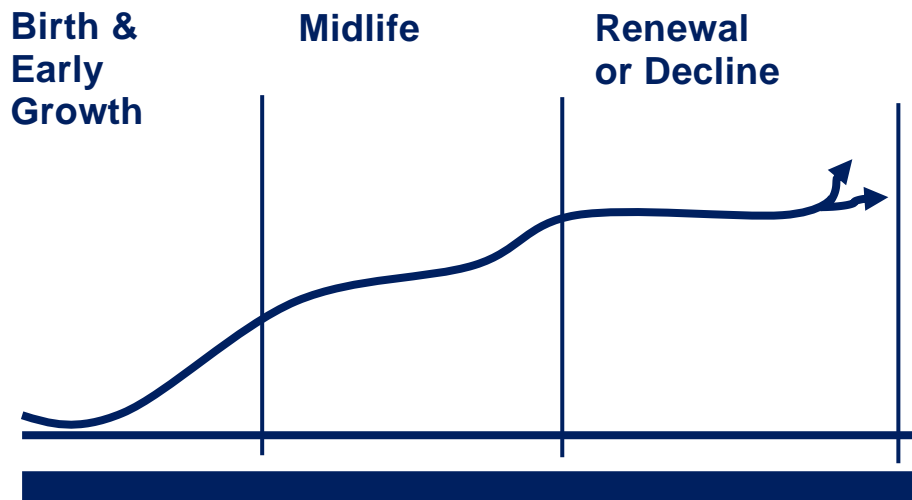
II. THE IMPORTANCE OF VISION

A. The essence of leadership is stimulating and guiding the process of change

Stages in the life of a Church and VISION

Vision is the most dominant part of the organization. Strong passion about purpose and vision.

When the organization gets too distant from its vision it begins to decline unless the vision is renewed.



Organization takes on institutional characteristics. Continues to make significant impact on society. Distance from original vision.

B. At critical points in the life of an existing church or organization the vision must be renewed

1. Without the vision being renewed, the church will begin to decline.
2. Ongoing visioning is essential to the continued growth of the church or ministry.
 - a. Circumstances and culture are continually changing. The vision that was effective at one point in the church's history may not fit the current situation.
 - b. For example, the dramatic political changes in Eastern Europe have required major changes in church ministry. A new vision for ministry is essential.
 - c. If the vision is not renewed, the church becomes out of touch with the new circumstances and changing needs of people.
 - d. The only stability possible is stability in the midst of continuous change. Life is not static.

III. THE BENEFITS OF VISION

A. A Vision statement provides **ENERGY** toward the fulfillment of the mission and purpose of the churches in your province – or an individual local church.

B. A Vision provides **FOCUS** to the provincial leader or local pastor's spiritual ministry.

1. It **ALIGNS HUMAN EFFORT AND ENERGY** toward the accomplishment of goals, which will fulfill the vision.

2. It concentrates attention directly on the **PERSONAL NEEDS** of people God has called the area overseer or local director to minister to.

Organizational development is useful. Buildings serve a purpose. Programs are a means to an end. But the end itself is always related to changing the lives of people.

George Barna, Without Vision, People Perish

3. It focuses attention and effort on what the provincial or local manager and his team will be and do in the **FUTURE**.
4. It emphasizes **ACTION** toward the fulfilling of the goals.

C. A Vision motivates people through the CHALLENGE of accomplishing something of value.

D. A Vision gives HOPE.

IV. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF VISION

- A. A vision must be anchored in reality. It must be connected to the real needs of people; it cannot be the private dream of one person.
- B. A vision must become the property of a **team** of provincial leaders, their ministry or churches – or a local church team. The pastors and the people of the local churches must come to "own" the vision.
- C. A vision statement is unique to a given province and its superintendent – or local church. It describes how that particular provincial leadership team will fulfil the mission Christ gave to HIS church. This is equally true for **local pastors or ministry leaders**.

