

Vision Course

A Practical Guide To Developing God-
Inspired Vision For The New Year

By Brian Few

“If people can’t see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; But when they attend to what He reveals they are most blessed.” Proverbs 29:18 *The Message*

When people don’t have clear vision in life they tend to stumble all over themselves and struggle unnecessarily. One time when traveling from Edinburgh, Scotland to London, England by train, I didn’t take time to plan how to get from Kings Cross Station, one of the busiest stations in London, to our hotel. When we arrived at the station there were literally hundreds of people moving in every direction, and it felt like Lindsay, Stella and I were the only ones who didn’t know what we were doing or where to go next! After a lot of anxiety, stress and spending \$100 more than necessary, we finally figured out how to take the “tube” to our hotel. I learned a valuable life lesson that day: *It’s better to plan than try to figure things out along the way!*

On the other hand, when “people attend to what God reveals they are happy, joyful and most blessed.” Doesn’t this sound good? But we need to clarify: Does most blessed mean a life free of problems and pain? No. Jesus told us that in this world we will face trouble, but to take heart because He has overcome the world. So “most blessed” doesn’t mean your life will always go as planned, but it does mean that God is on your side, present with you and helping you in the details of your life.

I don’t think anyone wants to stumble through life. Most people have a desire to be fully alive and alert to what God has for each day. I believe God made you for a purpose and has a unique vision for your life. My goal is to help you discover and develop a **God-Inspired Personal Vision** for the new year. *A God-Inspired Personal Vision is a personal vision (what you want to see happen in your life)*

that is shaped by the teachings of Scripture and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

If you want your vision to be God-Inspired you have to: know what Scripture teaches about the things you want; pay attention to the Spirit’s leading in your life; be honest about what you really want; then invite and allow God to shape and even change your plans. Proverbs 16:9 says, “A man makes plans, but God determines his steps.” I believe our responsibility is to dream, make goals and plans, and trust God to determine what’s best for our lives.

For most people the idea of developing vision for their life is overwhelming. If you feel this way, I want to encourage you to take a deep breath and relax. There’s no pressure to get this right! The beauty of this process is that it gives you permission to dream and to imagine how your life could be better this year.

Developing God-Inspired Personal Vision is a process that involves the following steps:

1. Establish perspective with The Life Arc.
2. Remember your story.
3. Dream about what you want to see happen.
4. Test your dreams.
5. Develop your vision by making goals and plans.
6. Ask God to shape your vision.

This booklet is designed to help you get started on the process and to guide you through the steps.

Session One | Establish Perspective With The Life Arc

“Seventy years are given to us! Some even live to eighty. But even the best years are filled with pain and trouble; soon they disappear, and we fly away...Teach us to realize the brevity of life (to number our days), so that we may grow in wisdom.” Psalm 90:10-12 NLT

Life is short, we all have a limited number of days to live on the earth. The Psalmist says, some people are “given seventy years, and some even live to eighty.” Today the average age of death is 72 years old. Of course some people live fewer years and some people live many more, but the point is that every person has limited time to live.

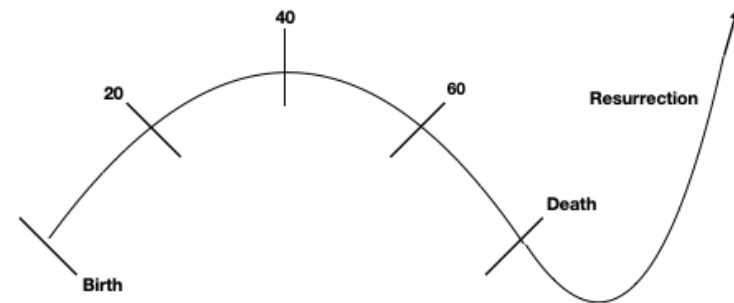
I think most people would agree that life is short and that everyone has limited time on earth, but when it comes to day to day living, I think we forget this is true. Think about it: when you’re young, you feel like you’re going to live forever, and when you’re older, you can’t believe that time flew by so quickly. The risk of living without perspective of reality is that you might waste your precious time and arrive at the end of your life full of regret.

