



# Setting Goals and Measuring Results



VISION & GOALS



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# The Vision-Setting Church: Setting Goals and Measuring Results

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## THE VISION-SETTING CHURCH: SETTING GOALS AND MEASURING RESULTS

### Leader's Guide

*How to use Setting Goals and Measuring Results by BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS in your regularly scheduled meetings.*

At BuildingChurchLeaders.com, we recognize that there is no “one size fits all” approach to church leadership training. Every church—and every team—is unique, with its own set of strengths and challenges that stand between where you are and where you want to be. That is why we have created Training Tracks—to help each church get from where you are today to where you want to be tomorrow.

This resource, “Setting Goals and Measuring Results,” is part of *The Vision-Setting Church* Training Track—Level One. This basic level includes assessments, theoretical and biblical foundations, practical skills training, and case studies. When you have completed “Setting Goals and Measuring Results,” move on through the other downloads in level one, and then on to levels two and three, which also incorporate multiple types of training content to dig deeper into the specific opportunities and challenges of *The Vision-Setting Church*.

**1. Select a learning tool.** This specific guide is designed to help you achieve your church’s vision. Simply print the handouts you need and use them as necessary.

**2. Select a handout.** The articles in the Assessments section (pp. 6–9) help you discern how you are doing in this area and where you might need to improve. Walk through the Case Study (p. 10) as a team to discuss the practicalities of goal setting in a real-life situation. For resources to help prepare your team for the challenges typical of setting goals and measuring results, check out the articles in the How-To section (pp. 12–16). And the Activity and Retreat Plan (pp. 17, 19) will help you put these principles into practice.

**3. Photocopy the handout.** Photocopy as many copies as you need—you do not need to ask for permission to photocopy any material from Building Church Leaders (as long as you are using the material in a church, ministry, or educational setting and are not charging for it).

**4. Prepare for the discussion.** We recommend you read the Scripture passages and identify key discussion questions. Think about how you will apply the principles found in the handout.

**5. Lead the discussion.** Each handout can be read within 5 minutes. After you have allowed time for reading, begin the discussion by asking one of the provided questions. Be ready to move the discussion to specific issues your church is facing.

Each Building Church Leaders handout can be discussed in 15 or 20 minutes. Your vision team will still have plenty of time to discuss its agenda.

Need more material, or something on a specific topic? See our website at [www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com](http://www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com).

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## SETTING GOALS AND MEASURING RESULTS

# How Shall We Evaluate Ourselves?

*5 ministry goals from the mouth of Jesus.*

1 Corinthians 11:28, 31

### Church-wide Goals

1. **Spiritual growth.** The first question for churches to ask is: Are people responding spiritually? Are lives being changed? “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?” (Matt. 5:13).  
➤ *In what ways are lives changed when the church is the salt of the earth?*
2. **Numerical growth.** If there is potential, there should be numerical growth. There are areas with little potential for growth, but in most cases, no growth means something is wrong. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19).  
➤ *How is numerical growth tied to the goals of a church?*
3. **Unity around biblical principles.** If you’re all going the same direction and the leadership team is committed to the same goals—not just because the pastor is, but because their hearts are committed—that unity offers tremendous spiritual power. “May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:23).  
➤ *In what areas are churches free to disagree? Where must there be unity?*

### Personal Goals

4. **Openness.** The greatest resource for evaluation that church leaders have is the quality of being open with elders, staff, and spouse. They can tell you if you’re doing a good job—as long as you’ve created a climate where they can also say, “We’ve got a problem here,” or, “You’ve offended someone, and you need to be aware of it.” “Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:4).  
➤ *Why is the humility exemplified in openness essential to church leadership?*
5. **Responsiveness.** Keep an ear to the ground. How do people respond to you? Watch body language as you speak, and you can tell if people trust you, if they feel you’re exhorting them because you love them, or if they feel you’re angry, being unfair, or manipulating them. “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant” (Matt. 20:25–26).  
➤ *Why is it important to recognize how others relate to you as a leader?*

—GENE GETZ is pastor emeritus of Fellowship Bible Church North in Plano, Texas and director of the Center for Church Renewal; © 2004 Christianity Today/BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

### Discuss

1. How could pursuing these personal goals make you a better leader? A better person?
2. What can our church’s leadership teams do to better demonstrate openness and responsiveness?
3. How can our church incorporate the first three goals?

## SETTING GOALS AND MEASURING RESULTS

### The Goal Is to Focus

*Setting goals focuses your church toward purpose, growth, and celebration.*

Matthew 6:33

*Paul Johnson serves as pastor of Woodridge Church in Medina, Minnesota, church-planting director of TeAmerica, and vice president of Baptist General Conference National Ministries. He spoke to BuildingChurchLeaders.com about setting goals and measuring results in church leadership.*

#### Why is it important for churches to set goals?

Throughout the New Testament, Jesus said to focus—"Seek first the kingdom," for example. Goals provide that focus. Actually achieving the goal is secondary to focusing on an established directional point.

For example, TeAmerica has a rule that a church plant can't hold Sunday services until it has 40 adults. One plant came to me with 20 and said, "If you'll just allow our pastor to preach on Sunday, more will come." It was hard to say "no," but I challenged the leaders to share with everyone the goal to have 40 members in two months. I challenged them to bring five visitors every week, and if three stayed, they would reach the goal. The goal brought focus, direction, and passion. The people accepted the challenge and grew to 40 members within one month.

