

USG SGM ~ September 2018
drawn from Soul Matters materials

Intro: What Does It Mean To Be A People of Vision?

There's one quote we all need to remember this month. The author is unknown, but they've given us a great gift. Here it is: "What will mess you up most in life is the picture in your head of how it is supposed to be."

It's not the place one usually starts when it comes to the topic of vision. Most often, conversations about vision tell us to hold on tightly to our pictures of how it is supposed to be, not be suspicious of them. We're encouraged to "stay true to your vision." We're told, "Without vision, the people perish." We're warned that without a clear vision, we're vulnerable to whatever winds blow. And let's be clear: all of that is true. A clear vision anchors us. It gives us direction and hope. It is, indeed, a precious thing to which we should hold fast.

But as our quote of the month makes clear, all that holding fast is also dangerous. In short, no vision is perfect. They are all flawed and limited. Every vision distorts even as it clarifies. On top of that, life changes. Some doors close, new ones open. If you stay true to the vision of what's behind that closed door, you'll just end up spending your life banging your head against the wall. And as Unitarian Universalists, we also know that one vision isn't enough. As clear as our perspectives may be, we all know by now that none is complete. To see the entire view, we need everyone's vantage point.

So clearly being a people of vision is hard work. Knowing when to stay true to your vision and when to let go is a very tricky task. Figuring out when to keep your vision front and center and when to de-center it and make room for others intimidates the best of us.

Yet, here's the thing. If danger and hard work dominate the tone of this month, we will have done ourselves a disservice. Besides being dangerous, holding tightly to one single vision is also just no fun! We don't just *have to* see things from others' points of view; we *get to* see things from others' points of view! Learning about the visions of others isn't just a way of making up for your flawed perspective. It's also an invitation to see the world anew! And while having to let go of precious visions and dreams is painful, it's also exhilarating to evolve and grow.

And maybe that's the most important vision of all this month. Not that of a stern-faced people sticking to their single vision through thick and thin. But that of a playful people exchanging visions and helping each other encounter new and larger worlds. A people who don't just ask each other "Are you staying true to your vision?" but who also say with a smile, "What *new* vision is calling to you?" Engage one of the **Spiritual Exercises** to find out.

Spiritual Exercises

1. Your Personal Vision Statement: Write It!

We've all heard of companies writing vision statements, but we rarely write one for ourselves. Use this month to fix that. Simple, clear and memorable statements of vision inspire us, help clarify our choices and motivate us to get out of bed each morning. Without them, we wander. With them, we choose and shape our own path. It's one of the best gifts we can give to ourselves.

And here's the great thing: it's not really that hard to give ourselves this gift. You don't have to make it complicated. In fact, the best personal vision statements are short and simple, even one-sentence. You can also make it less intimidating by narrowing the timeline. For instance, instead of trying to write a vision of what you will make of your entire life, just focus in on what you want to accomplish this year. For instance, you could just make the exercise a matter of answering one or both of the following questions: "How do I want to be different when this church year comes to an end?" and/or "What do I want to have done when this church year ends?"

Here's some more support. If you want to take the single sentence approach, check out these videos:

- <https://vimeo.com/8480171>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gw2xSdp4bOc&feature=youtu.be>

If you want to dive in more deeply, here's a great road map:

<http://static1.squarespace.com/static/5765deb1be659449f97fcbf5/t/5770b309579fb313164a7a37/1467003657818/LINDYNORRIS.COM+-+How+to+Develop+a+Personal+Vision+Statement.pdf>

As you are writing your statement, run it by those close to you. Ask for their reactions. Something insightful will surely arise from those conversations.

Come to your group ready to share your one, two or twenty sentence vision statement, and what you learned from the journey of writing it.

2. Your Personal Vision Statement: Visualize It!

Instead of writing your personal vision statement, create a visual representation of it. This popular technique is called vision-boarding. Here are three great sites that explain how to go about creating one:

- https://www.huffingtonpost.com/elizabeth-rider/the-scientific-reason-why_b_6392274.html
- <https://artfulparent.com/make-vision-board-works-10-steps/>
- <http://marthabeck.com/2010/06/how-to-make-a-vision-board/>

Consider focusing your vision board on your vision for this year. Another idea is to include your relationship partner or the entire family. How cool it would be if all of our families took the time to create a "family vision"?!

