

Tools for Wise Leadership

A programme of TWR-Africa, produced by TWR-Zimbabwe, presented by Rev Dr Roy Musasiwa

Series 14: Personal Development Planning

Talk 02: Personal Development Planning - Vision

Welcome to the programme Tools for Wise Leadership. We are discussing the very important subject of a leader having a personal development plan. I wonder if you have developed one? If you are like many leaders you might not have developed one, which is why I am helping you to do so.

Is this an important exercise? In the last programme I pointed out the truism that if you fail to plan, you are planning to fail. People who drift through life, being blown in the direction of every strong wind will not have a sense of achievement. So you need a personal development plan. And such a plan consists of the following four elements:

- Your vision of the future
- Your life mission
- Your goals and strategies
- The values you live by

Today we are focusing on your personal vision. Your vision is a clear mental picture of the preferred long-term future. It comes about because you are not convinced things must remain the same as they are now in your life. You are not satisfied with the status quo. For example, you may not be satisfied with what you have attained in terms of education or impact on others around you. That dissatisfaction spurs you to create a mental picture of a preferred future. And that vision then inspires and energizes your present action.

With this explanation can you work out what Jesus' vision was? From our reading of the New Testament it becomes clear that Jesus' vision was that of establishing the Kingdom of God. All that Jesus did and taught was about the Kingdom of God. The parables of Jesus paint a picture of what that kingdom would be like when it had been realized. Take for example the parable of the mustard seed in Matthew 13:31-32.

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.

Now what do we learn about vision from this parable? Firstly it is based on an inspirational dissatisfaction with the current reality. It says the seed is the smallest of all your seeds. That represented the Jesus movement at the time Jesus was speaking. It was easy to despise this movement and judge it to be too insignificant. After all it was being led by someone born in a manger to a peasant carpenter. His disciples were simple peasants with no education and no earthly wealth. Compared to other movements of the time this Jesus movement was indeed a mustard seed. Secondly, the parable looks at a preferred future – the seed has become the largest of all garden plants and birds of the air are now benefiting from this large plant. In other words Jesus could envisage the Christian faith as a worldwide faith and benefiting so many people. Thirdly, implied in this parable is the idea that the vision of this preferred future was a big source of energy for Jesus and his disciples. That is what a vision does. As we see what is currently invisible we get energized to work and make it visible.

In order to be energized for achievement our vision must be crystal clear and succinct. It is for that reason that the vision needs to be written down and constantly referred to. In Habakkuk 2:2 we read:

And the Lord answered me, "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it."

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So you see the Lord believes in a written vision statement. Why? It says, “So he may run who reads it.” Vision has that energizing effect. You feel like running rather than walking when the vision is clear.

So how do you go about crafting such a vision? There is a lot of preparatory work that needs to be done, mainly in the form of prayerfully answering some key questions about your life. I suggest you get pen and paper now so that you jot down answers to the questions that I am about to give you. If you simply write a vision statement without first answering those questions the vision may be a copy of someone else’s vision and therefore you will not be able to run with it as you should.

Now are you ready with pen and paper? Firstly you have to answer some Exploration questions aimed at understanding yourself better:

- What are the five things you most enjoy doing? These are the five things without which your weeks, months, and years would feel incomplete.
- What are your five most important values? We will talk more about such values in a future programme.
- If you never had to work another day in your life, how would you spend your time instead of working?
- If your life was to end today, what would you regret not doing, seeing, or achieving?
- What strengths have other people commented on about you and your accomplishments? What strengths do you see in yourself?
- What weaknesses have other people commented on about you and what do you believe are your weaknesses?
- What would make your life more meaningful?
- What have you always yearned to make happen?

Having answered the above exploratory questions try to now picture yourself 20 years from now. You now have to answer another set of questions to do with the actual content of your vision statement. These questions have to do with being, doing, having and giving. So here are the questions:

- What do you want to be in twenty years to come? Here we are talking about your character development and your relationships. They say in Zulu “umunthu ngumunthu ngabantu”, meaning a person’s being is shaped by other significant people around him or her. So perhaps in the next twenty years you see yourself as a loving husband to your wife and a response father? Maybe you want to be someone who will be modelling godliness and Christian maturity before the watching world? Just what do you want to be in twenty years to come?
- Question 2: What do you want to do, or to have done, in the next 20 years? Maybe by then you want to be a professional engineer? Maybe you see yourself as an accomplished counsellor? Or you will be a leadership consultant who will be making other leaders wiser? What do you want to do, or to have done, in the next 20 years?
- Question 3: What do you want to have in the next 20 years? Maybe by then you want to have some tangible assets like your own house and a car? Or maybe you will want to have intangible achievements like a completed a Master’s degree? What do you want to have in the next 20 years?
- Question 4: What would you like to give, or to have given in twenty years’ time? What will be your legacy? Something for which you will be remembered by future generations? Maybe you want to write some books for future generations? Maybe you want to give your time in voluntary work for some charity organizations? The Bible says, give and it shall be given back to you. So what would you like to give, or to have given in twenty years’ time?

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Once you have thoughtfully answered the above questions you are now ready to craft your personal vision statement. Write it in first person and make statements about the future you hope to achieve. You must not write a long essay. I would recommend not more than 100 words for such a statement.

Having written your vision statement, keep it in a place where you can see it every day so that you constantly remind yourself of the possibilities you have embraced for your life. You will find yourself energized to achieve far greater than you would have done if you did not have a vision statement.

When we meet again in the next programme we will be ready to discuss your mission statement and how it differs from the vision statement. Now that you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

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