A focal point also prevents ministry from being blunted. Churches tend to continue what has worked well in the past, but then add new ideas. When we add more and more ministry without focusing it, we blunt the overall impact. Goal-setting enables us to say, "This is what we sense from God is most important, and this is what's not." Often the greatest benefit of goal setting is giving yourself permission not to do what is outside the focus.

#### How do you select appropriate goals?

It's important to set two kinds of goals. The first are long-term, big goals. Our denomination set the goal to plant 442 churches in five years. Such a large goal forced us to change our strategies and gave us the intensity to reexamine how we do things. Though it's now not likely we'll achieve that goal, we learned from pursuing it what we weren't doing right and the denomination has put in new systems to address these areas.

The second kind of goal is the short-term, momentum-building goal. A practical way to develop short-term goals is to determine three to five areas to focus on for the coming year and list them in one column. In the next column, list what you're *not* going to focus on. This gives ministry leaders permission to say "no" to initiatives outside the focus.

Then, try to establish numerical and time marks for each goal, so you have a way of measuring progress. Make your goals realistic, specific, and measurable.

#### Why attach numerical qualifications to your goals?

By connecting numbers, you give the church something to celebrate. Actually achieving the number is secondary, however, because you can celebrate achieving the goal *or missing it*. When you miss a goal, you celebrate what was accomplished *and* all the things you learned. It is sometimes more valuable to learn from a missed goal than to reach a goal.

Especially in missed goals, without something specific and measurable, you tend to give more spin to what was achieved. A church I knew wanted to focus on evangelism, so the evangelism team decided to do a pig roast. The plan was to invite friends and informally share about faith. The event brought a couple hundred people, and they had good time. But afterward, a member of the team asked, "Were there any unchurched people there?" The rest of team said, "Why criticize? It was a great event."

The question was, however, were there any unchurched there? Had they actually made progress toward the goal of evangelism? If they had set a goal of bringing 20 unchurched and missed, they could say, "It was a great event, but we learned this isn't the way for our church to attract seekers."

## SETTING GOALS AND MEASURING RESULTS

### How do you know the difference between wild-eyed dreams and reasonable goals?

The one, big goal focused over a long period can be a dream goal, because it pushes you to grow and learn. The sub-goals, however, need to make reasonable use of resources God has provided. If all you have are dream goals, you always feel like a failure. That carries over to people in church. Often, when a church lacks momentum, it's because they have unrealistic goals and never get to celebrate the things God has actually done for them. I've seen high-profile plant teams plan for 1,000 new people in a year but never break 200. It happened because everyone who came to the church felt like a failure. The goals exceeded resources. Managing momentum is critical, and achievable goals help you do that.

### What other mistakes do people make in setting goals and measuring results?

If you assume success in a goal means you need a larger goal in the same area, it's a mistake. If your goal was to start five small groups, for example, does that mean once you achieve it, you set a goal for ten? No. You need to go back and ask if it's time for a new focus. Perhaps God's direction for small groups is completed and you need to focus now on evangelism.

Another mistake is when individuals put such effort into achieving the goal that they get bitter about those who aren't helping or become slave drivers to see the goal accomplished. An example might be a student ministry that wanted 100 people but stalled at 60 because they made the kids who came feel guilty for not inviting more friends every week.

In the first church we started in Shawano, Wisconsin, I had set a goal of 120 people at a certain service. I set the goal four months ahead of time. I prayed, fasted, and invited people. On that Sunday, we had 110 people. I put on my best face for the service, but afterward I went for a walk alone. I prayed like the Psalms: "I care about these people; don't you, God? I prayed, I cleaned up my act, but you didn't deliver."

God's answer was clear: "You didn't care about a single person, Paul; you cared about a crowd." He was right. There were no faces in that crowd to me. It was dysfunctional for me to pray for a number if I wasn't praying for individuals. I had made a mistake in how I pursued the goal, but not in setting it. I wonder: How long would it have taken me to learn that lesson of caring if I hadn't set the goal—if I hadn't shot for 120, only to taste 110?

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### Discuss

1. Talk about a time you set a personal goal. Did you miss it or achieve it? What did you learn from that experience?
2. Describe some ways our church's leaders could set long- and short-term goals.
3. What three to five goals would you like to see our church focus on in the coming year?

## SETTING GOALS AND MEASURING RESULTS

### Measuring Your Success

*Are you measuring results by trustworthy criteria?*

1 Timothy 4:15–16

*For some, bigger is better, with success defined as continued growth in membership, giving, and attendance. Others equate success with quality ministry of personal care and nurture. Which paradigm represents successful ministry? Success, like a diamond, is multifaceted. The different facets of the diamond together make up the luster of success in ministry.*

#### Church Culture Criteria

How our congregations measure success determines to some extent how we must measure it. My older son ministers in a small town of good people. They measure a pastor by his willingness to visit, care, and continue the programs they love. My son is sensitive to that, yet he has helped them develop a vision for the future. I categorize that as great success.

My youngest son serves in a major metropolitan area. His ministry is primarily to professionals, movers and shakers, successful businessmen. They tend to have vision, drive, and creativity. They appreciate my son's drive and initiative, and though he's a young man, they offer him strong support. Given their expectations of a pastor, he too is experiencing success.

