

7 Principles to a successful life: Vision

Vision

By Martin de Lange

The men don't make the vision; the
vision makes the man.

Pastor Yonggi Cho

The Oxford English Dictionary defines
vision as:

Something which is
apparently seen
otherwise than by
ordinary sight;...

I like this interpretation for when we
talk about the kind of vision that I
have in mind, it is not vision that one

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sees with ordinary sight. It takes extraordinary sight. More than 20 years ago I was a regular crime scene investigator in the South African police. I just got promoted to the rank of Sergeant and at the age of 22 I was a very happy, fulfilled, young police officer with an exciting career ahead of me. I loved my job and enjoyed the challenges that I had to face every day. I worked very hard in an understaffed unit and I had my sight on becoming a Captain within the next 5 years. I was young, ambitious and I had a dream. I just got married and could not be more contented in life. As a young Christian I thought I had it all.

Of course that was until the Lord Jesus stepped into one of my quite-time moments one morning. I was

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meditating on Romans 1:1 (NIV) and suddenly became aware of how the word in the Bible seemed to come alive and fill the room. It was as if the Lord himself spoke to me. It was a supernatural experience that changed my life forever. Although I was a young Christian at that time I was very satisfied with my life and the direction in which it was heading. However, the experience that morning changed me forever. I became aware of a deep inner calling. A desire to leave all that I do and follow Jesus into a life of fulltime commitment and service. It was as if the ambitions and goals that I had in the police service were no longer relevant. I suddenly realised that my main calling is to share Jesus with the rest of the world.

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For me this was a new experience, I looked at my job environment as a harvest field of opportunity. It was not enough just to aim for the highest rank in my unit I wanted to aim for the highest possible calling of the Lord Jesus on my life. I came into alignment with the Holy Spirit and it was as if the Lord Jesus, through His Spirit, started to flood my spirit with what he wanted for my life. This is where a deep desire was birthed to serve him on a full-time basis and it led to my decision to leave the Police service.

I would like to clarify something important here. I am not propagating that everyone who wants to serve the Lord Jesus needs to quit his or her job and start with missions. You can fulfil your live calling right where you are

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now. Perhaps you are a plumber going about your daily routine and the Lord presents you with a variety of opportunities to be his witness. Maybe you are a professional, like a scientist or lawyer. A good friend of mine doing his doctoral studies in nuclear science in Paris, shared with me the amazing opportunities he has as a Christian to share Jesus with highly educated, intellectual people, which would be totally out of reach for any ordinary Christian. For my friend this is his calling for now right where you are, you can fulfil that calling that the Lord has placed on you.

For me it was different. I embarked on a journey of obedience where the Holy Spirit revealed his will to me just one step at a time. My next step was

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to open my heart for his calling. It was 12 months later that I resigned from the police and entered Bible College to train for a pastor. I was on a new journey towards a destiny that I did not know. I just knew that the Lord placed in me a burning desire to serve him on a full-time capacity. In my frame of reference, that meant to be a minister in a church and that was what I was preparing myself for. It was here that the seed of my vision got planted. Soon after my studies at Bible College started, I met Muslim neighbours in our area. This was something that I never encountered before. I was intrigued by their belief system. A research visit to the local mosque left me with a Quran in my hand. I read through it within days and was back at the mosque with more questions. This led to my

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involvement in an outreach group to Muslim people, and eventually to a clear calling to serve the Lord as a church planter in Turkey, some years later.

I am sharing this with you because I want you to understand that in my case, the development of my vision was a long process, bathed in prayer, in the Word, and meditating on and being obedient to God's will . It was a process rather than a moment. It developed into a solid idea that came into focus as time moved on. It was important for me to be sure of my vision because it released energy into my spirit that made me move forward, even during challenging times. Today I can share with you that my life calling is to help others find their place in the Lord Jesus and for

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now I am called to help the Turkish people find that place in their lives.

