



Making Mission Possible

**ARROW
LEADERSHIP
PROGRAMME**

**DEVELOPING
A PERSONAL
VISION
STATEMENT**

BE LED MORE BY,
LEAD MORE LIKE,
LEAD MORE TO JESUS

OVERVIEW

Introduction

This booklet is designed to be used in association with the Discerning Personal Vision material taught on the first residential. It provides two frameworks for developing a personal vision statement.

Some will like one or other of these approaches, others will much prefer to do their own thing. Some will find the material gives them a launching point for developing their statement without actually following the structure given here. Please only use this material if it is helpful.

Above everything else we are trying to discern God's vision for our lives, so prayer and the spiritual disciplines are a vital part of the process.

Resources

- To Be Told, Dan Allender, Water Brook
- Living on Purpose, Tom and Christine Sine, Monarch
- The Purpose Driven Life, Rick Warren, Zondervan
- Praying for Purpose for Women, Katie Brazelton, Zondervan
- Let Your Life Speak, Parker Palmer, Jossey-Bass
- Growing Leaders, chapter 5, James Lawrence, CPAS
- Get Out of the Boat, chapter 3, John Ortberg, Zondervan
- Why You Do What You Do, Bobb Biehl, Nelson

Background

Vision is vital in leadership. One of the hardest aspects of leadership is working out what to do with our time given all the opportunities around us and the demands placed upon us. How do we ensure that those things that are most important to God and us actually receive the care, time and attention we want to give them? How do we keep the main thing the main thing?

'JESUS KNEW HIS CALLING. HE WASN'T JUST PASSING THROUGH LIFE, BUT PURSUING A VISION.'
LEIGHTON FORD

Personal Vision

On Arrow we define personal vision as 'finding and fulfilling God's particular call for our life, giving direction to how we use our time, talents and treasure.'

Two aspects to this sense of call are:

- **Primary Calling** This is the basic calling of every disciple to follow Jesus, summarised in the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. This is a given for every Christian, and without it we will struggle to discern God's particular (or secondary) call on our lives. This primary calling involves:
 - ⇒ Cultivating intimacy with God through worship, prayer, Bible study, service, participation in the body of Christ and practising the spiritual disciplines.
 - ⇒ Actively serving God's kingdom purposes through self sacrificial giving of ourselves to whatever he asks of us.
 - ⇒ Developing wholesome relationships with others through costly love, courageous honesty, compassionate caring, committed self-giving, and consistent doing good.
- **Particular calling** To discern God's particular purpose for our life, and be committed to living it out. Everyone is called to discipleship, but not everyone is called to be a church minister, evangelist, children's worker and so on.

A Personal Vision Statement

This is simply a tool to help us identify God's priorities for our lives. Some will find this particular tool easier to use than others, and it isn't the only way of discerning God's priorities for us. Nor is it meant to set aside the place of the Bible as the foundation for our understanding of what God wants for us, nor subvert grace as the starting point of any understanding of God's work in our lives, nor be seen as something that is set in stone. It is simply one way of practically trying to make sense of God's priorities for our lives.

OVERVIEW

Our personal vision statement is likely to be made up of five areas:

- **Personal.** Focused around character, this section answers the question: what areas of my character does God want to develop?
- **Relational** Focused around relationships, this section answers the question: how does God want me to grow in my relationship with him and other people?
- **Professional** Focused around your ministry this section answers the question: what does God want me to do in my work?
- **Physical** Focused around our care of our bodies, this section answers the question: how does God want me to take care of my body?
- **Spiritual** Focused around our spiritual wellbeing, this section answers the question: how is God calling me to grow in my relationship with him?

'OUR TASK IS NOT TO
DREAM UP A VISION FOR
OUR LIFE, BUT TO SEE
JESUS' VISION,
UNDERSTAND THE
FATHER'S STRATEGY FOR
OUR LIFE, AND LIVE IT.'
TERRY FULHAM

Creating a Personal Vision Statement

This booklet suggests two ways of creating a PVS. The first is more linear, left brain, rational. The second is more lateral, right brain, intuitive. Please note that we say 'more'. Both approaches include elements of the other. We suggest you take time to read through both and then choose one to work with. Alternatively you could read one of the suggested books and use that as the framework for discerning your PVS.

