

Sermon Mark S. Aites
SETTING GOALS FOR THE NEW YEAR
(Special thanks to Willard Tate for portions on "Setting Goals")

PHIL. 3:14-15 *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*
3:15 *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded...*

INTRODUCTION:

1. The coming of each new year seems to set out for many a series of resolutions.
2. Granted there are a number of physical ones, such as losing weight, or working on a particular project.
3. But what about spiritual matters?
4. Many people have a vague idea in mind as to where they want to go in life, and what they want to accomplish, but they lack the specifics on how they intend to achieve it.
5. Actually, it is very wise to set specific goals:
Prov. 3:13-14 *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.*
3:14 *For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.*
6. When it comes to discussing goals with Christians, it is so often in such a general scope.
 - 1) For example: wanting to be more spiritual, or wanting to know the Bible better.
 - 2) My question and challenge to you is, just how do you propose to achieve this?
7. Bro. Willard Tate, in speaking of the subject of setting goals, gives some reasons for their importance:
 - 1) It is impossible not to have goals of some kind.
 - 2) They are important because of what they make of us in pursuit of them.
 - 3) They reveal a lot about us.
 - 4) They provide motivation.
8. Goals help to give us an aim, a direction, or purpose in our daily walk in life.
 - 1) Paul admonishes us to make the best use of our time that we have upon this earth (**Eph. 5:15-16**).
 - 2) It is hard to answer that challenge if we don't have some specific goals in place.
9. Just what kind of goals might a child of God consider for the coming new year? Perhaps in the area of biblical knowledge, one might...
 - 1) Have the goal of memorizing the books of the Bible in January, memorizing the plan of salvation in February; and perhaps setting forth with the goal of memorizing where the conversions in the book of Acts can be found.
 - 2) It is not that we cannot set forth with such goals in mind.
 - 3) Looking back in the days of the Restoration Movement, students of God's word memorized entire books of the Bible; not just in English, but some did in the Greek and even in Latin.
 - 4) No, I am not suggesting that you need to memorize all of the verses in a particular book, although it would be nice -- but simply to convey to you that setting a goal and striving to achieve it is a very real possibility.
10. In this lesson I want to make some suggestions to you about setting goals based upon Scripture.

DISCUSSION:

I. THE EXAMPLE - JESUS.

- A. Peter challenges us to follow in the Lord's steps (**1 Pet. 2:21**).
- B. In following the Lord's steps, we find that our Lord had goals.
 - 1. Certainly this was evident even in His childhood (*Know ye not that I must be about my Father's business, Luke 1:49*).
 - 2. The Lord made His goal and objective known to the house of Zaccheaus (*seek and save the lost, Luke 19:10*).
 - 3. He also had the goal of destroying him that had the power of death, that is the devil (**Heb. 2:14-15**).
 - 4. He expressed His goal to provide us with the abundant life (**John 10:10**).
 - 5. He had a goal of fulfilling the law (**Matt. 5:17**).
 - 6. He had the goal of tasting death for every man (**Heb. 2:9-10**).
 - 7. He sought to give His life a ransom for many (**Mark 10:45**).
 - 8. He had the goal of calling sinners to repentance (**Matt. 9:13**).
 - 9. And He had the goal of preaching the gospel (**Mark 1:38**).
- C. His goals were from on high:
Luke 4:18-19 *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,*
4:19 *To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*
- D. And even though His goals were somewhat general, He did have specific ones in mind, even encouraging His disciples to go with Him from town to town (**Mark 1:38**).
- E. And one of the most admired goals of all, was that Scripture indicates that He set His face or mind to go to Jerusalem and face the cross (**Luke 9:53**).
- F. Our Lord also expressed gratification that He had accomplished the goals He had set forth to do.
John 17:4 *I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*
John 19:30 *It is finished.*
- G. Our Lord provides us with the example that goals indeed are biblical.

II. THE EXPLANATION - PAUL.

- A. Note text.
- B. Let's consider the explanation of the goal setting process.
 - 1. Having a set goal requires work and patience *I count not myself to have apprehended.*
 - 1) In other words, Paul had not yet obtained the goal.
 - 2) He recognized that it would take time; that it was a continuing process.
 - 2. The goal setting process requires dedication. *But this one thing I do.*
 - 1) His goal was not questionable, but actually it was clear and precise.
 - 2) He is simply conveying to us that he was dedicated to reaching it.
 - 3. Goal setting requires that one not dwell upon the past: *Forgetting those things*

which are behind.