V. THE DEVELOPMENT OF VISION

A. Lessons in Developing a Vision from Nehemiah



All of Nehemiah's accomplishments chronicled in the book of Nehemiah are built upon a vision which he developed before the project was started. The vision building process is recorded in Chapter 1. When he heard of the desperate plight of the Jerusalem Jews, he wept and mourned for days, and he immediately began fasting and praying before God (1:3). As this spiritual process progressed, Nehemiah began to see more and more clearly the future God desired for Jerusalem. It is as though Nehemiah could "see" Jerusalem with its walls rebuilt,

with its people strong and secure from the attacks of their enemies, no longer at the mercy of the nations around them, and with Israel's God no longer held to be inferior to the gods of the surrounding nations. It was this vision, which energized Nehemiah's personal involvement, making him willing to leave the security of his position at the Persian court, and motivated his leadership of the Jews to transform this desired future into present reality. It was also this vision, which motivated the people of Jerusalem to become involved in making the dream a reality in spite of the opposition of their enemies.

Nehemiah's prayer (1:5-11) reveals that his vision came from his time of seeking God's will, through prayer and fasting before God, and from his knowledge in four areas: his knowledge of God, his knowledge of the Word of God, his knowledge of himself and his position, and his knowledge of the situation in Jerusalem. Through this process, God put His vision into the mind of Nehemiah (2:12).

His knowledge of God. Nehemiah knew that God is the "great and awesome God." He is powerful, more powerful than any other power and able to accomplish His will no matter what the opposition. He knew further, that God is a God who keeps His covenant promises to His people and who loves His people with an unfailing loyal love (1:5).

His knowledge of the Word of God. Nehemiah knew that God had clearly told the children of Israel in His covenant with them that if they were unfaithful. He would scatter them from the land (1:8). The fact that God fulfilled that warning promise was clearly evident by Israel's Babylonian captivity and later domination by the Persian Empire. He also knew that God promised that if they would return to Him, He would re-gather His people to the land, which He promised them and their descendants forever (1:9). In the past few years a remnant of the people had begun to return to the land of Palestine. Nehemiah may have known from the prophet Jeremiah that the captivity would last seventy years (Jeremiah 29:10).

