

# Writing SMART Goals

Before you begin writing your own Covenant Plan, we need to look at how you will write your goals. The difference between motivation and frustration often lies in how SMART the goals are.

What do we mean by SMART goals? This is an acronym given to goals that are:

**S**pecific

**M**easurable

**A**ction-oriented

**R**ealistic

**T**ime-related

## **S**pecific

Be very clear and well-defined in what you seek. A goal that uses vague or fuzzy language is not helpful. Example: “I want to be a better person.” One that is specific would be: “I will read and then throw away the morning paper before I go to work.”

## **M**easurable

Some goals are difficult to obtain because there is no way to measure them. Again, a vague goal is difficult to measure. Example: “I will read my Bible more.” A measurable way of stating this would be: “I will read two chapters in my Bible each day.” Did you achieve this goal? “Yes. I followed a reading plan and checked off two chapters each day.”

Keep in mind that sometimes the measurement is simply a ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Example: “I will stop eating dessert.” Did you achieve this goal? “Yes. I stopped eating dessert.”

**Action-oriented** Our discipleship goals require action. It has been said: “If you no longer feel close to God, then guess who moved.” The path of discipleship requires us to *do* something, whether it is in the area of Prayer or in Justice Ministry. Returning to a previous example, we may say, “I want to be a better person.” This describes a condition of being but does not describe what we need to do in order to become that person. Action-oriented goals would state exactly what we choose to do to move toward our vision. Perhaps one of the goals would be, “I will stop gossiping about my church to friends in the community.” This is an action-oriented goal because it describes something we must *do*.

**Realistic** Our goals must be sensible and pragmatic in order to be achievable. Saying “I will read the entire Bible by tomorrow.” is not realistic. Unrealistic goals are pipe dreams. The goals we need to set in our Covenant Plan are the sensible things Jesus demonstrated to the disciples that could be achieved.

**Time-related** Again, vagueness will not get us motivated to do anything. It is very easy to put off a goal that has no deadline for either beginning or completion. Putting dates into our goals gives us a schedule that we can work toward. A goal that says, “Someday I want to take a vacation to Italy,” will not get us moving toward landing in Rome. However, we could re-write that goal to read: “By August 15, 2005, I will book a flight to Rome to begin a two-week vacation in Italy during October.” Now it is time-related and we are listening to tapes to learn a little bit of Italian!

As noted earlier, the difference between motivation and frustration often lies in how SMART the goals are. It also makes a difference in whether or not you actually achieve the goals you desire.