Approach One: Steps

STEP 1: IDENTIFY YOUR STARTING POINT

- Exercise 1: How has God made and gifted you? (Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, Experiences)
- Exercise 2: What are your responsibilities?

STEP 2: DISCERN WHERE GOD IS CALLING YOU

- Exercise 1: Reflecting on life.
- Exercise 2: Tackle some searching questions.

STEP 3: DEVELOP A VISION STATEMENT

- Guideline 1: Seek your personal vision through exercising spiritual disciplines.
- Guideline 2: Sharpen it by capturing it in detail.
- Guideline 3: Test it by submitting it to others.
- Guideline 4: Develop it through obedience.

STEP 4: IMPLEMENT IT

How does it Help?

Developing a personal vision statement helps to:

1. **Bring direction** It is forward looking, describing where you believe God is leading you over the next period of time. This helps strengthen a sense of movement in life.
2. **Clarify priorities** There are so many possibilities in most people's lives. A PVS helps sort out the important from the simply urgent.
3. **Inform decisions** Not only on the macro level: what to do with the rest of my life, what sort of job should I take on? – but also on the micro level: how should I use my time today? 'The greatest incentive to say no is to have an even bigger yes burning inside you' (Stephen Covey).
4. **Fuel motivation** Knowing you are going somewhere increases the appetite for getting there.
5. **Strengthen perseverance** When the inevitable knocks of ministry take their toll, your statement provides a thought through prayerfully discerned base of why you are doing what you are doing.
6. **Guide evaluation** When you come to reflect on how things are going, you have something concrete to reflect, review and revise against.



APPROACH 1: STEPS

Thoughts on Spiritual Gifts

'But each person has their own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.'

1 Corinthians 7:7

'If Jesus actively leads his local church by the gifts of the Spirit, then leaders have a vital role in helping each member to be open to the Spirit, to know how he has gifted them, to encourage and train them to use gifts wisely, maturely and in faith, and to order and structure the life of the church so as to free each one to make their contribution.'

Graham Cray

Spiritual gifts are:

- Gifts from God, not rewards for good behaviour. They are received not achieved. (1 Corinthians 7:7).
- Manifestations of grace not marks of maturity. Not dependant on how long you've been a Christian. Children get them as well.
- Tools for the job not trophies for the mantelpiece. They are received for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7).
- Spiritual gifts and not simply natural abilities. They are the expression of God's grace in ordinary people's lives, sometimes transforming the natural talent of an individual, sometimes supernaturally giving an individual an ability.

'Unity in the church is not attained by all being alike; but by all having the same purpose – the desire to glorify God and build up others.'

Bob Buford

Step 1: Identify Your Starting Point

There are two exercises in this section. The first is based around some material from Rick Warren's A Purpose Driven Life (Days 30-34) identifying our:

- Spiritual gifts.
- Heart.
- Abilities.
- Personality.
- Experiences.

We've given a page for each of these as you think them through, and then a summary page to write your conclusions.

Exercise 1: How has God SHAPed You?

(A) UNWRAP YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

You can use the gift inventory in the additional handouts of your Residential 1 resource file, or alternatively use the web-based inventories listed in the module overview.

Definition Special God-empowered abilities.

Questions that might help:

- Where have I seen **fruit** in my life that other people have confirmed?
- What do I enjoy doing that brings me energy and **fulfilment**?



APPROACH 1: STEPS

(B) LISTENING TO YOUR HEART'S DESIRE

Definition: the heart represents the source of all your motivations – what you love to do and what you care about most.