- 1) We must not dwell on past failures, which we seem to be prone to do.
- 2) Now it is true that we can learn from past failures and successes, but we must keep in perspective that those things are in the past.
4. Goal setting requires enthusiasm: *reaching forth unto those things which are before.*
 - 1) It is absolutely essential that we be excited and have enthusiasm about the future.
 - 2) If we don't have it, then it is going to be virtually impossible to attain our goals.
5. Goal setting also requires determination: *I press toward the mark.*
 - 1) It takes discipline to work toward the goals we have set before us.
 - 2) Consider the athlete who trains for the Olympics, and the hours and hours of hard work and training for a short time before judges.
6. Setting goals also requires confidence: as Paul speaks of pressing onward to the prize.
 - 1) Paul had been through a lot, but still managed to have a confident and optimistic spirit.
 - 2) He believed in the reward that he would receive for all of his hard work and effort.
7. Goal setting requires setting our priorities.
 - 1) Paul was fixated on *the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*
 2. He admonished the church at Colossae:
Col. 3:1-2 *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*
3:2 *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*

III. ESTABLISHED GOALS.

- A. It is worthy for us to note that God has already given us some general goals.
- B. For example, We must bring glory to God (**Eph. 3:21**).
- C. God has given us the goal of seeking the kingdom of God first, that is, as the most important thing in our lives (**Matt. 6:33**).
- D. We are given the goal of striving to live holy lives.
1 Pet. 1:15-16 *But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;*
1:16 *Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*
- E. We have the goal by application in **Rev. 2:10** to live faithful unto death.
- F. We are given the goal by the apostle Peter to grow in grace and knowledge (**2 Pet. 3:18**). Or as Paul states is, we must grow into Christ in all things (**Eph. 4:15**).
- G. Jesus gives us the goal of preaching the gospel to every creature, and to make disciples (**Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16**).
- H. Each of these goals should be goals of every Christian in this assembly; but again, they are general in nature and require more specific goals to meet the challenge.
 1. For example: With the general goal of seeking God's kingdom first, I must ask myself how I plan to attain that goal?
 2. I might first contemplate the idea of setting aside 30 minutes of my day for Bible

- study and prayer.
3. I might resolve in my heart to attend every service of the church; and to avail myself to every class or opportunity to learn about God and His church.
 4. If my goal is seeking God's kingdom first, then I must adjust my priorities accordingly, making all my worldly activities secondary in importance.
- I. In the matter of evangelism, in drawing from the application of the great commission, I again must ask myself how I propose to carry out the Lord's will?
1. Certainly, living the Christian life and being a good example is advantageous with this goal, but we must understand that much more is required.
 2. To accomplish that task, I need to develop a good report with some non-Christians.
 - 1) Notice I didn't suggest developing that report with just one person.
 - 2) You remember the old saying, "Don't put all your eggs in one basket."
 3. In the school of preaching, we were taught to target five people.
 - 1) Now that is not to say that we can't go beyond that, or that to do so is to deem other unworthy to hear the truth.
 - 2) The reason for the specific number, is to help achieve a specific goal, and to keep yourself from getting discouraged.
 4. To attain the goal of carrying out the great commission, I would have to set a specific amount of time to educate myself with the various religious beliefs of those whom I have targeted.
 5. To help me with my goal, I would seek to develop a relationship where my prospects would be comfortable discussing religious matters with me.
- J. Brethren, the church, in many areas, does not grow because brethren tend to think in generalities instead of specifics.
1. We talk about saving souls, and rightly so as Scripture bears out that this is wise (**Prov. 11:30**).
 2. But stop and think for a moment, what are you actually doing to attain that goal?
 3. Now don't sit there and contemplate what bro or sis so and so should be doing. I am asking you to do some soul searching and honestly and truthfully admit what you are actually doing to attain that goal.
 4. **Luke 6:46** *And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*
 5. **James 1:22** *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

IV. THE EXECUTION OF YOUR GOALS. (In other words, putting them into action)

- A. To achieve our goals and to move forward, it would help immensely to write them down.
1. Keep them handy to reflect upon them and see what progress you are making.
 2. If need be, set a deadline.
- B. One of the areas to guard against, is that many have stopped pursuit of their goals because they became discouraged.
1. Do you suppose Paul got discouraged when he was stoned, ship wrecked, beaten, and even left for dead?
 2. Thankfully, he did not allow his discouragement to keep him from pressing

forward for the Lord.

- C. Sometimes in an effort to achieve our goals, it may require that we make changes. That is the implication in what James said about those who made plans without God (**James 4:14-18**).
- D. And here is must if you are serious about meeting your goals, and that is that you must continue to work on it daily.
- E. But let's not leave one very crucial element in this process out; and that is we need to pray to God for help in attaining our goals.

CONCLUSION:

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: "The world makes way for the man who knows where he is going."
2. And another unknown author wrote: "There is nothing to do but bury a man when the last of his dreams has died."
3. Are you productive in the Lord's service? If not, I implore you to set specific goals and take steps to achieve them.
4. It may be that steps need to be taken first and foremost to get your life right with God.