INTRODUCTION

### A. WHY HAVE A VISION?

Having a vision is essential. Put simply this means that you must have an idea of where you think you are going and where you want to go with your ministry. The following statements range from old to modern, and include great perception from Helen Keller — they illustrate the need for vision.

##### “If a man does not know to which port he is sailing,

***no wind is favorable”.***

# Seneca, circa 65AD

***“A vision statement focuses on the direction***

***of an organization and what the organization wants to accomplish.***

***It is inspirational, motivational,***

***and able to paint a picture of the transition and the end product.***

***Values are the foundation of the vision statement.”***

# Fred Pryor

***“If you don’t know where you’re going, then you probably
won’t know when you get there.”***

Yogi Berra, 1963

***A reporter once asked Helen Keller “Is there anything worse than being blind “?***

***“Oh, yes” she replied, “Having sight but no vision!”***

Developing a vision is a journey. It takes, time, much thought and reflection. As the leader you must have a vision, in fact you must ensure that a vision is developed. But you don’t have to do this in isolation. True, some leaders like to spend time reflecting and thinking, alone. And you may be one of those. If you are, make sure that the information on which you are going to reflect is based on truth and is current, up to date, and factual.

Many leaders like to share the whole process of developing a vision with their team. They share their knowledge, values, and priorities to develop a common view of what they would like the future to be.

1. that your team has probably contributed some excellent ideas (you, personally, don’t have a monopoly on the good ideas)
2. the team has a similar depth of understanding,
3. the team has a sense of ownership “we developed this vision and most importantly, because of those reasons the team is more likely to be
4. the team is committed to the vision and prepared to ensure it is implemented.

In his book *“The Empowered Leader — Ten Keys to Servant Leadership,”* Calvin Miller has three important things to say about vision:

1. It’s Inherent Power

* *Its dynamic is the enthusiasm it infuses. The enthusiasm inspired by vision results in some kind of life product. Feelings of productivity increase your feelings of self- esteem, causing a healthy celebration of your usefulness to God and your world.*

2. Where it comes from

* *Christ is the font of our best imagination and vision.*

3.How you hold on to it

* *When you have adequate quiet time before the altar of your own trust in God, visions will hold a strong place in your life*

## B. THE SEVEN STEPS IN DEVELOPING A VISION AND PLAN

**1. Pray and reflect.**

Time is well spent on prayer and reflection before any start on a collective vision. You want to be guided by the Holy Spirit. So take time to read and ask God to speak to you through His word. Take time to pray and commit yourselves and the work to Him. Ask for His vision to guide you. Ask Him where He wants you to go, what He wants you to do.

***Planning is bringing***

***the future into the present,***

***so that you can***

***do something about it***

***now.***

**2. Plan**

Contrary too many impressions, the usual route

of developing a vision for a team or an

organization lies along a path of planning and

work. Very rarely do we suddenly wake up with

some miraculous understanding of the way ahead and a team prepared to go enthusiastically on that path after a few inspiring words from their leader.

**3. Gather information**

There are at least three main sources of information for you to use.

1. **Information about the needs of women in your local community and in your local church.** Your church may have conducted a survey within the last year or so; talk to your pastor and see what is available. Also discuss with him ideas about how Women’s Ministries may serve the local church and its women. It is quite possible that there are one or two areas of ministry he would like to develop that you could work on. (see the SPD Orientation booklet).
2. **Information from Women’s Ministries itself.** Around the world, Women’s Ministries groups are working in a variety of different ways. Investigate some of these, not only will they give you ideas but will also broaden your concept of Women’s Ministries.
3. **Your team itself as a source of information.** Before you have your first meeting, contact your team and ask them to start brainstorming.

**4. Analyze and discuss values**

When you have your first meeting it is helpful to develop a common basis for your approach to the work. Discuss the goals of Women’s Ministries; discuss what you as a team believe is important and what should guide your planning. For example:

* In some more affluent areas, you might need to ensure that programs organized by you include women from poorer homes, that they are not made to feel unwelcome, or prevented from accessing a program (e.g. a breakfast, or a weekend retreat) because of costs.
* In some areas there may be quite a number of separated or divorced women and the team in that area might specifically include ministering to this group in their plans. You may have a high number of young mothers in a “young suburb.” A ‘Welcome Baby Program’ might fit your values of ministering to those young women in your community.

This is the appropriate time to write down your mission statement (see section on how to write a mission statement on page 8). You might like to have members of your committee do this on their own at first and then share with the team. From this a collective statement can be composed.

**5. Analyze and discuss the information**

Now that you have set your values which will guide your ministry, and a guiding statement which is your mission statement, it is time to examine the possibilities.

This is easily done via a brainstorm approach. Have each team member take a few minutes to silently consider the approach you wish to take, the possible activities, and then and write down their suggestions. Have a large sheet of paper or a blackboard and take turns to go around the team and write up the suggestions. An important feature of brainstorming is that the suggestions are made without judging them immediately. That way you get a global view of all the possibilities and are then able to make a more informed decision about what will be dealt with immediately and what will be left for later.

**6. Prioritize**

Give each team member five votes and have them place them alongside the suggestions as they see fit. That way the whole team has set its priorities for the year. As the leader it is your prerogative to advise and comment (particularly regarding difficulties you foresee such as financial) but be careful not to be negative or discouraging God may have some wonderful surprises for you as you step out in faith so don’t underestimate His power!

