

The Path to Self Improvement

Is there something you really want to accomplish in life or something about yourself you would sincerely like to change? Any change requires commitment. Commitment involves a vision of what you want to accomplish, whether in your work, your family or your faith. A successful endeavor needs a vision, broken down into goals and the steps to reach them.

Anything worthwhile will have its difficulties in achieving or maintaining it over time. This is clearly demonstrated in marriage. Without a vision of the marriage relationship desired, a goal of it lasting a lifetime, day-to-day actions toward that goal, and a sincere evaluation of the costs to make it successful, the risks of failure are high.

If you desire for your children to grow up to be respectful adults, faithful to God and their family and successful in their career, it is not enough simply to hope this will happen. Commitment to this vision means having a plan of how it will be accomplished. It requires consistency in mentoring your children, living out the values you want them to emulate, teaching them how God's Word defines a man or woman of character, etc. Commitment to such a vision entails continual focus on how your behavior today is shaping the adults your children will become.

Whatever you want to accomplish, once you have defined your vision and goals, some keys to maintaining commitment might include:

- Breaking your goals into smaller steps - making your steps ones that will challenge you, but not be unreasonable;
- Assigning timelines to steps toward your goal – this will help minimize procrastination;
- Making yourself accountable to a mentor, your spouse, or a group of people with the same goal – encourage them to ask you about your progress;
- Telling others about your vision – this will solidify the vision in your own mind and feed your enthusiasm;
- Writing out a personal pledge and signing it – share it with someone to whom you will be accountable;

For example, if you are not having any kind of daily devotional, but want to develop a stronger faith, don't set your initial goal as spending an hour each day in Bible study. Start with 5 minutes each day, or 20 minutes twice each week. Once you achieve consistency there, increase the time you devote to it. In our rush to achieve a vision quickly, we set ourselves up to fail; we are more vulnerable to old habits and old ways of thinking. Those old thoughts are always there to talk us into giving up when we are at our weakest point.

The most successful people don't necessarily have better plans than other people, they just have a better day-to-day execution of their plans. That sort of commitment will help you achieve success too.

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