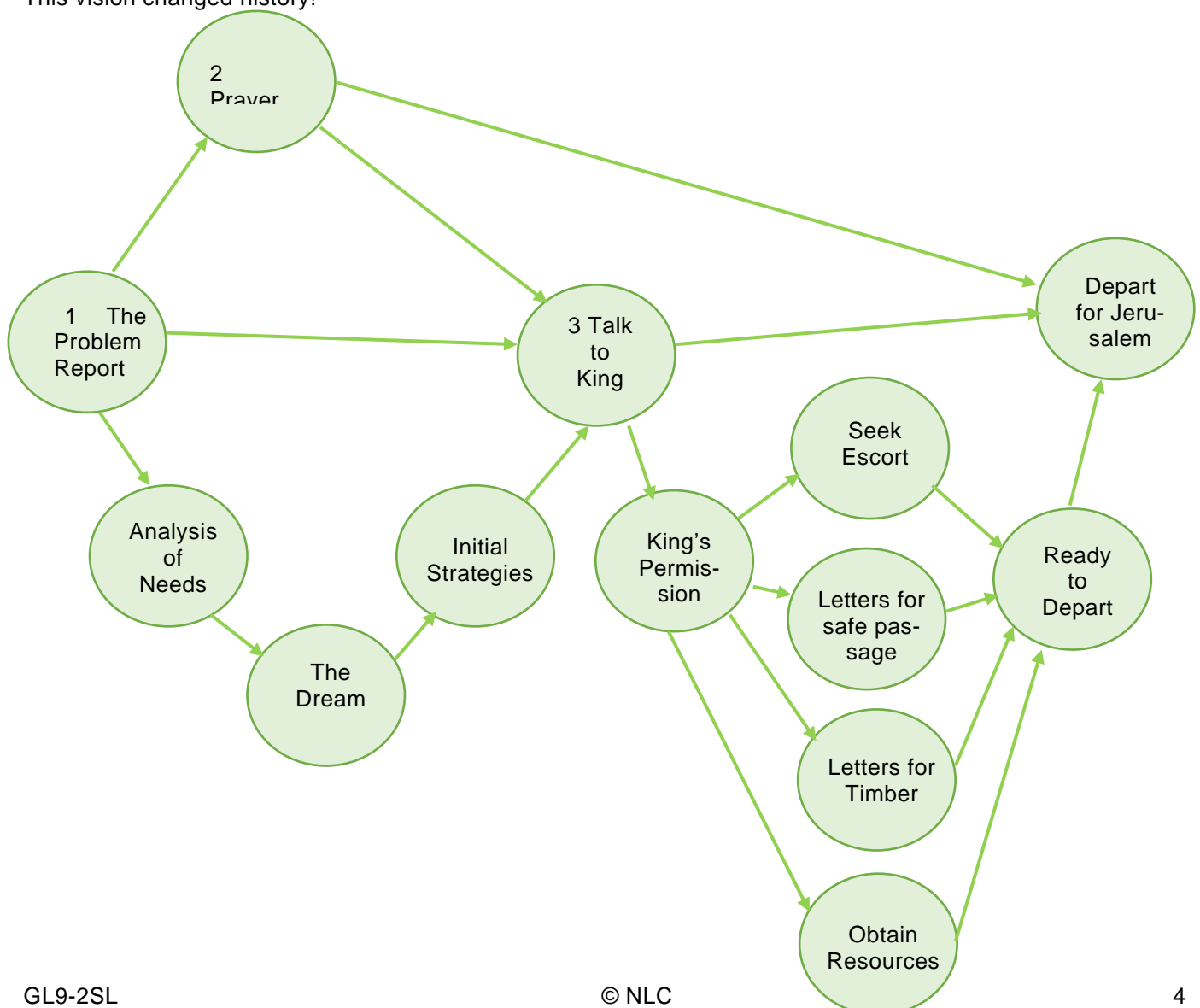
His knowledge of himself and his position. Nehemiah also was well aware that he had leadership abilities, personal wealth, and the support of the Persian king.

His knowledge of the situation in Jerusalem. Hanani's report spelled out the situation in Jerusalem in graphic detail (1:2,3). Nehemiah knew that the wall of the city was broken down and its gates were burned. He knew that the people were in great distress and were held in reproach by the nations around them. They were effectively at the mercy of their enemies, and their God was considered too weak to defend them from the nations whose gods were stronger.

All of these elements came together as Nehemiah fasted and prayed before the Lord God of heaven. Out of this process, the vision of a restored Jerusalem and an obedient and strong people was born in the heart of Nehemiah.

"Jerusalem with its wall rebuilt physically and people rebuilt spiritually, no longer at the mercy of their enemies"

This vision changed history!



B. The 5 steps in Developing a Vision

Based on the Nehemiah example, the following are 5 steps to guide the process of developing a vision for ministry.

NOTE: These "steps" should **not** be thought of as discrete actions, each of which must be fully completed before going on to the next step. There is value in working on them in the order they are given, but they should be continuously evaluated and updated. Certainly it is important to continue to pray and study God's word throughout the visioning process.

Step 1: Gain a clearer understanding of God and His purposes.

Step 2: Understand your own unique strengths and abilities as well as limitations.

Step 3: Understand your provincial churches' unique strengths and abilities as well as limitations.

Step 4: Develop an awareness of the special needs of the people you will minister to.

Step 5: Write and refine a vision statement for your provincial churches.

THE DETAILS OF THESE STEPS

Steps to Develop a Vision

2 Steps for General Vision Applications

Step 1: Gain a clearer understanding of God and His purposes.