Just like we suggest in exercise A, consider focusing your vision board on your vision for this year. Maybe even consider updating your group about your journey with it as the year progresses! Another idea is to include your relationship partner or the entire family. How cool it would be if all of our families took the time to create a "family vision"?!

You know your small group will want to see what you created, so be sure to bring your Vision Board to your group to accompany your story about what you learned while creating it.

Vision Session Plan

Chalice Lighting

We are here to abet creation and to witness it, to notice each thing so each thing gets noticed. Together we notice not only each mountain shadow and each stone on the beach, but we notice each other's beautiful face and complex nature so that creation need not play to an empty house. Annie Dillard

Check-in

Share briefly what's been on your mind lately or your highs and lows since we last met. We give each other the gift of listening without asking questions or offering advice to allow people the safety to share what's in their hearts.

Wise Words

We are limited, not by our abilities, but by our vision. Unknown

If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change. *Wayne Dyer*

If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.
Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Failed plans should not be interpreted as a failed vision. Visions don't change, they are only refined. Plans rarely stay the same and are scrapped or adjusted as needed. Be stubborn about the vision, but flexible with your plan. John C. Maxwell

The Opening of Eyes

That day I saw beneath dark clouds
the passing light over the water
and I heard the voice of the world speak out,
I knew then, as I had before
life is no passing memory of what has been
nor the remaining pages in a great book
waiting to be read.
It is the opening of eyes long closed.
seen for the silence they hold.
It is the heart after years

of secret conversing
speaking out loud in the clear air.
It is the vision of far off things
It is Moses in the desert
fallen to his knees before the lit bush.
It is the man throwing away his shoes
as if to enter heaven
and finding himself astonished,
opened at last,
fallen in love with solid ground.
-- David Whyte

Questions

Pick the one question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of vision means for you and your daily living.

1. What vision has been with you since you were a child? How has it both changed and remained the same?
2. Who are your vision mentors? What poet, preacher, spiritual teacher, artist, activist or musician helps you hold on to your vision of the possible and the good? What practice do you use to keep their guidance and inspiration in front of you?
3. Is your vision of how your life is "supposed to be" in your way? Could clear vision require letting go of the visions to which you currently cling?

4. Rose Nguyen writes, "I sometimes get so caught up with my big dreams... that I forget to recognize all the little dreams I've made come true!... We can get so caught up looking at where we should be, where we aren't, and where others are in comparison that we forget to appreciate where we've been and where we've come from." *How might looking back on how far you've come be a blessing to you this month?*
5. Share your vision statement or vision board, and what you learned from the journey of writing or making it.

Sitting in Silence

Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon your thoughts.

Sharing/Deep Listening

Respond with your thoughts and experiences with the topic. We create a safe space by listening deeply and not responding. When sharing, connect with what is true for you. When listening, give the speaker your full attention rather than thinking about what you will share.

Reflection

This is a time to respond briefly to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared.

Songs and Music

I Can See Clearly Now (Johnny Nash) ~ to sing or sing along

I can see clearly now, the rain is gone,
I can see all obstacles in my way
Gone are the dark clouds that had me blind
It's gonna be a bright (bright), bright (bright)
Sun-Shiny day.

I think I can make it now, the pain is gone
All of the bad feelings have disappeared
Here is the rainbow I've been prayin' for
It's gonna be a bright (bright), bright (bright)
Sun-Shiny day.

Look all around, there's nothin' but blue skies
Look straight ahead, nothin' but blue skies
(Repeat verse 1)

Cover by Haeda: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUUcQ3CdGi8>

The World Is Ours, World Cup 2014 Anthem ~ to watch

Aloe Blacc X David Correy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=240THRFkCd4>

Closing Words

Your vision will become clear only when you look into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens. *Carl Jung*



Packets are for use only by member congregations of the Soul Matters Sharing Circle.
Learn how to join at <http://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com>