I, on the other hand, minister in a megachurch. Most of my elders joined the church after I became pastor. As a result, they look to me for leadership initiative. When our board works well together, I consider our relationship a success.

*How does our church measure success?*

➤ Which of the following do our church members value most highly:

Evangelism      Community impact      Discipleship programs      Church relationships

➤ By which values do I typically measure our church's success?

Our church's unique values      What I wish our values were      The values of other successful churches

#### Faithfulness

I measure success by asking myself three or four times a year, *What did I do, even if I didn't particularly want to, that I knew I should?* Fulfilling one's responsibilities and roles is a major part of ministry.

Shortly after I arrived at Elmbrook Church, one of the men largely responsible for bringing me to the church was killed in an accident. Because I had grown to love him dearly, the idea of performing his funeral was intimidating. What made the situation even more difficult was that all his relatives spoke only German. But in the providence of God, I had previously ministered in Germany and had gained some comprehension of the language. I was able to conduct some of the service in German. His family seemed deeply touched.

At the end of the day I felt incredible exhilaration. I had faced my fears and fulfilled my biblical responsibility. One measure of success is to do what I think is right and good for my people, regardless of my feelings.

*How do you factor in faithfulness when you measure success?*

➤ I have a clear understanding of my roles and responsibilities as a leader:

Definitely      Somewhat      Not at all

➤ I credit or critique my faithfulness in these specific areas:

Definitely      Somewhat      Not at all

## SETTING GOALS AND MEASURING RESULTS

### Realism with Hope

Two dangers exist when setting standards for success. One is to shoot for the moon. The other is to throw in the towel. If I suffer chronic disappointment or disillusionment, I need to ask myself, *What's disappointing me? Is it the failings of people in the congregation? Or is it my unrealistic expectations?*

The church is comprised exclusively of sinners. In that sense, it's unwise to expect too much of others. On the other hand, there's a danger of lowering our expectations too far, and thus losing hope.

Even though some people will never seek more out of their faith than what's in it for them, it's unwise to abandon such people. Our Father doesn't abandon children who are disappointingly slow in development, but neither will I seek to make them perfect according to my timetable.

One facet of success for me, then, is to maintain a realistic but hopeful attitude as I minister.

*How do my expectations affect my sense of success?*

- I am disappointed by our inability to accomplish what I think we could:  
Frequently      Occasionally      Rarely
- I anticipate with dread our next failure:  
Frequently      Occasionally      Rarely

### Progress

Another facet of success is progress—not perfection, but progress. For example, churches often measure success by meeting a giving goal. Yet, in most instances, the goals are purely arbitrary. Who is to say if a 10 percent or 30 percent increase is too much or too little? The more important question is, “Are people progressing in their understanding and expression of biblical stewardship?”

Take another example: When I finished preaching a series on sexual values, various people came to staff members and said such things as, “We’re living together, please help us,” or, “I’ve lost my virginity, and I’m feeling desolate.” The staff reported a sudden increase in the number of people seeking help in this area. People were responding to the prompting of God’s Spirit in their lives, and that kind of progress (though the congregation was clearly far from perfection) is a facet of success.

*How do we account for progress in measuring results?*

- We establish numerical goals for our church:  
Arbitrarily      Unrealistically      With hope and reason
- We record testimonies and seasons of growth, both corporately and individually:  
Always      Occasionally      Never

—STUART BRISCOE is a writer and speaker and formerly served as senior pastor of Elmbrook Church in Waukesha, Wisconsin; adapted from our sister publication *Leadership Journal*, © 1993 Christianity Today. For more articles like this, visit [www.LeadershipJournal.net](http://www.LeadershipJournal.net).

### Discuss

1. In what ways have our measurements for success been unrealistic?
2. How can we establish new measurements that reflect the above criteria?
3. How can our church acknowledge those that succeed according to these new measurements?



## SETTING GOALS AND MEASURING RESULTS

### 5 Goals for Struggling Churches

*These transitions mark progress on the road to recovery.*

Ephesians 4:22–24

*Sometimes in ministry, we need mile markers to let us know what kind of progress we're making. In my years of ministry at a church in recovery, these 5 transitions marked our growth.*

|   | True<br>of us            | Somewhat<br>true of us   | Not true<br>of us        |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>1. We returned from profession to passion.</b><br>When I went to college, I had a passion for life. But after graduation, instead of having a passion, I had a profession. Nothing is more important, however, than believing God has called you into ministry and service to the church. In my office hangs a picture with this caption: "Passion: There are many things in life that will catch your eye. But only a few will catch your heart—pursue those."                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>2. We moved from plans to purpose.</b><br>Purpose is more than knowing you're called; purpose is determining what you intend to accomplish for God and his kingdom. When I first arrived at our church, we were plagued with the disease of small-mindedness, focusing on things and buildings. We made a vital transition when we wrote a statement of purpose, which reads: "The Jersey Shore Church of God exists to make Christ real and relevant to the world."                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>3. We released pain for promise.</b><br>In a year when 48 people left our church, a painful confrontation sent me driving into the mountains. I broke down. But in that moment, God assured me it was his church. He was the gardener, and it was time to do some pruning in the body and in me. Was it painful? Change most often is. Was it worth it? Absolutely! I learned that pain can be a significant mile marker of progress in God's work, if I chose to view it as such.           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>4. We shifted from programs to people.</b><br>I used to pray, "God, if we just had a different group of people, we could really grow this church." God's response was simple and straightforward: "No." If a church is going to turn around, the leaders must be leaders of people—not programs. A true marker of progress is the ability to involve people in ministry. Our greatest resource is our people. They must be encouraged, equipped, and put to work. Then the church will grow. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>5. We pushed through paralysis to prayer.</b><br>All churches pray, but prayer must become our lifestyle. It must be intentional and specific. When prayer becomes the heartbeat of ministry, God will bless his church, bringing health and progress.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