1. Pray individually and corporately
 - a. Ask God to give direction and understanding as you work through the process of developing a vision for your church. Ask Him to reveal to you what He desires your church to do.
 - b. Practice fasting or other spiritual disciplines you desire as part of this process.
2. Study the Scriptures
 - a. Study passages of Scripture that reveal God's purpose for the church.
 - (1) Study the key passages in the New Testament on the church. Be sure to include such passages as:
 - Matthew 28:19-20
 - John 3:16
 - 2 Corinthians 5:18-21
 - 2 Corinthians 6:19
 - Ephesians 1:3-12
 - Ephesians 4:11-16
 - 1 Timothy 2:4
 - (2) Study other passages that you select
 - b. Synthesize the teaching of these passages and write a Mission/Vision Statement for your church
3. Reflect
 - a. Spend some time quietly reflecting on what you have learned about God's plan for the church.
 - b. Ask God to direct your thoughts and sharpen your understanding.
 - c. Throughout the process of developing the vision, ask yourself the question:
"What is the most effective thing our church can do to accomplish this mission in our area of ministry?"
4. Seek wise counsel

- a. Talk with mature believers in other churches about the mission and vision of their church.
- b. Seek out wise members of your own congregation and ask for their counsel about the vision of your church.

Step 2: Understand your own unique strengths and abilities as well as limitations.

1. If you are the pastor of the church or leader of a ministry team, much of the responsibility for determining and fulfilling the vision rests upon you. This is why God made you a leader! The primary task of leadership is to develop a vision for your church or ministry and influence people to give themselves to fulfilling the vision.
2. The vision will be closely connected to who you are as a person; it will be influenced by how God is working in your life, by your own gifts, abilities, strengths and weaknesses.
3. Since you will be the primary (though not the only) person articulating the vision and leading people in its fulfillment, you should experience a strong commitment to and identification with the vision.
 - a. If your personal vision is in harmony with the church's vision, and your gifts, abilities, and interests fit with the church's vision, you will experience a strong sense of fulfillment and satisfaction as you work toward the fulfillment of the vision.
 - b. However, if your personal vision diverges from the church's vision, or your gifts, abilities, and interests do not fit the church's vision, you will experience significant dissatisfaction and stress. Under these conditions, many pastors find it necessary to move to another ministry.
4. It is therefore essential that in the process of developing the vision for your church or ministry you carefully consider your own interests, gifts and abilities, strengths and weaknesses. The following questions are a beginning:
 - a. Your motivations:
 - Why are you in the ministry?
 - What are your personal goals in ministry?
 - Whose glory are you seeking?
 - What are you seeking to accomplish in the visioning process?
 - In what situations do you feel most "alive?"
 - b. Your values:
 - Which attributes of character are most important to you?
 - What are the core values that are the foundation for your personal life and ministry?
 - What are you the most passionate about? What do you dream about doing or accomplishing? What do you feel that you **must** do?
 - c. Your strengths, gifts, and abilities:
 - What are your spiritual gifts? How have you been able to use these gifts in ministry?
 - What special abilities do you have? Artistic? Music? Preaching? Writing? Others?
 - In what activities or ministry have you experienced the most satisfaction? What do you enjoy doing?
 - In what activities or ministries have you been most successful?
 - For what ministry activities do you consistently receive positive feedback from others?
 - d. Your weaknesses
 - In what activities or ministry responsibilities do you feel that you struggle?

- What things do you dislike doing? What things do you avoid?
- For what aspects of ministry do you not feel suited?

e. Your spiritual life:

- How intimate and satisfying is your relationship with God now?
- Where in your life have you recently experienced God's faithfulness?
- Is your relationship with God growing in a positive direction? Why or why not?
- What sins do you struggle with the most?
- What things do you try to hide from God, others, or even yourself? What would happen if you were honest with God about these things?
- How deeply can you trust in the goodness of God? Why or why not?
- Which passages of Scripture impact your life most strongly?

f. Your ministry

- How satisfied are you with the direction of your ministry at the current time? Why?
- How would you like to see your ministry develop in the next five years?
- How comfortable are you in your relationships with others? Is it easy for you to talk with others about personal issues in their lives? Why or why not?
- On what aspects of your ministry do you spend most of your time?
- What ministry goals do you have for the next year?
- How will you recognize success in your ministry?