Questions that might help:

- If I knew I couldn't fail, what would I do with my life?
- What do I really enjoy doing most?
- When do I feel most fully alive?
- What topic could keep me talking late into the night?
- What am I passionate about? What would I die for?
- What 'I can't stand any longer', is a source of holy dissatisfaction?

Thoughts on Heart

'Two tell-tale signs of serving God from our heart: enthusiasm and effectiveness.'

Rick Warren

'Heart determines where you use your spiritual gifts. For example, two people may be evangelists, but one has a passion/heart for children, the other for street sleepers.'

James Lawrence

'Our heart is more than our mind, deeper than our will, and truer than our emotions. It is the sum of our being.'

Dan Allender



APPROACH 1: STEPS

Thoughts on Abilities

'Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.'

1 Corinthians 10:31

'A talent is a recurring pattern of thought, feeling or behaviour that can be productively applied.'

Marcus Buckingham

Buy a copy of Strengthsfinder 2.0, Tom Rath, and use the excellent online Strengthsfinder tool available through the Gallup organisation (pin access number comes with the book).

'When I do not honour my raw material, reality becomes my enemy. I close my eyes and ears to all the inclinations that I am trying to pursue what I am not called or gifted to do. But underneath I am condemned to live in chronic, low-grade anxiety that whispers to me that I am trying to be someone I am not.'

John Ortberg

(C) APPLYING YOUR ABILITIES

Definition: not the things we can do, but the things we can't help ourselves doing i.e. talents.

Questions that might help:

- What have I always been able to do well?
- If someone was to say 'You're a natural' what would they be referring to in my life?



APPROACH 1: STEPS

(D) EXPRESSING YOUR PERSONALITY

You can use insights gained from 16PF-5 or other personality inventories e.g. Myers Briggs.

Definition: the sum total of all the behavioural characteristics by which a person is unique.

Questions that might help:

On a continuum where would I place myself on the following scales?

extrovert	introvert
project/task oriented	people oriented
routine	variety
individual	group
thinker	feeler
action	reflection
competition	co-operation
structured	unstructured
outcome	process

Thoughts on Personality

'God needs all personality types in ministry, but different types of personality are best suited to different types of roles.'

James Lawrence

'Like stained glass, our different personalities reflect God's light in many colours and patterns.'

Rick Warren



APPROACH 1: STEPS

Thoughts on Experience

'Experience is not what happens to you, but what you do with what happens to you.'

Aldous Huxley

'The very experiences that you have resented or regretted most in your life – the ones you've always wanted to hide or forget – may be the experiences God wants to use to help others.'

Rick Warren (adapted)

'We mustn't allow our personality preferences to become an excuse for bad behaviour. The pearl of our personality may need a great deal of polishing for it to reflect the beauty Christ has placed within.'

Arrow

'God can achieve his purpose either through the absence of human power and resources, or through the abandonment of reliance on them. All through history God has chosen and used nobodies, because their unusual dependence on him made possible the unique display of his power and grace. He chose and used somebodies only when they renounced dependence on their natural abilities and resources.'

Oswald Chambers

(E) EMBRACING YOUR EXPERIENCE

Definition: the events of life and their impact upon us.

Questions that might help:

- What did I learn growing up in my family?
- What were my favourite subjects at school?
- What jobs have I been most effective in and enjoyed most?
- What have been my most meaningful times with God?
- What problems, hurts, failures, trials have I learned from?



STEPS: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

(Use this page to summarise your findings so far)

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

HEART'S DESIRE

ABILITIES

PERSONALITY

EXPERIENCE

APPROACH 1: STEPS

Thoughts on Responsibilities

'Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.'

1 Timothy 5:8

'This is the true joy in life – being used up for a purpose recognised by yourself as a mighty one, the being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clot of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.'

George Bernard Shaw

Exercise 2: What are Your Current Responsibilities?

None of us come to this exercise in a vacuum. We all have responsibilities that are a part of our lives e.g. caring for elderly parents, paying the mortgage. When you've identified them you may like to give them a rating from:

0=not at all important 3=average importance 5=very important



APPROACH 1: STEPS

Step 2: Discern Where God is Calling You

There are two exercises in this section. Both are designed to help us identify some of our inner values and dreams. Each of these exercises is simply a way to look forward at what might be. We have no guarantee that what we come up with is part of God's particular call on our life, but it just might be.