This is why the Psalmist says, “Teach us to realize the brevity of life, to number our days, so that we may grow in wisdom.” Eugene Peterson says wisdom is “skill in living.” Realizing that life is short and that we have limited time makes us wiser. This perspective motivates us to live with vision and intention and to make the most of our lives.

But this wisdom doesn’t just happen, you have to be taught and reminded to “number your days.” To make the most of your life you have to become aware of the different seasons of life and know where you are in the natural course of human life.

Ray Dalio created a helpful tool called The Life Arc for this very purpose. I have modified it by adding the resurrection arc to give it a Christian point of view. This tool will help you make sense of where you’ve been in life, see where you are today and help you create vision for what you want to see happen in the future.

LIFE ARC by Ray Dalio



How do you distinguish the different seasons of life. Why do you think it’s important to do so?

What were some of the most significant events of your past? How have these events shaped you as a person?

Where are you on the life arc today? Assuming you are blessed to live 80 years, how many more years do you have ahead of you?

What major events and goals are you looking forward to in the future?

Session Two | Remember Your Story

"Make sure that when you eat and are satisfied, build pleasant houses and settle in, see your herds and flocks flourish and more and more money comes in, watch your standard of living going up and up—make sure you don't become so full of yourself and your things that you forget God, your God." Deuteronomy 8:11-16 *The Message*

Right before the people of Israel crossed over the Jordan River into "the land flowing with milk and honey," Moses warned the people to "be careful not to forget the Lord your God when you became prosperous," and to "Remember that it was God who gave you the power to be successful." And then he went on to say, "When you have eaten your fill, be sure to praise the Lord for the good land He has given you."

If I'm honest, I fully understand why Moses had to remind the people of Israel over and over again. I bet you do too, because we are so quick to forget all the ways God has helped and blessed us. I have trouble remembering what happened last week, let alone last year. The following questions are intended to help you remember, so that you can thank God for all that He did in your life last year. And there's no pressure to answer all of the questions, the goal is to simply get you thinking about what happened last year in the most important areas of your life.

What were some of your best memories from last year?

What was your most difficult experience last year, and how did you grow from it?

What are a few things that happened last year that you are really thankful for?

Faith

If your love for Jesus is a fire, would you say it was hot, warm or barely aflame last year. Why?

How did you see God move in your life last year?

How did you become more like Jesus last year? What experiences or practices helped you?

How did you use your time, talents and resources to strengthen and build up your local church?

Did you invite anyone to church or share your faith with anyone?

Dating

When you think about your relationship last year, do you feel happy, sad or confused?

Did your relationship draw you closer to God and community or pull you away?

What was the most fun thing you did together last year?

What did you learn about your boyfriend or girlfriend last year?

How well did you stay pure together as a couple? What helped or hindered you?

Marriage

What was the best experience you had with your spouse last year?

Would you describe your spouse last year as a lover, friend, roommate or adversary?

How did you grow in friendship with your spouse? What helped the most?

What was the most difficult thing you went through together, and how did it go?

Parenting

What were some of your best memories with your kids last year?

What are some ways you enjoyed spending quality time with your kids last year?

What parenting challenges did you face last year and how did you handle them?

What are some things you did last year to help your children grow in Jesus?

Friends

Which friends did you enjoy spending time with last year, and why?

How did you use your home and table to build community last year?

Did you experience any friend drama last year? If so, what did you learn from it?

Did you help anyone grow in their faith or see anyone come to faith in Jesus last year?

Work

What did you love or like about your work last year?

When you think of your last year at work, do you feel motivated or stuck? Why?

What was difficult about your work last year?

Did you grow or learn any new skills in your job?

Finances

Last year, did your finances increase, decrease, or stay the same? What contributed to this?

Did you increase your debt or make progress paying down debt last year? What contributed to this?

Did you increase your savings or make any new investments last year?

Did you grow in generosity last year? What helped?

Time

Did your pace of life last year make you more kind or grumpy?
Peaceful or anxious? Patient or irritable?