—DREW WILKERSON is pastor of Jersey Shore Church of God in Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania; adapted from our sister publication *Leadership Journal*, © 2000, updated 2013 Christianity Today. For more articles like this, visit [www.LeadershipJournal.net](http://www.LeadershipJournal.net).

#### Discuss

1. What hinders you from making these transitions in your life?
2. How could these transitions impact our church?
3. What steps could help our church make these transitions?

## SETTING GOALS AND MEASURING RESULTS

### Is the Goal Worth the Risk?

*5 questions to guide prudent goal setting.*

Luke 14:28

*To distinguish between a prudent risk and a wild-eyed gamble, I've learned to ask myself five key questions before taking ministry out on a limb.*

#### 1. Who else has done it?

By asking what went well and what went wrong, I can usually pinpoint where dangers lie, taking much of the risk out of a risky situation. When our church was forced into an emergency building program, I talked to other pastors who had tried solutions we were considering. Knowing where the predictable risks lay meant we could devise a plan to minimize them.

#### 2. How bad can it get?

If you can't live with the worst-case scenario, it's seldom a risk worth taking. Nick, the pastor of a plateaued church, made the mistake of pushing through a church merger without considering the worst. He was so focused on the potential benefits, he failed to consider what might go wrong. A year later, Nick's church was swallowed in the merger, he lost influence, and he bitterly resigned.

#### 3. Can we give it a trial run?

A trial run can turn a stupid decision into nothing more than a popped balloon. Two pastors I know, both of whom had attended church-growth conferences, brought home ideas on how to revolutionize their churches. Len implemented his ideas immediately, only to discover a culture clash that cut his church in half. The other pastor experimented only one Sunday a month, and after six months discovered the changes didn't fit. Although some leaders were discouraged over their failed experiment, it didn't sink the church.

#### 4. How much room do we have for error?

The amount of risk in a decision is directly related to the quality of my relationship with the people affected. When I was new to our church, small changes created uproar; now that I've been here 13 years, I seldom worry about the fallout from a change in direction. When the relationships are deep, my margin for error is great. When the relationships are shallow or strained, there may not be a margin for error.

#### 5. How clearly has God spoken?

The clearer God's direction, the greater the risk I'm willing to take. Like Abraham mounting his donkey to go sacrifice his son Isaac, or Peter stepping out on the water, I want to obey when the Lord speaks clearly, no matter the risk. The hard part is deciphering whether God has spoken clearly or whether I've merely baptized my ideas. That's why I use these five questions. They help us determine God's will for our church. But on top of these questions, I want to be open to a clear word from the Lord.

—LARRY OSBORNE is pastor at North Coast Church in Vista, California; © 2004 Christianity Today/BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

### Discuss

1. What questions in this study did you find particularly insightful?
2. Take an example goal for our church and test it by these questions. What did you learn?
3. What future goals might need to be informed by these questions?

## SETTING GOALS AND MEASURING RESULTS

**Too Many Goals, Too Little Time***Is your to-do list too long? Tame it.*

Matthew 6:34

**The Case** When our small staff (of two) met for a long-term planning and goals review, my colleague was visibly stressed. She said, “My whole life is church. I’m drained, rather than energized, by ministry. I want to be able to go home without thinking about work all the time.”

We talked about delegating some of her duties. But she was already delegating effectively. Then we talked about her schedule. She produced a to-do list with 64 items on it. No wonder she felt pressured!

Her list included everything from meetings and telephone calls to recruiting ministry leaders and revising ministry positions. With the help of another set of eyes, she realized some of the duties could be delegated. But it still left an intimidating list and an incredible mess on her monthly planner.

**What Would You Do?**

- ♦ Have you ever been plagued by too many things on a to-do list? What steps did you take to reprioritize?
- ♦ If a colleague was struggling with this, what would you suggest?

**What Happened**

I suggested my colleague choose no more than five things from the 64 and write them on a clean page in her day calendar. Which five? First, she evaluated deadlines and started with the most urgent. Second, she asked, “What steps could be taken now to make visible progress toward long-range goals?”

By narrowing her focus, she discovered many of the pressing things weren’t as urgent as she felt before. She chose five items, and then we established a rule: she had to finish all five before looking again at her Big List. She could not add a sixth task after completing the first. Only after all five were done could she choose up to five more. The rest of the Big List stayed hidden in the hard drive of her computer until the five were done.

We did, however, make two exceptions to the rule. On Friday, if she had the time to choose one more task for the day, that’s fine. Second, if the unexpected happened and something else on the Big List needed to be dealt with immediately, it had to replace one of the five already chosen. The replaced item, then, returned to the Big List.

