

**The following is an excerpt from the book
Life is a Gold Mine: Can You Dig It?
You can order a copy from the Store section.**

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Let's Set Some Goals!

As we begin this chapter, let's look at Habakkuk 2:1-5:

I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint. Then the Lord replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay."

From this passage, you have the basic steps of how to set your own goals. Let's look at it phrase by phrase.

1. **"I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts."** First of all, get away from the phone and all other distractions. Go to the library, a public park, your church sanctuary, or your favorite place of meditation. If you're really serious, you may want to fast and pray before you begin or during the process.

Then "station yourself on the ramparts." Get above the situation in which you're now living. Forget about money (or the lack of it), education, your current job, or the lack of ministry opportunities or career advancements. Remember that "God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6). Take your place with Christ and look down on your life.

Exercising faith that "in his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps" (Proverbs 16:9), begin to examine every area of your life. Ask yourself where you want to be and what you would like to accomplish in the next two years in your job, ministry, family, finances, health and spiritual life. As you formulate goals, ask yourself what you must do to make those goals a reality.

For instance, if you are a pastor and desire to see your church double in size within two years, what is your plan to see that happen? How often will you pray, what

will you preach, and who will you enlist to help you reach your goal? If you want to write a book, how many pages per day or week must you write to be done in two years? If you want or need to do more reading, how many books will you read each month and what kind of books will they be?

2. **“I will look to see what he will say to me.”** Add to your goals those that may be unexpected or seem out of character for you because they may be from the Lord. You may never have thought of furthering your education, but sense that may be an issue about which the Lord is leading. If it is, make it a goal. Remember not to dismiss something right away as being ridiculous or far-fetched. Exercise some faith and do something to see if the Lord won’t confirm your unexpected thoughts and desires.

Take time also to renew those past dreams that you’ve abandoned due to family responsibilities, lack of time or money, or discouragement. Let the Lord energize those old “castaways” into active goals once again.

I can’t emphasize enough the need for you to take your impressions and thoughts seriously during this process. Don’t be so ready to dismiss them as too wild or impossible. See what God will say to you and find a way to do it instead of finding excuses not to.

3. **“Write down the revelation.”** Don’t just think about your goals; write them down! And don’t just write them down on a scrap of paper or a legal pad that can be easily misplaced. Record your goals in something you carry with you everywhere. If you don’t use anything like that now, invest in a pocket calendar or notebook to which you can add sheets of paper. The whole idea behind writing down a goal is to keep it visible before you.

In Psalm 50:17, the Lord rebuked His people, “You hate my instruction and cast my words behind you.” When you have a goal and you believe it’s something that the Lord has put in you to do, don’t cast those words behind you. Keep them in front of you. Writing them down helps you do just that. Writing down a goal also helps insure that you take it seriously. Furthermore, it prevents you from abandoning the goal during tough times.

4. **“For the revelation awaits an appointed time.”** A goal isn’t truly a goal until a time schedule has been worked out for its fulfillment. Once you have answered what you will do, you must then decide when you expect to complete it. Until that happens, a goal still lives in the land of dreams.

As mentioned previously, Nehemiah was asked by his boss, the king, “How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?” Nehemiah responded, “It pleased the king to send me, so I set a time.” (Nehemiah 2:6). Nehemiah had not even seen Jerusalem or the scope of the task, but he set a timetable as best he could.

Robert Schuller wrote,

When you set goals, put a time limit on them. Without it you are normally and naturally lazy and lethargic more than you want to admit. It’s amazing how much you can accomplish in a short period of time if the pressure is on. What do you do when you have not succeeded in meeting your time limit, and it becomes apparent that the project will take longer than you expected? You keep walking in faith. You review your timetable: “It’s not impossible, it just takes a little longer.” Suddenly seemingly unachievable projects become very realistic! What can you accomplish if you take ten years? You might be able to get a new degree. Perhaps you can acquire a much larger financial base. You might even be able to overcome that handicap. Keep walking the walk of faith. Don’t give up believing; just revise the timetable! God never promised to deliver an answer to prayer according to our timetables.