The story of Joseph in the Bible perhaps provides one of the most stunning examples of someone with a vision. As a young, arrogant lad he got a series of dreams that made him quite unpopular with his siblings. It nearly got him killed. His parents were not too impressed with him either when he shared these dreams and his father rebuked him. His dreams made him the joke of the family and his father's colourful robe did not help his standing with his brothers. But Joseph had a dream. He hanged on to that dream. As he was thrown into the pit and later sold to the traders as a slave, I believe that he had only this dream to comfort him. As we know the story, after many trials and

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challenges he ended up at the second highest rank in all of Egypt and later when the famine came knocking on the door, his dream finally became a reality. There are many things that can be learned from the life of Joseph. Here are but a few of my insights:

1. When you get your dream or your vision, be careful who you share it with. The reason is that not all people will understand your vision and neither will they share your excitement.
2. Be prepared for your vision to be tested. A Godly vision will remain standing when it is tested . Joseph went through a very difficult time before his vision became a

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reality. His vision was tested time and time again. In the same way your vision will be tested by fire in order to refine it. If your vision is not really from God then it will fall by the wayside.

3. God's timing for his vision for your life to come to fulfilment is not always the same as your timing. We tend to get impatient when things are not going according to our plan; God however is not pressed by time. He stands above time. He is outside of time. He created time and he is not influenced or pressured by it. God moves in another dimension and he can step into and out of time as he

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wants. So be patient. Your vision will come to fruition in His time. Remember Abraham who had to wait such a long time for the promise of God to become a reality in his life. However, the important fact is that it did come to fruition, just as it did in the case of Joseph.

How do I know I have a Godly vision? I believe there are some road signs that will help me see if I am busy with a Godly vision or not. One's vision takes everything one has and you want to make sure as a follower of Jesus that you are busy with the things of God, rather than with your own ambitions and pursuits . It will be a horrible day to stand before God one day and to hear Him saying "Sorry, but I never

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called you to be a lawyer. I wanted you to be a teacher.” Or “My son, I never meant for you to be a doctor of medicine. I implanted you with a dream to be an architect.” Many of us are climbing the ladder of success only to reach the top and discover that the ladder was placed against the wrong wall all the time.

It is therefore important to make sure that you are busy with what God has called you to do. Another aspect that I would like to highlight before going deeper into this is the fact that a vision does not always enter our minds fully developed. It develops over time. Sometimes we have a glimpse of what we believe God wants us to achieve and as we embark on this journey we gain clarity. Dan Black runs an internet-

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based church leadership forum and on his regular blog he identifies the following characteristics of a Godly vision:

1. A Godly vision will lead to helping others. A Godly vision is not about myself, my plans or even my dreams, It is about how others can be helped. Ask yourself: Is what I believe God has imprinted on my heart going to help other people? If your answer is yes, you are most probably on the right track.
2. A Godly vision will glorify God. It will always be about the glory of God and not the glory of man. God alone is the one who must be lifted up and glorified.

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3. A Godly vision is future-focused. It is not just for now and then. Not that there is anything wrong with it, but a Godly vision more specifically looks into the future.
4. A Godly vision will defeat the devil. This means whatever will be accomplished by this vision will suppress the devil and his demons. It will stand against Satan and his army. This, of course, opens the door to resistance from the enemy.
5. A Godly vision will always seek to advance the Kingdom of God. This is what Jesus came to do and this is what we also need to do.

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It is interesting that even those who do not follow the way of the Lord Jesus can have a vision. Usually it is a vision of self-enrichment and self-gain, a vision to achieve something great in its own way. We can also call this ambition.

No-one goes on a journey without knowing where he or she wants to go. I lived in the port city of Mersin in the east of Turkey for many years. We started our church planting experience in this city and the neighbouring city of Tarsus. One of my favourite pastimes was to take long walks or runs along the sea-facing promenade. From there I could see the boats leaving the harbour. The Mediterranean Sea can get real nasty, especially in winter, and it is no fun to be out on a ship in rough

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stormy waters. The harbour is always a safe haven. The problem is that although the harbour is a safe place to be, it does not take you anywhere. You don't journey anywhere. All of those ships that I watched leaving the harbour knew where they were going. They each had a specific goal and destination in mind.

For us to embark on our journey, we also need to know what our destination is. I want to call it a vision. I would not have been able to do what I am currently doing for such a long time, without a clear vision. Unfortunately, it is often true that many people are pursuing other people's visions. They are helping others to make their vision a reality while neglecting the visions that are in their own hearts. For some, this

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concept might come across as an unrealistic pie-in-the-sky idea that work for others, but not for themselves. But be encouraged, vision is for everyone. If you understand what vision can do, then you will look for it with a greater sense of urgency.