As we’ve practiced this plan, we’ve found that it works. It’s adaptable enough to meet the flexibility ministry demands, and it puts into balance ministry, administration, and personal life. In other words, it has tamed that Big List and made it a servant of ministry rather than a tyrant.

—GRANT MCDOWELL is lead pastor at Leduc Alliance Church in Alberta, Canada; adapted from our sister publication *Leadership Journal*, © 2003 Christianity Today. For more articles like this, visit [www.LeadershipJournal.net](http://www.LeadershipJournal.net).

**Discuss**

1. How might having only five things on your to-do list make your life easier? Less stressful?
2. How can we work together like these two colleagues to evaluate priorities and delegate responsibilities?
3. With stress such a common malady in today’s culture, how can we as a church help our members restore balance and peace in their lives?

## SETTING GOALS AND MEASURING RESULTS

**Dreaming Too Small***A goal worth dreaming over may be the goal worth going after.*

Matthew 19:26

**Read** *“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26).***Comprehend** One of our members wanted to serve Christ, but he told me he didn’t want to organize or lead any more meetings in the church; he’d had enough of that. I thought about it for a few days and came back with a suggestion. “Why not start a community breakfast or lunch? A monthly meeting over breakfast, for example, might attract business people who commute to Chicago. Nationally known speakers could address the audience on relevant topics. Periodically we could bring in an inspirational speaker, and I could lead with prayer. This community is growing and it lacks cohesiveness. It would be a way our church could serve the community.”

That caught his interest. So we started the Executive Breakfast Club of Oak Brook, now the biggest club of its type in the Chicago area. Average attendance is about 500, although we’ve had up to 1,200 people attend. We have had speakers such as Gerald Ford, as well as business people who talk about their faith. People have converted to Christ. Many people come to the church because of it.

Here was a man who was tired of routine ministry, but he was actually just underemployed. He was energized by the vision of doing something big for Christ in the community.

Big goals normally excite a church and win congregational support faster than small goals. A church denomination sometimes makes the mistake of trying to start a church by erecting a small building, then sending someone to fill it with people. Unfortunately, the denomination has announced to the community that its vision is small. Highly motivated people are attracted by great ideas. When we limit vision, we immediately cut off those who have the capacity to catch a broad, exciting vision for ministry.

Naturally, I don’t believe good things only come in large packages. Many people are served best in smaller ways. People have left our church because they felt it grew too large for them, and I respect that. But even a small church lifts up a large vision to its members, albeit in a different way. To be an intimate, caring church family, for example, is hardly a small vision.

—ARTHUR DEKRUYTER was pastor at Christ Church of Oak Brook in Oak Brook, Illinois; © 2004 Christianity Today/BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

**Discuss**

1. Why do you suppose people are drawn to large goals?
2. What can we do to break out of the routine and seek a larger vision for our church?
3. What do you dream our church might do or look like some day?

**Pray** Ask the Lord for the courage to see his desire for our church.

## SETTING GOALS AND MEASURING RESULTS

### Team Ministry Goals

*Working together in leadership requires sharing more than responsibilities.*

Ephesians 4:29

*Only when we moved our church to team-based ministry did I learn what shared ministry really meant. In the past I would have argued our church was team-friendly, but we weren't. Teams, I discovered, are mostly about sharing—sharing goals and sharing life. It takes the first to act like a team and the second to feel like a team. Here are four ways to do both:*

1. **Develop a plan for sharing individual goals.** Team members need to accomplish something to feel productive. Like the players of a sports team, each person needs to know that he or she has executed the play and seen some results.  
  
Each year, every staff person in our church develops a MAP—a Ministry Action Plan. These plans are distributed to the entire staff, and then each person discusses his or her MAP with his or her ministry team. When the tyranny of the urgent begins to crowd out someone's stated goals, the team leader explores the reason behind it. One person was recently challenged to evaluate whether the changes in her activities were on purpose or simply covering for another staff person.
2. **Establish a process for accomplishing goals.** Functioning effectively as a team requires process. In an effective system, the leader acts as a catalyst, ensuring there is an agenda for each meeting, that there are individual assignments with accountability, and that progress is evaluated and measured. Systems allow a team to be process-oriented rather than people-dependent, freeing up people to do the work of the ministry.
3. **Affirm one another personally.** Team members need to sense that they are cared for beyond their accomplishments. At our last staff retreat, each leader awarded medals to team members, affirming in each not a job well done, but a personal quality. Every person also had the chance to talk about his or her ministry passion as well as a personal struggle or desire for development. Team leaders followed up, assuring each that they were praying for the requests.
4. **Enjoy one another relationally.** One way I balance the functional and relational dynamics of team ministry is to monitor our fun together. Do we have enough of it? Fun mitigates the effects of the inevitable frustrations of ministry. At times fun happens spontaneously when we poke fun at each other and end up laughing until we cry. But I also structure unexpected trips to a restaurant or a day at the lake. Our agenda may include prayer or discussing a book on leadership, but usually it's the eating at a unique restaurant or the sand between our toes that makes the day.

—WAYNE SCHMIDT is vice president of Wesley Seminary at Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion, Indiana, and he previously served more than 25 years as senior pastor of Kentwood Community Church in Kentwood, Michigan; © 2004 Christianity Today/BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

### Discuss

1. Between sharing goals and sharing life, which would you like to see more of in our ministry team? Why?
2. How can we encourage one another toward reaching individual and ministry goals?
3. How can our ministry teams incorporate more affirmation and enjoyment into relationships?