Once you have set a time limit, you are ready for the next step.

5. **“Though it lingers, wait for it.”** Schuller spoke of the need for flexibility in the above quote, and he’s right. Goal setting is not a science but an art. You don’t have perfect knowledge, and you can’t foresee the unexpected. If you could, you may not set out on your goal’s journey at all! You make your best estimates, realizing that you may need more time.

Schuller again writes,

Give God time, and He will perform the miracle. When a human condition appears to be totally impossible, don’t check out; ask for an extension of time. The hotel sign reads, “Check-out time is 12:00 noon.” Don’t believe it if you run into a predicament! Ask and believe. They will extend the check-out time. Just don’t get locked into an ironclad schedule. Don’t surrender leadership to a clock or a calendar. Of course you set time-dated goals. Of course you generate energy by creating urgency. But be prepared to revise your timetable before you bury

your dream! Every passing hour of every passing day and every new month increase the possibility that things will turn around. What you may need is not more faith, but more patience. The impossible may become possible when you take the long look. As we walk the walk of faith, we must become more God-like. And one quality about God is his immeasurable long-suffering and patient attitude. What great impossible deeds could you accomplish if you had a forty-year goal? If you are tempted to abandon your dream—don't.

I've found that typically I'll reach about one-third of my goals annually, another third will see some progress, while the final third seem to die shortly after they are set. I try never to discard the latter but to re-evaluate them annually and carry some over to the next year.

This book took longer to write and publish than I anticipated. My doctoral studies took a year or two longer than I expected. But I was further along even with the delays than if I had waited for everything to be perfect before I got started.

Before closing this section, there are two other important aspects of goal setting that you need to remember. The first is to share your goals with someone you trust. Job 22:28 (NAS) says, "You will also decree a thing and it will be established for you; and light will shine on your ways." Then Malachi 3:16 (NAS) states, "Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name."

Those two passages attest to the fact that, when you declare your goals, an unseen spiritual dynamic and energy described earlier in this chapter are released. Your commitment to a course of action is sealed when you tell someone, because now they will be free to ask you, "How are you doing with that goal?"

The second and last aspect is to have courage and act! Courage is not the absence of fear, but acting in the midst of it. David said to his son, Solomon,

Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the Lord is finished (1 Chronicles 28:20).

Let's close by looking at one last verse from the book of Nehemiah, the story of a man who marshaled the people toward a common goal. Nehemiah 6:15 states,

So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days. When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.

Commit to do something great for the Lord, see it through to the end, do it with excellence, and then watch God's enemies disheartened.

In conclusion, let's review the steps necessary to set and accomplish goals:

1. Ask yourself where you would like to be in two years. Remember that the Lord is guiding your steps and heart, so don't be concerned at this point whether what you are sensing is in the will of God. Assume that it is for right now. Remember "Roll your works upon the Lord—commit and trust them wholly to Him. And he will cause your thoughts to be agreeable to His will, and so shall your plans be established and succeed" (Proverbs 16:3, Amplified Bible).
2. Seek the Lord for specific, measurable goals in each area of your life – personal, family, ministry, job, etc.
3. Write down each goal in your calendar, planner, notebook, or handheld organizer.
4. Set a date to accomplish each goal. Be flexible but don't be afraid to make your best guess of when you can be finished. "A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps" (Proverbs 16:9).
5. Develop a dated action plan for each goal (see Nehemiah 2:6). I want to have my next book published by 12/31. So I have a dated plan for when I will have completed each chapter, when it will go the editor, publisher and printer.
6. Share your goals with someone you trust.

“You will also declare a thing, and it will be established for you; so light will shine on your ways” (Job 22:28).

“Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name” (Malachi 3:16).

7. Exercise faith and courage to move out! What can you do today to take a step closer to achieving your goal?