

TIPS FOR SETTING GOALS



Whether you are setting goals for yourself, for a small group, or for a larger ministry, keep in mind these simple principles for writing goals you can achieve.

1. Be specific about what you plan to do. Avoid being broad and vague. For instance, rather than saying, “Have a better prayer life,” say something like, “Take a ten-minute prayer walk each weekday morning.” If you word your goal with a specific action, you will know whether you did what you said you would.

2. Plan how to measure your progress. This usually involves numbers. How many minutes? How often? Suppose your small group decides to raise money to fight human trafficking. Your goal might be, “Hold one fund-raiser event every four months for the next year.” Then you can see your progress. If you want to read more of the Bible, one of the beauties of a one-year reading plan is that the progress checkups are built in every day.

3. Make sure you know what action to take, and in what period of time. Use verbs in your goal statements. “*Invite* three friends to attend the conference with me before the registration deadline.” “*Identify* four possible Bible study guides by our meeting time next month.” If you have an ambitious goal, break it down into specific action steps. When you accomplish each step, move on to the next one, and you’ll be that much closer to your goal.

4. Set goals you can actually do. In a burst of enthusiasm after a retreat you might decide you want to write in your journal for an hour every day. And then real life happens. The baby gets sick or your boss schedules you for extra hours or your mother falls and breaks her hip. Let’s face it, this kind of stuff happens to all of us, and things we truly intended to do simply are not possible. That leaves us feeling like failures. Set goals that challenge you but not goals that are so unrealistic that you are certain to fail. Find the balance between something that stretches you and helps you grow but at the same time is something realistic for your life.

5. Set time limits. Goals don't have to last until the second coming of Christ. If you want to start a new habit—healthy eating, exercise, Bible study, reading with your child, dinner with your husband, or whatever—set a goal for a few weeks, or even a few days. If you're successful, then set a goal for a longer period of time. But if you're not successful in the short term, you have an opportunity to make adjustments and start again without beating yourself up for failing. Habits don't change overnight. Give yourself the grace of second chances.

When you write a goal, make sure it is specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, and timely.