## SETTING GOALS AND MEASURING RESULTS

### Escaping the Numbers Trap

*The goal to get bigger isn't always best.*

Revelation 3:8

*One pastor I know leads a vital, multi-staff church of 300. He would be the envy of many smaller-church pastors, but he doesn't feel that. Instead he looks at the churches of 500 and 1,000 that are nearby and questions what he's doing wrong. Freedom comes not from size, which is a relative and shifting measure, but from an internal sense of worth based on entirely different criteria.*

*Here are five ways churches have learned to focus on goals other than growth, based on a survey by Leadership Journal:*

- 1. Accept your current size.** “One thing that helped me,” wrote a Baptist pastor, “was hearing Garrison Keillor. He was talking about a small town, and he said its motto was ‘We are what we are.’ I decided I was going to love what we were. Early in my ministry I’d look out and see the empty pews. Now I’m looking at the people who are there and trying to say something for them.”
- 2. See this place as a holy calling.** Oswald Chambers wrote, “Notice God’s unutterable waste of saints, according to the judgment of the world...God puts his saints where they will glorify him, and we are no judges at all of where that is.”
- 3. Realize the importance of ministering to your current members.** The life issues people face in a small church are just as difficult and significant as the issues in a larger church. Said one small-church pastor, “One woman’s husband is dying of cancer. A young guy is struggling with whether to go to seminary. Those are significant issues; they can’t get any bigger. And what God says through me to these people is a gift.”
- 4. Embrace the opportunities of small-church ministry.** One pastor in the survey didn’t want to do ministry in a large church: “I gain encouragement from dealing with people on a one-to-one basis, where you can really have a spiritual conversation and deal with people’s needs. And I probably wouldn’t be able to do as much of that.”
- 5. Find a different measuring stick.** Since churches are called to equip the saints, some look not to the number of saints but to the number equipped. “I was a fair-haired youth worker who had hundreds of kids coming to meetings,” remembers one pastor. “But looking back, if I had to gauge my success, it wouldn’t be by the number who came, but the number whom I nurtured to become Christian leaders. I can think of six people who are still ministering today, helping what’s now a third and fourth generation of kids. That’s what makes me feel good.”

—KEVIN MILLER is associate rector of Church of the Resurrection in Glen Ellyn, Illinois; © 2004 Christianity Today/BulidingChurchLeaders.com.

#### Discuss

1. Which of the five ways above moved you the most? Why?
2. What measures of vitality, other than numerical growth, are most important to our church?
3. Even if our church isn’t growing in numbers right now, what things are we doing well? Where can we see God working in our church?

## SETTING GOALS AND MEASURING RESULTS

### Measure What Matters

*How can a church measure heart transformation?*

Colossians 1:6

“Measurement has been a troublesome thing for the church for two thousand years.” That’s how Jim Mellado of the Willow Creek Association responded when I asked about measuring congregational success. “It’s incredibly hard to measure transformation in a heart,” he continued, “and that’s what we’re all after.”

The things that matter the most—transformed lives, ministry effectiveness, spiritual growth—are the hardest to measure. So we settle for metrics that are easier to obtain but much less meaningful.

### Inputs or Outputs?

Many Christian organizations are unclear about what data is meaningful to their ministry. A chief struggle is the common confusion between inputs and outputs.

Simply defined, outputs are the results produced by a given organization or process. Inputs are what the process starts with or what it uses along the way.

For example, a bicycle manufacturing plant starts with steel for the frame and rubber for the tires as key inputs. It uses labor, machinery, electricity, and paint as further inputs. Can you imagine the plant manager boasting, “We set a record for the amount of steel we used this month”? Of course not. The accomplishment that truly matters is producing a certain number of bicycles and to do so within its budget. This doesn’t mean the plant manager ignores the usage of steel. Monitoring steel consumption (or labor hours or any other input) is important, but merely as a tool to achieve the ultimate output goal.

To put this in church terms, attendees are inputs, disciples are outputs. But for churches, measuring this output isn’t simple. The bicycle plant can clearly describe and accurately measure its desired outputs. Heat and machinery consistently form steel into a bicycle frame, but the processes for “forming” disciples are much less predictable.

Because the desired results (transformed lives, healthy congregations, exercising faith, hope, and love) are extremely difficult to measure, some churches just measure inputs—giving, attendance, spending. They assume that these inputs will indicate progress toward the goal. Of course, every experienced leader knows that things are not that simple.

Putting more money into the youth ministry doesn’t automatically lead to teens with a deeper commitment to Christ. Holding an event with a celebrity speaker may generate a large audience, but it is not guaranteed to raise the spiritual vitality of the congregation. Loaning money to a seamstress in a developing country may not build a successful business that lifts her family out of poverty.

Reggie McNeal of Leadership Network states that the typical metrics in the church can lead to wrong behavior. “The old church scorecard of how many, how often, how much—measures of church activity—is counterproductive to participating in the missional renaissance. The old scorecard keeps us church-absorbed. As long as we use it, we will continue to be inward-focused, program-driven, and church-based in our thinking.”

### Measurements Matter...

You can find plenty of people who critique the metrics that are used in a typical Christian organization, but you won’t find many who say that measurement doesn’t matter at all. Reggie McNeal comments, “A universal maxim of human behavior—in families, at school, at work, wherever—is that what gets rewarded gets done.”