Exercise 1: Reflecting on Life

Here are three suggestions for thinking through some of our core values and hopes. These need to be reflected on in the light of Scripture (e.g. Matthew 5-7, Galatians 5:22). The idea is to get in touch with some of the deeper stuff within ourselves.

(A) WRITE YOUR OWN OBITUARY

What would you like people to read about you when you die? What kind of person do you want them to look back on? What things will you hope to have accomplished?

Thoughts on Life

'Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.'

Proverbs 3:5-6

'Asking the question "What do I wish to be remembered for?" is the beginning of adulthood.'

Augustine

'An epitaph should be something more than a wispy, wishful, self-selected motto. If it's honest, it says something who you are at the essence of your personality and your soul.... When you select an epitaph as an expression of gratitude for your singular talent – and as a goal to which you are committed until you rest, at last, beneath the gravestone – you identify yourself as someone with a purpose and a passion that has been encoded in you for life.'

Bob Buford

'Discerning a calling requires one of the greatest challenges of self-exploration and judgement a human being can undertake. Callings are usually not easy to discover. You will have to be ruthlessly honest about your gifts and limitations. You will have to be willing to ask hard questions and live with the answers.'

John Ortberg

APPROACH 1: STEPS

'The real test of a person is not when s/he plays the role that s/he wants for him/herself, but when s/he plays the role destiny has for him/her.'

Vaclav Havel

'Some people say, "God will never ask me to do something I can't do". I have come to the place in my life that, if the assignment I sense God is giving me is something that I know I can handle, I know it is probably not from God. The kind of assignments God gives in the Bible are always God-sized. They are always beyond what people can do, because he wants to demonstrate his nature, his strength, his provision, and his kindness to his people and a watching world.'

Henry Blackaby

'A calling, which is something I do for God, is replaced by a career, which threatens to become my god. A career is something I choose myself; a calling is something I do for God. A career promises status, money, power; a calling generally promises difficulty, even some suffering – and the opportunity to be used by God. A career is about upward mobility; a calling generally leads to downward mobility.'

John Ortberg

(B) IMAGINE A RETIREMENT SPEECH

Imagine attending your retirement party. Your best friend who has known you for the last 40 years is giving a speech summing up your life and ministry so far. What would you like him/her to say about you as a person and about your ministry until retirement? At the end of the speech another friend leaps up and asks if they can say a word. They begin their short speech with these words. 'There is one vital thing that hasn't been mentioned that very few of you will know about...' If you can, finish this short speech.

(C) GOD'S JUDGEMENT ON YOUR LIFE

What do you want God to say to you when you meet him face-to-face?



APPROACH 1: STEPS

Exercise 2: Tackle Some Searching Questions

If you were guaranteed it was part of God's will, your friends would support you, you had all the resources required and it would succeed, what three things would you most like to do for God over the next five years?

What do those who know you best think you should do with your life?

What one thing could you do right now to bring most pleasure to God as your heavenly father?

Thoughts on the Process

'Considering the alternatives, who wouldn't want a life with meaning and purpose moulded in partnership with our Creator? But I recognise the mere desire for a focused and meaningful vision is not enough. It requires effort to both define my vision and then carry it out. It requires time with God, not just to discover what he would have me do, but also how in dependence on him I am to carry it out.'

Robert Kuhn



APPROACH 1: STEPS

Thoughts on Personal Vision

'In a society which presents many of us with a large range of options for ourselves and our families, developing a personal vision is becoming increasingly important as a tool in charting our way through life's decisions.'

Steven Croft

'God offers us a purpose filled, integrated life. He is more than willing to help us discern what shape that life should take for each of us individually.'