5 Remember, these questions are only a beginning. You should continuously be evaluating your own life and ministry. This is an essential element in the process of growth.

Steps to Develop a Vision

3 Steps for Local Church Applications

Step 3; Understand your congregation's strengths and abilities as well as limitations.

1. Every congregation has important resources, which are available to fulfill the vision. These resources include people, finances, facilities, skills, information, history, level of community respect, etc. No two congregations are the same; the particular grouping of resources makes a congregation unique and equips it for a specific role in the building of the Kingdom of God.
2. Seeking answers to the following questions will help clarify the unique contribution your congregation is equipped to make:
 - a. What are the characteristics of our congregation?
 - What is the membership? the attendance?
 - What is the age profile of the members?
 - What are the trends in membership and attendance?
 - Are we growing? Holding steady? Declining?
 - b. What are the special strengths of our congregation? What things are we pleased with? What do we do well? Where have we seen God's blessing?

c. What are the weaknesses of our congregation? What things do we wish were different? What do we not do well?

d. What are the interests and needs of our members?

- What are their dreams, their hopes?
- What are their particular stresses?
- What are the program needs?
- What are the facility needs?
- What are the staffing needs?

e. What is the history of our congregation?

- How was it founded?
- Who were the early leaders? What were they like? What stories are popular about them?
- What were the major ministry accomplishments of the church?
- Construct a "Life Map" of the church?

f. What is the current situation of our congregation?

- What are the current strengths and weaknesses of the leadership team of our church?
- What is the atmosphere of the congregation? Warm? Cold? Cooperative? Lively? Dull? Uncertain? Powerful? Dynamic?
- What unique opportunities exist in this congregation?
- What unique strengths do we have to build on?

g. What special influences are there in our congregation?

- How have the major political changes effected our church?
- What new opportunities for ministry exist in our area?
- What "hold-overs" from the communist days are now non-functional and need to be eliminated? Attitudes? Beliefs? Programs?

Step 4: Develop an awareness of the special needs of the people you will minister to.

1 What are the special needs of the Community

Note: The needs of people are "***Doorways to Ministry.***" People may think they are not interested in "church," but they are interested in satisfying their felt needs. For example, hurting marriages become an opportunity for ministry to people who might not ordinarily give any thought to the church.

a. It is necessary to consider the particular community in which the congregation exists.

- What is the community like?
- What are the needs of people?
- What pressures are they facing? Where are people hurting?
- What are the values, beliefs, and attitudes? Which values control their lifestyles?
- What cultural changes are happening in the society?
- Understand the competing distractions of your cultural context:

television, sleeping late, tiredness, desire to raise economic level, need to provide for family, sports, hobbies, family time, etc. Find out why people choose other options over involvement in the church.

- What are their dreams?
 - Who are the people who have no relationship with the church?
 - What special people groups exist in the area of your church? For example: Apartment dwellers, university students and faculty, business people, poor people, prisoners, others?
- b. If possible, do a community survey, asking people for their perception of personal and community needs. Ask what ministries they would be interested in at the church.
 - c. Responding to such surveys by changing programs or other aspects of church life will strengthen the church's service to the community.
2. The World at Large
- a. Scripture indicates that the mission of the church extends to the entire world (Matthew 28:18-20)
 - What are the needs and the hopes of people?
 - Where is the gospel not heard?
 - b. What should the church do to carry out its ministry with greater effectiveness?
3. As you consider the needs of people around you, you should begin to sense a commitment to minister to a certain group of people.
- a. Perhaps the group is defined geographically, or perhaps by age or occupation.
 - b. As you consider the various possibilities along with the strengths and weaknesses of your church. God will lead you to focus on a particular group of people.
 - c. Try to identify this group clearly
 - d. Remember that no one church can meet all the needs, which exist in society. Focus on those people and needs God has equipped your church to minister to and trust Him to raise another church (or churches) to minister to the others.

Step 5: Write and refine a vision statement for this church you are considering.

1 The process of developing a vision for your church involves bringing together (in the context of prayer, Bible study, and honest seeking of the Lord's direction) the biblical mandates, which define the timeless mission of the church and the situational realities in which your church exists and ministers.

