

## SMART GOALS QUICK GUIDE

**“If you do not have written goals and expectations for ministry that you and your pastor or other leaders have agreed upon through a process of consultation, you can’t complain about the results.”  
If it is an expectation or goal, put it in writing!**

**S - SPECIFIC** - The less specific and objective a goal is, the more difficult it is to measure any progress toward meeting that goal. “*We want to start a new Bible Study*” is a nice goal, but it is not specific enough, and it uses wishy-washy “want” language. It’s not about what you “want,” it’s about what you and the pastor, or other leader, have agreed to commit yourselves to doing. And it may be the pastor won’t actually “do it,” but is charged with making sure it gets done. So, a more appropriate wording might be: “*The Pastor will see that at least one new Bible study is started in the coming year.*”

**M - MEASURABLE** - Goals have to be measurable in some objective way, otherwise there is no way to determine if you have met or are making progress toward fulfilling the goal. The more specific you get, the better. So, “*The pastor will facilitate the start of a new Disciple 1 class by August 1<sup>st</sup>*” is a bit “smarter” than the example above. As noted in “Timely” below, you may also find it helpful to break some goals up into incremental steps. Using the above example, you may want to break the goal down into steps: “*Promoting of Disciple 1 will begin by May 1<sup>st</sup>.*” “*The Orientation meeting for Disciple 1 will be held by July 15<sup>th</sup>*” Larger goals feel far more attainable when broken down into measurable steps. It also facilitates the ability to measure progress along the way toward the ultimate goal.

**A - ACTIONABLE** - Some sources define the “A” as “*attainable*,” but that is very similar to “Realistic” which is the “R” below. Goals that don’t require some “action,” or something that must be “done,” to be considered complete, are not really goals. “*We will become a more welcoming church*” may imply some action, and is an admirable desire. But it is not clear goal directing what action is to be taken. How do you “act” that goal out in objective, measurable ways? Again, it is all about specifics that are measurable: “*In order to become a more welcoming church we will hold appropriate training for our greeters and ushers by March 1<sup>st</sup>.*” “*Within 30 days, the Pastor (or Lay Leader) will create a task force to explore and propose methods for following up with visitors that will be adopted by the Church Council no later than (date).*”

**R - REALISTIC** - While “*doubling church membership*” or “*professions of faith*” might be a worthy goal, it may or may not be realistic, depending on your setting. In a church of 20 members, that might be possible. In a 200 member church, you would very likely be setting yourself up for failure. A SMART goal is one that should stretch and challenge, but it should not set people up for failure. It has to be reasonable, and attainable. You may want to double membership and increase worship attendance by 50%, but experts say that incremental steps are more realistic, and therefore more successful. So be sure the goal is a realistic or “attainable” one in the time frame being set. Maybe those kinds of increases are reasonable long term goals, but break it up into smaller, shorter term goals that are more realistic, like 10% growth per year.

**T - TIMELY** - Timeliness can refer to the urgency of the need (now!), as well as the timeline for completing the goal. If there is no timeline, there really is no clear goal! Once you know the goal, determine the specific timelines for when you will initiate, evaluate progress, etc... “*We will bring six new members into the church by profession of faith before November 1, 2011*” is a SMART goal. But, as noted above, from a “Timely” perspective, a smarter approach might be to make the goal more incremental. For example: “*We will bring in one new member per month by profession of faith during 2011.*” Then, if you are at 0- in August, you will know you aren’t really making progress - unless or course you have a membership class of 12 that will end in September.

Above all, work together through love, prayer, and thoughtful conversation. Be reasonable! Keep “checking in” and offering support and encouragement. And when a goal is met, celebrate and affirm the pastor, or whomever helped to reach it! There is also absolutely nothing wrong with having some incentive/reward attached to the fulfillment of a goal. Quite frankly, “carrots” work far better than “sticks” at motivating leadership and change. And don’t ever forget, working “together,” rather than laying all the expectation on “one” is a more more successful, and excellent way.