Stacy Rhinehart

Common blockages to vision:

- Too much activity.
- Pressure.
- Poor self concept.
- Fear of failure.
- Forgetting.
- Lack of focus.
- Imbalance.
- Tiredness.

'The thing is to understand myself, to see what God really wishes me to do... to find the idea for which I can live and die.'

Søren Kierkegaard

Step 3: Develop a Personal Vision Statement

This next step brings together insights from steps one and two. A personal vision statement (sometimes described as a personal life statement) is a description of where we think God is leading us. It is likely to contain elements of both primary and particular calling. It acts like a compass, guiding us through the maze of decisions about how to use our time, pointing to God's priorities for our life. It will probably take the best part of a year to develop, but by Residential 2 we'd like you to complete a draft version. We each will probably go through several attempts at this before we have something faithful to what God is asking of us. At every stage we are trying to be as open to God as we can, longing to discover his priorities for our lives, prayerfully laying it before him, open to his prompting and correction. But once we've got a statement that reflects as clearly as possible how we think God is leading, we must act upon it.

GUIDELINE 1: SEEK IT THROUGH EXERCISING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

It is God's vision for our lives, so it helps to spend time praying, listening, fasting and reading, asking what God wants. Our task is not to dream up a vision for our life, but to see Jesus' vision, understand the Father's strategy for our life, and live it.

GUIDELINE 2: SHARPEN IT BY CAPTURING IT IN DETAIL

Vague thoughts in our minds are converted to concrete ideas and insights by writing it out, drawing it, singing it, talking it through with someone else. It is likely to have five main areas, loosely connected with the five dials from living life in the red zone.

- Physical: how does God want me to take care of my body?
- Spiritual: how is God calling me to grow in my relationship with him?
- Relational: how does God want me to grow in my relationships with others?
- Personal/emotional: what areas of my character does God want to develop in me?
- Professional: what does God want me to do in my work?

GUIDELINE 3: TEST OUR CALL BY SUBMITTING IT TO OTHERS

People who know us can bring a healthy external perspective on God's calling. It is best to choose people who know us well, who have God's best at heart for us, and who aren't afraid to tell us things as they really are. It may help to have some good questions lined up for them, giving them the questions ahead of the conversation so that they can think about what to say.

GUIDELINE 4: DEVELOP OUR CALL THROUGH OBEDIENCE

Are we really prepared to commit ourselves to this call of God on our lives? It is likely to be costly. If this is God's call on our lives we need to submit to where he is leading. It is not enough to create a statement; we need to act upon it.



APPROACH 2: STORIES

Approach 2: Story

This approach uses story as a way into the personal vision statement. The end point of the process is the same – a way of sharpening what God’s call is on our lives that helps us to make decisions about what to do with this one precious life.

It is based on insights from *To be Told: Know Your Story – Shape Your Future*, Dan Allender, Water Brook. The approach involves listening to your story, writing your story and telling your story and is based on the following assumptions:

- God is not merely the creator of our life, he is also the author of our life. He writes each person’s story to reveal his divine story.
- Our lives are not a series of random scenes that pile up like shoes in a wardrobe.
- When I study and understand my life story, I can then join God as a co-author. He asks us to take the only life we are given and shape it in the direction he outlines for us.
- There is the necessity and blessing of telling our story to others, and listening to other’s stories.

This approach is particularly helpful if you’ve experienced pain and hardship in your life.

‘I don’t believe God is so concerned that we build ministries – or companies, families, or any other human legacy – to his glory. His glory is grown when we simply live out the calling he has given us. We give him much greater glory when we are aware of our calling, live intentionally, and live with passion. That’s how we co-author our own story.’

Dan Allender

APPROACH 2: STORIES

'We are, first of all, according to Scripture, called to know God, to receive his love and mercy, and to be his children. We are called to live in the reality of the kingdom and to have Christ formed in us.'

John Ortberg

Part One: Your Story and Your Name

Think about your life as a series of stories, all making up one big story. What are the chapter headings so far? What is the content/drama of each story? What would the book be called?