Did you practice keeping a sabbath by taking one day off a week to
worship, rest and enjoy the good things of life last year? If so, how
was this beneficial to you? If not, what hindered you?

Do you feel like you maintained a good rhythm of work, rest and
play last year? Why or why not?

What did you do in your free time last year that was life giving?

What new skills did you learn last year?

What hobbies did you enjoy last year?

What projects did you accomplish last year?

Session Three | Dream About What You Want To See Happen

"We make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps." Proverbs 16:9 NLT

The ability to create vision for our lives is a gift from God. The Bible says, "we are made in the image of God." This means we have the unique ability to dream of a better future, and then to make goals and plans to see our dreams become reality.

My dog June cannot do this. The only thing she thinks about, as far as I can tell from her behavior, is eating, sleeping, going on walks and chasing squirrels. She doesn't sit around thinking about how to make her life better.

Some people approach their lives like June. They act like they have no say in their lives. They just wait to see what happens each day and accept things as they are. And some people even believe this approach is how you discover God's will.

Dallas Willard says, "many things that happen in our lives are not the will of God, although he does not act to stop them." Accepting things as they are usually leads to an existence of settling for cheap comforts and pleasures like eating, sleeping, shopping and wasting endless hours on screens.

CS Lewis describes it this way, "We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

Existing like a dog, just waiting to see what happens, is no way to live. If this is you, you need to know you are made for so much more!

Other people approach their lives with vision, intention and passion. They have measurable goals and detailed plans for every area of their lives. They are highly disciplined, waking up early to read the Bible, workout and to go to work. They check all the boxes of success. And as a result they're thriving. They are making money, live in nice homes, drive respectable cars, enjoy fun vacations and their kids are on the road to success.

But there is one big problem with this approach: These people have separated their faith from their life. Their faith is important to them, but they don't see how it relates to their "everyday ordinary lives." This is "functional atheism." Living this way produces a lot of anxiety and stress, because your whole life is dependent on your ability to maintain it. On one hand, this approach to life is filled with wisdom, but on the other hand it's lacking faith.

If you are approaching life with wisdom without faith, you are missing out on the blessing, provision and guidance of God in your daily life. If you are able to get this much done by applying wisdom to your life, imagine what your life could be like if you lived with both faith and wisdom. And imagine how different your mind, body and spirit would feel knowing you are trusting the Lord rather than depending on yourself!

The Proverbs provide a healthy tension between human responsibility and God's Sovereignty. I believe our responsibility is to do our best with all that we've been given to live in a way that honors God and to trust Him with the outcome. Proverbs 16:9 says "We make our plans, but God determines our steps." When it

comes to creating vision for your life, I believe you should dream and make plans, and then trust God to either establish or change your plans.

The following process is designed to help you create and develop God-Inspired vision for your life. The first step is to dream about what you want to see happen in your life. There are a series of questions to help get you thinking about the most important areas of your life. There's no pressure to answer all of the questions, the goal is simply to help you get started thinking about your vision.

The second step is to test your dreams and ideas with the teachings of Scripture, the guidance of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. The way to do this is for every dream or idea that you write down, ask the questions: What does Scripture teach about my idea or this area of my life? Does my dream or idea align with what the Scripture says? Do I sense the Holy Spirit is leading me to pursue this dream or idea? Is this something that is wise for me to pursue right now?

If Scripture doesn't say anything about a particular idea or area of life related to your idea, you can assume it's safe to pursue as long as it doesn't go against any obvious teaching in Scripture, discernment of the Holy Spirit or the basic wisdom of life. Remember, overthinking can lead to the death of your dreams. If you feel stuck in this process, don't hesitate to reach out and ask for help from someone you trust!

The third step is to develop your vision by making goals and plans. This is a really important step if you want to see your dreams and ideas become reality. Once you test your dreams and ideas and feel confident about pursuing them, you need to make some measurable goals and solid plans. For each dream or idea, ask yourself the question: What do I need to do to for this idea to

happen? What steps do I need to take? What deadlines do I need to establish?