**7. Consolidate an action plan**

Begin by obtaining a church calendar (speak to your church pastor if you don’t have one) and also a regular calendar, which has school holidays, public holidays, etc. Use the prioritized suggestions and mark them in on your calendar. Do not attempt too many projects in the year. It is better to have a few successful projects than some failed, grandiose plans, which will accomplish nothing for women or the reputation of Women’s Ministries.

An important aspect of consolidation is the ability to keep the vision alive. You and your team must model, refer to your vision, talk about it, and constantly promulgate its existence and value.

### C. GOAL SETTING

**1. Some people don’t like setting goals**

Sometimes people are cautious about setting goals: in fact they will even avoid doing this, as they feel they are then committed to a goal ― and what if they don’t achieve it? They will have failed! So they prefer to “play safe” and not set specific goals, that way it is impossible to fail!

If you feel like this, than it is time to get on your knees. Ask God for the courage and strength to work for Him, to set goals, and then work towards those goals.

Make your goals realistic, not ridiculous, and as you achieve them you will want to aim higher.

#### 2. Goals are about outcomes, not “busyness”

One of the biggest traps for all of us who want to be better organized and have goals is to make the goal the “activity” and not the “outcome.” By this I mean, it is easy to be very, very busy doing useful things and still not get the result we really want. By focusing on the “outcomes” or results, we get to see whether the activity has been really useful.

***Without a goal against which to measure our progress,***

***we can waste a lot of time just being busy.***

A specific example of this might be: We organize a women’s breakfast. We hire a lovely venue, we recruit a fabulous chef, lots of women are attracted by the advertising and come along and everyone has a nice time. At the end of the day we pat each other on the back and say to each other “we did well,” “it went off without a hitch,” “we all worked hard.” But what was the desired result? Was the desired outcome only to go smoothly and get through the activity?

If we want to bring women closer to Jesus through a breakfast with a spiritual theme, and enjoy each other’s company, then we need to say this at the beginning and keep the goal of spiritual growth firmly in mind as we plan for the activity. Having the goals in mind at the beginning will guide us as we plan each segment of a program and ensure that the activities and strategies are appropriate and lead towards the desired outcome.

#### 3. The power of a goal

President John F Kennedy’s establishment of a national goal to have a man walk on the moon by the end of the 1960s decade is a good example of the power associated with the goal setting process.

Everyone’s efforts are focused and concentrated on achieving the goal; time spent on anything not associated with the achievement of the goal is begrudged.

###### 4. Need for equity

We need to view our activity through “equity glasses” as well—we need to ensure that people are not left out because of:

* finances (have some sponsors, or keep the price well down)
* little children (organize some babysitting)
* transport (organize some car pools)
* shyness (organize some people to invite and go with those who might feel alone)

**5. Align the strategies with the desired outcomes**

So in all our planning, we need to first define exactly:

* what it is that we wish to achieve. We must then ensure that the activities we choose and the way they are implemented perfectly align with the desired outcome.
* that the chosen strategies, in fact, are the most suitable to achieve those desired outcomes.

***The “old” definition of goal setting was:***

**“What you are going to do, and how you are going to do it?”**

***A better approach is:***

**“What outcome do we want to achieve?”**

***[and then]* “What are we going to do and how will we do it,**

**to get that outcome?”**

**6. Goals need to be measurable**

If we have the wonderfully vague goal of: “To spiritually encourage the women of the church”— how do you know if you have achieved your goal? Now, there is nothing wrong with wanting to spiritually encourage the women of the church: in fact this needs to underlay most of what we do in Women’s Ministries. However, it is very difficult to know if you have really achieved that kind of a goal unless you survey all the women before and after your activity to see if there is an improvement. You certainly don’t want to do that each time you hold a program.

So make your goals more easily measurable. Examples might be:

* “That over 75% of the women will come back for the following program”
* “That the majority of women will indicate the program was a blessing to them on the feedback sheet.”
* “That\_\_\_\_% will respond to the opportunity for re-consecration”

**Ways you can measure your goals:**

* Feedback sheets (answers to specific questions, or percentages of those indicating help, or benefit from the program).
* Numbers responding to the opportunity for re-consecration
* Numbers participating in a program

If you do not have goals and do not measure your results, what will you use as abenchmark to examine your progress and seek for improvement?

**D. WRITING A MISSION STATEMENT**

It should relate closely to the work of Women’s Ministries and what you would like God to do through your team. It should be short — one, or perhaps two, sentences at the most and should be clear, brief and to the point. It should clearly tell those who read it what your ministries are about— especially those who may not be supportive initially.

**About the author**

**Dr. Marion Shields** is a senior lecturer in education at Avondale College of Higher Education in New South Wales, Australia. Her main teaching areas are special education and leadership at both undergraduate and post graduate level. She also dabbles in literacy and numeracy for pre-service teachers and earlier this year had a textbook published on this topic that is aimed towards those who struggle with these concepts. Currently she is researching the influences that change attitudes of pre-service teachers towards students with disabilities; and also leadership in Christian Early Childhood Centers.

###### Bibliography

Miller, C. (1995) *The Empowered Leader: 10 Keys To Servant Leadership.* Briadman and Holman, Nashville.