

Setting Goals for Growth

Proverbs 16:25

Introduction:

Do you know where you are going in life?

Whether we do or do not, we will arrive!

Some choose a destination, plot out a course, and arrive where they intended.

Others, choose a path, follow the course, and arrive wherever the path has led.

_____ read with us, Proverbs 16:25, “There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”

The metaphor of this standalone proverb, is more vivid in the Hebrew text, “There is a way that seems right before a man, but at its end are ways of death.”

Picture this, “A man stands at the beginning of a road and it looks fine to him; but when he comes to the end, he discovers death lies before him no matter which way he turns.”¹

Coming to such a dreadful end in life, as to discover that the life which has been lived did not lead to the good destination is irreversible.

If heaven is our desired destination, then we can plot out a course that will assure we arrive where we intend to live eternally.

Just before Jesus announced that He “came that [we] may have life, and have it abundantly,” He said, “I am the door of the sheep...I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture” (John 10:7 and 9).

Immediately after saying He “came that we may have life, and have it abundantly,” Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

Jesus says, down in verse 14 and following, “I am the good shepherd; and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.”

Jesus is gathering all His sheep together, bringing them to Himself, the one entrance through which they will be saved.

Are we headed toward the good shepherd? Are we headed toward the door? Are we headed toward Christ?

If we are deeply committed to Christ, we ought to take our interests and skills and begin drawing up a few specific measurable steps to grow in Christ so we can better fulfill God’s mission.

Through mission planning, vision shaping, and goal setting we can be the hands of Jesus, bear fruit, and “grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:15).

I. Define the Mission.

Setting goals for growth requires us to define the mission.

A mission is a definite compass point in our lives.

The successful completion of our life’s mission will guarantee our arrival at the door that enters into the destination we intend to reach.

¹ Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, vol. 14, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 157.

A mission is a permanent central fixture in our lives that helps us focus, helps us see, and helps us make decisions.

A mission statement defines what we will do with our lives.

Take Jesus, our greatest example in all things, for consideration in determining our mission.

His mission was simple...please God.

In John 6:38, Jesus said, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

We are encouraged by Jesus to join Him in His mission, "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

The mission of Jesus helped Him focus on the result, helped Him see the task at hand, and helped Him make obedient decisions.

He stated in John 8:29, "...for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him," speaking of His Father.

According to Colossians 1:10, we are to "walk (live life) in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

We ought to adopt the mission of Jesus in life, please God.

II. Determine A Vision

A mission of life should never change. A vision for life should change.

A Vision is the optimum implementation of a mission at any point in time.

If our mission is to please God, then a vision will determine how we can best do this over the coming years.

How can we best accomplish pleasing God in the next three to five years, ten years, twenty years, or longer?

A vision for life will change from person to person; it will vary based upon each person's interest, abilities, spiritual gifts, experiences, and opportunities.

Our own vision will change from time to time as we mature or age.

Four areas of life should be considered in drawing up a vision.

Consider passion.

What do we love to do? How has God formed us?

Our personality, interests, abilities, spiritual gifts, and experiences point to what we will be passionate about.

Consider purpose.

What do we want to accomplish in life? What impact do we plan to make with our lives? How do we want to be remembered?

God designed the Christian life to be purpose-driven (Matthew 6:33).

One of the purposes God has for every human being is to do good things (Ephesians 2:10).

Consider people.

Who do we love?

How do we plan to love them? How are we going to nurture them?

Who do we not love?

“If we only love certain kinds of people, what credit is that to us?” asked Jesus in Luke 6:32.

The kind of people we love will determine the scope of our influence.

Consider praise.

How will we worship God? What spiritual sacrifice of worship, Romans 12:1, will we offer to God?

How will we show our love to God, day in and day out, day after day?

Jesus had a clear vision of what He wanted to do while on the earth.

He knew exactly what His mission was, as we spoke earlier, and He knew how He wanted to fulfill that mission.

We find Jesus saying things like, “My hour has not yet come” (John 2:4), “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also” (Luke 4:43), “I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next day” (Luke 13:33), and “I must bring them also” (John 10:16).

His mission even fueled Him, for in John 4:34 He told His disciples, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.”

Nearing the end of His life, Jesus said, “I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do” (John 17:4).

Two chapters later, as Jesus hung on the cross, He said, “It is finished” (John 19:30)!

Determine a vision for the coming years that complements the mission.

III. Draw up Goals.

From a vision statement for life, goals can be drawn up.

Goals are simple, precise statements and strategies to achieve our vision.

Goals provide feedback about our plan.

By way of Matthew 6:34, we learn not to worry, not to fret or be overly concerned with what is going to happen in life.

James 4:15 instructs us to wrap every plan for our lives in prayer.

The more mission planning, vision shaping, and goal setting we do the less there will be to worry about.