The fourth and final step is to pray Psalm 90:17, "May the favor of the Lord be upon us, and establish the work of our hands." Ask the Lord to either bless and establish your plans or to change them. Remember, The Lord is wiser than the wisest person to ever live, and He has a better plan for your life than you could ever create on your own. Don't miss out on inviting the Lord into your dreams and plans, and allowing Him to shape and "determine" what is best for your life!

Again, If you are feeling overwhelmed by this process, I want to encourage you to take a deep breath and relax. There's no pressure to get this right! The beauty of this process is that it gives you permission to dream and to imagine how your life could be better this year.

The good news about this process is if you only came up with one thing you wanted to see happen in each of the most important areas of your life this year, and then you surrendered and invited God into your plans, you would be much better off than if you just sat back and passively waited to see what happens to you!

Big Life Vision

What are some dreams you would like to see fulfilled in your life?

What is one big thing you want to see God do in your life?

What are some specific things you hope happen in your marriage?

What are some dreams for your family while your kids are at home?

What are some career goals you would like to achieve in your life?

What are some financial goals you want to achieve in your life?

What are some bucket-list places you want to travel to in your life?

Faith

What would you love to see God do in your life this year?

How do you want to become a little more like Jesus this year?

What is one area of your life that you need to invite Jesus into this year?

What do you need to do to establish a weekly Sabbath day of rest, worship and play this year?

What would motivate you to make Sunday worship a normal part of your weekly rhythm this year?

How could you use your time, talents and resources to strengthen your local church this year?

Who would you like to see become a Christian this year? What could you do to help?

Dating

What do you want to see happen in your relationship this year?

What are some fun things you could do together this year to become better friends?

Can you see yourself marrying the person you are dating? Why or why not?

Do you think Jesus is supportive of your relationship? Why or why not?

Are your friends supportive of your relationship? Why or why not?

What do you need to do - or stop doing - to help you stay pure this year?

How do you need to grow in order to be a good husband or wife one day?

Marriage

What do you want to see happen in your marriage this year?

What are some fun things you could do with your spouse this year?

What are some things you could do for date night that you both would enjoy?

What are some things you could do at the end of the day to reconnect emotionally and mentally?

How would you like to see your sexual intimacy with your spouse improve this year?

What is one way you could love your spouse better this year?

What is one way your spouse could love you better this year?

Are there any conflicts or areas of disunity that you need to resolve this year? If so, what do you need to do about it?

Specifically, how do you need God's help in your marriage this year?

Parenting

What are some things you want to see happen in your family this year?

What are some easy ways you could spend more quality time with your kids this year?

Are there any fun trips or experiences you want to have with your kids this year?

What are some simple ways you could help your kids grow in their discipleship to Jesus this year?

Specifically, how do you need God to move in your family this year?

Friends

What do you want to see happen in your friendships this year?

What friends do you want to spend more time with this year?

How could you use your home and table to bless others and build community this year?

Specifically, how do you need God to move in your friendships this year?

Work

What is something big you want to see happen at work this year?

How does your current job fit into your overall career path? Are there any changes you need to make to stay on vision?

Are there any new responsibilities, skills or opportunities you want to pursue at work this year?

What small changes could you make that would have a big impact on the quality of your work?

What could you do to improve your relationships at work this year?

Specifically, how do you need God to bless and establish the work of your hands this year?

Finances

What do you want to see happen in your finances this year?

What could you do this year to increase your income?

What could you do this year to reduce unnecessary spending?

If you have debt, what could you do this year to make progress on paying it off?

What would it look like for you to grow in generosity this year?

How do you need God to provide for you financially this year?

Time

What is small change you could make to help you make the most of your time this year?

How would you describe the pace of life you want this year? What small changes do you need to make to see that happen?

What do you want your rhythm of work, rest and play to be like this year? What do you need to do for this to happen?

What could you do in your free time that would refresh and energize you this year?

What new skills do you want to learn this year?

What hobbies do you want pursue this year?

What projects do you want to accomplish this year?