## SETTING GOALS AND MEASURING RESULTS

When the spotlight of measurement is pointed at an activity or an outcome, people pay attention. It is drilled into us from an early age with report cards in elementary school and scoreboards for children's sports. Accomplish the measured goal or exceed the target, and you'll receive praise. Fall short of the mark, and you'll face the disappointment of others (or worse).

Measurement may be a great tool to identify problems and opportunities or motivate people, but does it really matter to God? This is not just a question of whether God cares about how and what we measure. It is a question of whether "success," particularly measurable success, is something that concerns the Creator.

Chris Hodges of Church of the Highlands in Birmingham, Alabama, has a response for those who resist measurement: "They need to see how much of an accountant Jesus is. Because he was counting a lot. But you measure what matters." Hodges makes a good point. A number of Jesus' parables—the mustard seed, the sower, the great banquet, the talents—have quantitative, measurable, or growth-oriented messages. This continues in the Book of Acts, where there are several references to the numerical growth of the church and where the church experiences specific geographic expansion.

In the epistles, Paul focuses more on the doctrinal and behavioral issues facing the church, but he clearly expects believers to continue to spread the gospel (Col. 1:6). His writing comes out of a conviction that if God's children are being transformed individually, the church cannot help but grow in health and in numbers.

### ...But Numbers Aren't Enough

God cares deeply about the spiritual growth of people and about the health of his church, and healthy churches should produce tangible fruit over the long haul. Appropriate metrics are a way to assess the church's fruitfulness and to identify opportunities for growth. But if I stop there, I have not presented a complete perspective.

Even with well-designed measurements, the hard data will not tell the full story. Greg Holder expresses this well: "If God is doing something here and we are yielding to him and following him, I don't think that you'll see unhealthy numbers. But that's not the 'be all and end all.' I just don't see any annual reports in the New Testament."

Beyond that, Holder accurately notes that some assessment "is going to be squishy. Was Jeremiah faithful? I don't know how anybody looking at [Jeremiah's] 'numbers' is going to celebrate in the short-term."

A few months after my interview with Greg Holder, I happened upon the website of Elevation Church in Matthews, North Carolina. I noticed the button on the site to download the church's 2009 annual report. I clicked on the link.

The document had the look and feel of a company's annual report, complete with professional-quality pictures, vignettes of life change, and lots of statistics. The stark last page caught my attention. The page was blank except for this statement: "We are all about the numbers. Because every number, every statistic, represents a life that was changed, a life filled with hope and purpose, a story of redemption and grace. People far from God filled with life in Christ."

So how are we to think about measurement? It's a tool to give a strong indication of health or effectiveness, but not one to be used apart from godly wisdom. Todd Mullins says, "Healthy things grow. If we don't have measurement tools in place, unhealthy areas could go unnoticed for years."

Dave Peterson is an experienced pastor who has only recently discovered metrics that go beyond the standard attendance and giving data. He explains, "I'm like a kid with a new toy. I'm discovering that these metrics have great potential." One story of discovering this potential is the church's new emphasis on young adults. A fresh look at church data revealed 300 young, single adults who had been relatively invisible as a group. This awareness led to new funding for ministry. Peterson concludes that metrics "paint the real picture of who we are and motivate us to change."

So, are data and discipleship oil and water? Absolutely not. No set of metrics will paint the full picture of a congregation, but if the measurement system offers a more complete look at people and helps leaders make



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decisions, it will have served a powerful purpose. Moving past the barriers to effective measurement in ministries can yield important insights about how what we're doing works. And equally important, how it may *not* be working.

—MIKE BONEM spent over 10 years on the staff of West University Baptist Church in Houston, most recently as Executive Pastor; adapted by permission from *In Pursuit of Great AND Godly Leadership: Tapping the Wisdom of the World for the Kingdom of God* by Mike Bonem (Jossey-Bass Leadership Network Series, 2012).

### Discuss

1. What is your attitude toward the use of metrics? What has shaped that attitude?
2. What are you currently measuring? How do these metrics relate to your ministry vision?
3. Do you communicate results to other leaders? To the organization as a whole? Is this communication effective?
4. What is one thing you would like to know but currently don't have a metric for? Why is this important? How might you create an "intelligent and consistent" way to measure it?

## SETTING GOALS AND MEASURING RESULTS

### 5 Essential Questions

*Answer these questions to define your goals and priorities.*

Matthew 28:19

*“There are five essential questions of congregational life,” said the Rev. Lloyd John Ogilvie at a conference I attended. “These five questions must be asked and answered sequentially. If you skip any of them, the best that your church will ever do is limp.”*

#### Question One, Goal One

The first question is: *“What kind of people does God want us to produce in this body of believers?”* Ultimately, this is the key question for every church. The biblical answer to that question is “Go and make disciples.” But what does a disciple look like?

Divide your group into three or more small groups. Ask each small group to pray, asking God to reveal the traits of a true disciple—not the traits we think make a good disciple, but the traits *God* desires in a disciple. Write those down, then come together, read the lists, and collaborate them into one list. These traits are the target goal that gives purpose to your church.