Jesus commended proper planning as He encouraged would-be disciples to count the cost of discipleship like a man counting his resources to see if he has enough to build a tower (Luke 14:28), or a king has enough men of war to meet another king in battle (Luke 14:31).

Goals are a part of the overall planning; they provide steps that lead us toward our vision and mission.

A good goal is relevant.

If a step or method does not propel us toward our vision, it is irrelevant to our mission.

Relevant goals get us going and keep us going forward.

A good goal is specific.

Think of them as targets.

The ones we hit have been accomplished, while the ones we miss show adjustments that need to be made.

A good goal is measurable.

Progress is quantifiable.

Either we are or are not doing things that show improvement, make us better, and propel us to grow.

A good goal is stretchable.

The challenge is to do more than we thought we could.

A goal that stretches us to our limits then stretches us, again and again, gets us to see just how far we can reach.

A good goal is flexible.

If a goal is reached, it is time to set a new goal.

Failure to reach a flexible goal does not destroy the goal, the vision, or the mission, rather a flexible goal allows for adjustments so progress can continue.

Draw up goals that will propel progress toward the vision and mission.

IV. Follow a Biblical Model

The Bible reveals self-development principles and often provides goals to make the most of this life.

Genesis chapter 24 just might include all these areas emphasized today, and even more.

While turning there, think back to Genesis 12, God came to Abram and said, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

Then the Bible says, “So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him...”

Abram’s MISSION was to please God; thus, he obeyed the commission of God.

Since his mission never changed, when we come to Genesis 24, we discover Abraham’s VISION complementing his mission.

“Now Abraham (his had name changed) was old, advanced in age (his age had changed, but his mission remained the same); and the Lord had blessed Abraham in every way. Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he owned, ‘Please place your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live, but you will go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac’” (Genesis 24:1-4).

Abraham had one son, Isaac.

Isaac needed a woman to marry, have children with, and eventually receive that great nation God had promised.

Abraham knows his mission and vision, so he develops a plan to get Isaac a wife that will go along with God’s plan.

Abraham drafted good goals.

The woman must be from his country and his people (v. 4).

She must be willing to follow Abraham’s servant back to Abraham (v. 5).

But as quickly as he set the goals, his servant jumped to the potential problems (v. 5). “Suppose the woman is not willing to follow me to this land”?

The time for setting goals is not the time for problem-solving.

If the woman was not willing to follow Abraham’s servant, then she must not be the one, is the indication (v. 8).

Abraham quickly dealt with the irrelevant matter and continued with his vision and mission.

The girl was to be “very beautiful” and “a virgin” (v. 16).

Abraham’s plan was wrapped in prayer.

When the servant was in position at the city of Nahor, he watched women come out to a well to draw water (vv. 10 and 11).

It was then that he prayed, “O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham” (v. 12).

The pray continues through verse 14, but “before he had finished speaking/praying” (v. 15) Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder.

After Laban and Bethuel gave Rebekah to Abraham’s servant (v. 51), the servant “bowed himself to the ground before the LORD;” He prayed before the family (v. 52).

A step-by-step plan was followed in verses 10-14 to carry out Abraham’s goals and vision.

Self-discipline, which is delayed gratification based on commitment, led to success.

Notice four areas of self-discipline Abraham’s servant had.

He was extremely cautious and focused on his decision (v. 21) “to know whether the LORD had made his journey successful or not,” so he was disciplined in his decision.

The servant did not allow food to distract him; he said, “I will not eat until I have told my business” (v. 33), so he was disciplined in his appetite.

Abraham’s servant was careful in his speech to persuade her father Bethuel and Laban her brother to agree (v. 49), so he was disciplined in his words.

He requested of Rebekah’s family, “Do not delay me, since the LORD has prospered my way” (v. 56), so he was disciplined with his time.

Application:

We can choose a definite destination, then define the mission, determine a vision, and draw up goals following a biblical model for life, or we can choose a path that seems right, follow it to the end, and there discover eternal death lies before us no matter which way we turn.

Conclusion:

Where is your life going to end up, in one of many ways of death or the only way of life?

Setting goals for growth will help us become the hands of Jesus, bear fruit, and “grow in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ.”

Jesus said He is the way, the truth, and the life that leads to the Father (John 14:6).

Jesus is the door, John 10:9, “if anyone enters through [Him], he will be saved.”

How can we enter through Jesus?

Hear His voice, John 10:16, now His teachings made know by the New Testament.

Believe His teachings, else we “are not of [His] sheep (John 10:26).

Confess belief in Jesus (Luke 12:8).

Repent of sins and “be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins” (Acts 2:38).

Then, Jesus will lead us as His sheep (John 10:2-4) to enter through Him (v. 9) where we will be saved.

Following a biblical model for life will provide the mission, the vision, and the goals that lead to salvation and eternal life.

The way, the truth, and the life is ready to lead anyone who will enter life through Him!