2. Now, write out your vision statement as concisely as possible.
- a. Your vision statement should include the following elements:
 - (1) Identify the people you believe God is calling you to minister to, your target audience.
 - (2) Clarify the purpose of your ministry to these people: what are you planning to accomplish with them?
 - (3) Identify the elements which make your church distinct from others in the area. What characteristics or purposes set your church apart from others?
 - b. Make the statement as clear and compelling as possible
 - (1) Use clear, graphic language that communicates positive images
 - (2) Use terms that are active rather than passive.
 - (3) Try to paint an attractive mental picture that people will want to identify with and become a part of.
 - (4) Keep the vision statement concise, preferably less than 50 words.

3. Test your vision statement

- a. Does your vision statement clearly identify the target group that you desire to minister to?
- b. Does your vision statement give a clear direction for the future of your ministry?
- c. Does the statement provide a positive view of the future for the church such that people will want to be involved?
- d. Does the statement give guidance regarding appropriate strategies to employ to fulfil the vision?
- e. Is the vision statement specific enough to enable the church to make clear choices between several good ministry options?
- f. Does the vision statement show your church to be unique and different enough to distinguish it from other churches?

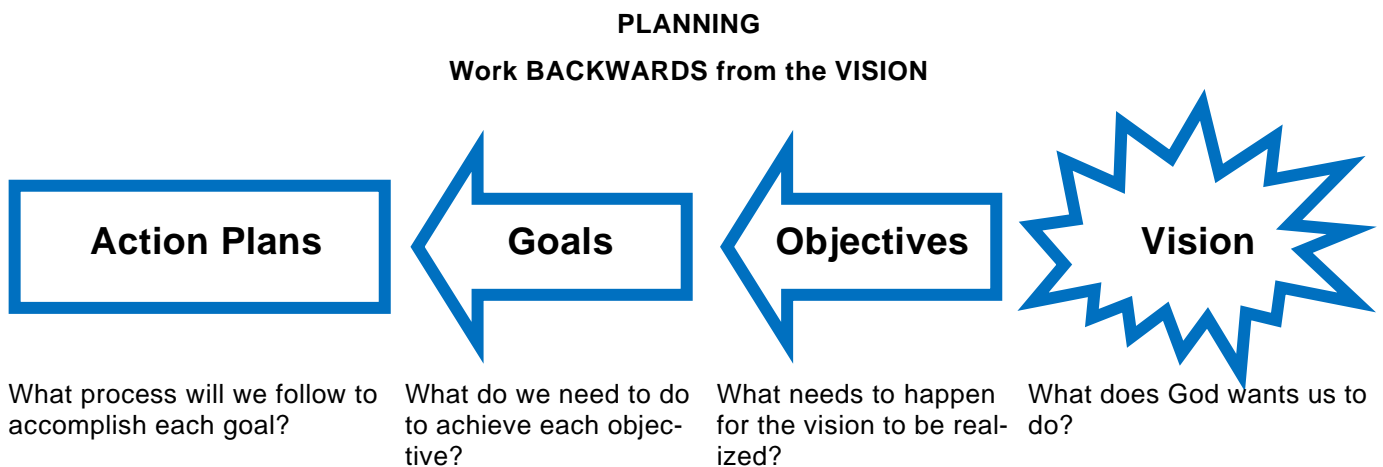
PART TWO

STRATEGIC PLANNING

INTRODUCTION

- Without effective planning, the greatest vision will never be fulfilled
- It is planning that translates the vision statement into achievable goals, objectives and action plans whose accomplishment leads to the fulfilment of the vision.
- For example, look at all the things Nehemiah had to accomplish before he could leave Jerusalem!

I. PLANNING WORKS BACKWARDS FROM THE VISION



A. The VISION is the image of the desirable future state for your provincial churches

1. The vision is developed by bringing together the Biblically mandated mission of the Church of Christ with the actual ministry context in which the provincial churches exist.
2. The Vision answers the question, "**What does God want us to do?**"
3. The vision provides direction for planning.
4. Developing a strategy for realizing the vision involves choosing objectives, goals, and action plans that will contribute to making the vision.