#### The Next Question

How do you move toward that goal? As a group, brainstorm the second question: *“What kinds of experiences does a person need to become that kind of person?”*

Answering this question will give direction to your church’s programming. Too often we start with programs without asking the first question. When we do, programming becomes what we did last year, what we did at our last church, or the pastor’s newest whim. Planning programming around the traits God wants us to produce lends purpose and urgency to our ministries. It also provides a bonus: you now have a reason to say “no” to things that don’t fit.

#### The Final Steps

The last three questions can be discussed in the same way, if time allows, in an additional activity time, or they can be delegated to the church board.

- ♦ *What kinds of leaders (plural) are needed to provide those kinds of experiences?* This question is not referring to the pastor. Making disciples is too big a job for one leader alone.
- ♦ *What kind of pastor is needed to train those kinds of leaders?*
- ♦ *What kinds of experiences does the pastor need to be that kind of pastor?* Practically, this means churches ask themselves, “What can we do to help our pastor become who God wants him or her to be?”

—ROGER JENKS is pastor of Fox Valley Area Christian Church in Aurora, Illinois; adapted from our sister publication *Leadership Journal*, © 2003 Christianity Today. For more articles like this, visit [www.LeadershipJournal.net](http://www.LeadershipJournal.net).


#### Discuss

1. In what ways did the first step of the activity expand your understanding of what it means to be a disciple?
2. How might thinking through this progression affect our church’s programming choices?
3. How can we, as a congregation, help our leaders move our church toward making these kinds of disciples?

## SETTING GOALS AND MEASURING RESULTS

### Further Exploration

*Helpful resources for setting goals and measuring results.*

 **BuildingChurchLeaders.com:** Leadership training resources from Christianity Today.

#### ***The Growing Church Training Track***

- Level One:*
- What We Value
  - Vision Casting & Planning
  - Vision
  - Developing Vision
  - Taking the Pulse of Your Church
- Level Two:*
- Vision & Strategy
  - Strategic Planning
  - Setting Goals and Measuring Results
  - Strategic Planning
  - Communicating and Initiating Change
- Level Three:*
- Streamlining Church Programming
  - Thriving Through Change
  - Leveraging the Strengths of Small Churches
  - Navigating Change
  - Aligning Ministries Through the Big Idea

 **LeadershipJournal.net:** This website offers practical advice and articles for church leaders.

#### **Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders** *by Aubrey*

*Malphurs.* Offers a nine-step, practical method for implementing a church's vision statement and extending its mission. (Baker, 2005; ISBN 9780801091810)

**Rethinking the Church, Revised & Expanded: A Challenge to Creative Redesign in an Age of Transition** *by James Emery White.* White helps pastors and lay leaders break "old molds," check assumptions, and answer vital questions about how *their* ministry can best foster evangelism, discipleship, worship, and more. This revised edition emphasizes how to move from rethinking to transition. (Baker, 2003; ISBN 9780801091650)

#### **Vertical Church: What Every Heart Longs For. What Every Church Can Be.** *by James MacDonald.*

In this transformational resource, MacDonald challenges pastors, ministry leaders, and disciples to go "vertical" in their approach to Sunday services and embrace the truth that the church is *only* about the glory of God revealed in Christ. (David C. Cook, 2011; ISBN 9781434703729)

**Visioneering: God's Blueprint for Developing and Maintaining Vision** *by Andy Stanley.* A strong endorsement for the value of a clear, God-ordained vision in every aspect of life. As the title suggests, it includes a plan for following God's vision. (Multnomah, 2005; ISBN 159052456)

## SETTING GOALS AND MEASURING RESULTS

### Retreat Plan

*How to create a weekend retreat on the theme of Setting Goals and Measuring Results.*

*Here is a sample retreat schedule you may follow for the Setting Goals and Measuring Results theme.*

#### Friday Evening

- ♦ 8–8:45 P.M. **Opening Session:** Hand out copies of “The Goal Is to Focus,” the interview with Paul Johnson, and allow time for each person to read it. Then form groups of three or four. Have each group discuss the questions at the end of the interview. Reconvene for the last 20 minutes and have the groups share their comments and consider what that may mean for the church.
- ♦ 9–9:45 P.M. **Case Study:** Close the evening with the case study “Too Many Goals, Too Little Time.” Photocopy and pass out the study, or use the handout as your notes.

#### Saturday Morning

- ♦ 9–9:45 A.M. **Devotional:** Set the tone for the day by handing out (or presenting) “Dreaming Too Small.” Discuss the questions at the bottom of the page and have a time of seeking God’s guidance for your church.
- ♦ 10–11:00 A.M. **Activity:** Use the activity “5 Essential Questions” to discuss how your church can reprioritize its ministry plan toward making disciples.
- ♦ 11:15–NOON. **Assessment:** Hand out a copy of the assessment “Measuring Your Measure of Success” to each participant. After everyone has read and completed the assessment, have them discuss how your church measures its success and affirms those who succeed.
- ♦ NOON. Lunch

#### Saturday Afternoon

- ♦ 1–2 p.m. **Final Group Session:** Close the retreat with the how-to article “Team Ministry Goals.” Each person should spend some time alone to read and respond to the questions on the handout. Afterward, bring the group together to share what God has taught them. Then pray together, asking God for guidance and wisdom as you take new steps together.

You can create similar retreat plans for any of the other BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS themes. Simply determine what you want to accomplish and select the handouts that support your objectives.