Vision gives you direction, it sets you on the path of life and takes you towards your destiny. Vision is that sparkle in your eyes when you talk about what you do. Vision releases energy that thrusts you forward and helps you to get out of bed in the morning. One of the personal favourite verses in the Bible is Jeremiah 29:11. It shows me that God thinks about me, and that his thoughts about me are of blessings and abundance. He wants to give me

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a bright future. The vision God has for my life is a vision of blessing and great things. We read in

Ephesians 3:20: God is able to do far more than we could ever ask for or imagine. He does everything by his power that is working in us.(NIV)

God can do far beyond what we can imagine. I believe it is time to imagine the impossible things for our lives. Vision from God is bigger than me. In fact, a vision from God is so big that it will make me scared, it will terrify me, and it will therefore require of me to trust in Him with all that I have. When I look at my vision and I can achieve it with my own resources or with my effort, it is probably not from God. A vision from God is bigger than the resources I have, a vision from God brings me to a place where I am fully

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dependent on God. I cannot achieve or reach a vision from God with my own means. A vision from God takes all that I have. It might even cost you everything that you have. When Abraham was on the point of offering Isaac on the alter he had no back-up. He only knew that God is faithful and that he will come through with greater things.

Next, let us consider how to acquire our vision. Looking at my own life, I realise that everyone's situation is different. What I learned from my own situation are the following:

1. One must first of all have a personal relationship with God. God wants us to stand in an intimate relationship with Him. He wants us to fulfil our creation purpose.

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He wants the best for our lives. God is a good God and he means us no harm. If there is anyone you can trust with your life, it is God.

2. Vision gets birthed from a desire to do God's will in your life. It gets birthed from a desire to seek Him and to hunger and thirst for Him. This is a work of the Holy Spirit. Ask the Lord to fill you with His Holy Spirit every day.
3. Vision gets birthed from the word of God and prayer. It is when we read and understand the word of God that we realise what He wants for our lives. I can pray the Word and let the Holy spirit flood my heart with the

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will of God. It is in these intimate moments that my heart gets prepared for the Lord to drop his dream for my life into fertile ground.

4. God has implanted in you a very specific DNA. You are very different from the next person your experiences are unique and special. You have to remember that you were put on this planet for a specific goal and purpose and that the Lord looked for two specific people whose DNA, if mixed, would produce a human being with your unique abilities and capabilities who would fill a specific place on God's timeline You are no accident, but a person with a clear

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destiny and calling to fulfil. This calling can only be fulfilled from a relationship that is founded in Jesus. It is only from this intimate relationship that you can truly journey towards your destiny.

Be careful for other people that tell you what God has planned for your life. I love to see the Holy Spirit working in people's lives and I believe that he still works in powerful ways today. I love the gift of prophecy and like to see it in action in our meetings and fellowships, but we must be carefully when other so-called prophets come to us with "words of God" to instruct us in what we need to do with our lives. I believe that if I have a personal relationship with

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God, he lives in me with his Holy spirit and he will talk directly to me, that is to say if there is no sin in my life that blocks His voice from penetrating my heart. When someone comes to you with a prophetic word regarding your vision, or your calling or your future, it will either confirm what the Lord has already impressed on your own heart, or it will in a very short span of time will be confirmed in your heart by the Holy spirit. From the way that I understand the Scriptures, I do not believe that the Holy Spirit gossips about us to other people. Of course, if there is sin in our lives we may sometimes need a prophet to deliver a message from God to us because we are just far from being in tune with the Holy Spirit and cannot hear his voice.

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But in terms of God's vision for our lives, he will direct us through these circumstances to the place that He wants us to be. We just need to be patient and trust Him fully.

Vision is an incredible gift to have; it is a gift for everyone. It is a blessing that infuses and inspires you. With vision, hope is released in our spirit - a hope that fills us with an eagerness to move forward, to climb the mountain, to scale the obstacle that we face in order to accomplish what God has planned for our lives. Press deeper into your relationship with Jesus and let Him flood your mind and spirit with His vision for your life.