B. OBJECTIVES are selected which will make the vision a reality

1. The vision is broken down into specific, measurable accomplishments which, taken together, will realize the vision.
2. Objectives are the answer to the question, "**What needs to happen for the vision to be realized?**"
3. Objectives describe things that we want to achieve. Objectives are usually long range.

C. GOALS are selected which will achieve each objective

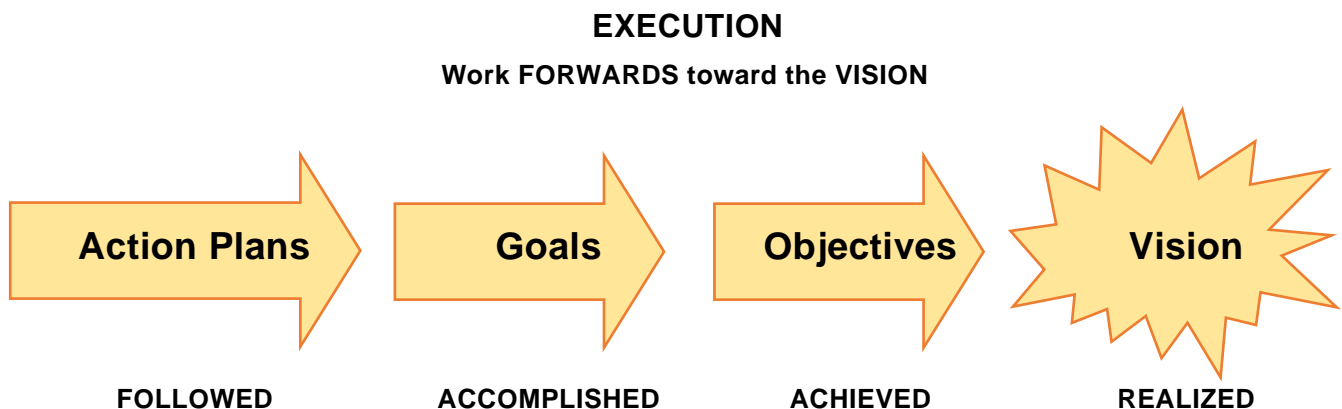
1. Each objective can be broken down into smaller parts which, when accomplished, will achieve the objective.
2. Goals are the answer to the question, "**What do we need to do to achieve each objective?**"

3. Goals are more specific than objectives; they are also measurable.

D. ACTION PLANS are made to accomplish each goal

1. Action plans involve specific steps which must be followed to accomplish each goal.
2. Action plans are the answer to the question, "**What process must we follow to accomplish each goal?**"
3. Action plans are normally temporary activities which mark the first activities taken toward reaching the objectives that will fulfil the vision.

II. EXECUTION WORKS FORWARD TOWARD THE VISION



- A. Beginning with the specific activities indicated in the Action Plans, the local or regional administrator works toward the realization of his vision and priorities.
- B. As the process develops, adjustments and changes may be made in the action plans, goals, or even the objectives. But the ultimate desire is always the realization of the vision.
- C. All activities must in some way be related to accomplishing goals which will realize the vision.

The Power of Goals

1. Goals give a sense of direction and purpose.
2. Goals give us power to live in the present.
3. Goals promote enthusiasm and strong organizational life.
4. Goals help us to operate more effectively.
5. Goals help us to evaluate our progress.
6. Goals force us to plan ahead.
7. Goals help us to communicate within the organization.
8. Goals give people a clear understanding of what is expected.
9. Goals help to reduce needless conflict and duplication of effort.
10. Goals take the emphasis off activity and place it on **output**.

The Vision (What does God want us to do?):

Objectives: What needs to happen for the vision to be realized?

Goals: What are the specific, measurable signposts in achieving each objective?

Action Steps: What are the specific steps required to accomplish each goal?