How do you celebrate when there is a satisfying close to one of your stories?

If you think about the names that you give yourself, and others give you, what are they? If God was to give you a name, on a dark night of the soul what do you fear your name would be? In the midst of buoyant hope, what do you wish your name would be?

As you think about your life, revisit scenes where you saw redemption and where it was absent; where great suffering occurred and where non-dramatic, routine suffering occurred; where there was peace and where there was resolution. Reflect on these experiences.



APPROACH 2: STORIES

Part Two: Reading Your Story

'We are what we choose. And we choose whatever our deepest passion compels us to be and to do.' Reflect on the following questions:

- What moves me most deeply?
- What do I most enjoy doing?
- Where do I find greatest pleasure and joy?

What does your ideal self look like in the following areas:

- Worker.
- Friend.
- Child.
- Citizen.
- Believer.
- Leader.

And if appropriate:

- Spouse.
- Parent.

At what point in your life has God remained silent? Make a list of instances when you have been/have felt:

- Abandoned and unprotected (particularly by our parents).
- Betrayed, alone, without a friend (particularly by our friends).
- Rejected or not chosen (particularly by a spouse or boy/girl friend).

'The future is meant to be written in light of the patterns of the past. We can't predict the future, but we can read the patterns of the past to see how God has marked us for his purposes.' Seek out those who know you well. Ask them:

- How do they see you, both at your best and your worst?
- How do they experience you when you are hurt, angry, afraid, lonely, tired, confident, jubilant, and at rest?
- What do they think you are most passionate about?

As you listen to your life described by others, what are the themes that develop? What do these themes or patterns reveal about God? What wrongs do you dream of righting? What good do you dream of growing?

'God acts in history and in your and my brief histories not as a puppeteer who sets the scene and works the strings but rather as the great director who no matter what role fate casts us in conveys to us somehow from the wings, if we have our eyes, ears, hearts open and sometimes even if we don't, how we can play those roles in a way to enrich and ennoble and hallow the whole vast drama of things including our own small but crucial parts in it.'

Frederick Buechner

APPROACH 2: STORIES

'If our deepest dreams aren't about other people, then we have settled for mere power and accomplishments – the self-absorption of narcissism. Our deepest and truest dreams must bring good to someone who is without justice, reconciliation or hope.'

Dan Allender

Part Three: Writing Your Story

When it comes to writing our story into the future it is the one that draws forth our most passionate yes and no. 'Whatever has wounded us most deeply will be a part of what causes us to shout, "No" And whatever has brought us the deepest joy and delight will steer us towards what we are called to bless and welcome with our heartfelt "Yes".'

- What is the wrong I am called to right?
- What is the good I'm called to grow?

God's vision for our lives will involve the big story focused on the future:

- Who I am to serve? Which specific population?
- Where am I to be? What is the primary context (place) where I serve the people I am called to love?
- What burden am I to bear? What aspect of the fall (problem) am I called to battle against?
- How am I to engage? What is the process that will be most true to who God has made me and reveal his character?

And the present story focused on the current context:

- Do I embrace, take care of, and have gratitude for my current situation?
- Do I take responsibility for the world that has been both given to me and created by me?
- Do I bring my story and vision to bear in the present?

As we write we need to submit our writings to others as editors.

- Where and to whom will you tell your most painful, honest and vulnerable stories?
- Invite them to be critical editors, in particular helping you identify the 'so what?' of the story.



APPROACH 2: STORIES

Part Four: Multiplying Your Story

Pray over your story, engage with God over the joys and troubles.

Fast, and in the freedom from other things, ask God to sharpen the focus of your story. Describe what you feel when you fast, and what, if anything, comes from the fast?

Share your story with others and allow them to share theirs with you. Invite people to explore the stories:

- Where have you been? (the past).
- Where are you now? (the present).
- Where are you going? (the future).

What have you learned through sharing your stories with others?

SPACE FOR REFLECTING ON YOUR PERSONAL VISION STATEMENT