

How to Set Meaningful Goals

Lesson 03 in the series: "Changing for Good"

A. God has important things for us to accomplish in this world.

"God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." Ephesians 2:8-10 (NLT)

B. We need to set goals if we are going to accomplish the things God has for us to do.

"It's not that I've already reached the goal or have already completed the course. But I run to win that which Jesus Christ has already won for me. Brothers and sisters, I can't consider myself a winner yet. This is what I do: I don't look back, I lengthen my stride, and I run straight toward the goal to win the prize that God's heavenly call offers in Christ Jesus. Whoever has a mature faith should think this way. And if you think differently, God will show you how to think." Philippians 3:12-15 (GW)

1. Goals are not the same as dreams.

"Much dreaming and many words are meaningless." Ecclesiastes 5:7 (NIV)

- Goals require action – Dreams don't
- Goals have a cost – Dreams are free
- Goals require focus – Dreams don't
- Goals have deadlines – Dreams don't

"So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." Psalm 90:12 (NKJV)

2. We must seek God's guidance while setting our goals.

"When people do not accept divine guidance, they run wild. But whoever obeys the law is joyful."
Proverbs 29:18 (NLT)

"Live as children of light... and find out what pleases the Lord." Ephesians 5:9-10 (NIV)

"Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do." Joshua 1:8 (NLT)

"If any of you needs wisdom to know what you should do, you should ask God, and He will give it to you. God is generous to everyone and doesn't find fault with them." James 1:5 (GW)

3. Goals that God guides us to make are only achievable through the power of the Holy Spirit.

"Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think." Ephesians 3:20 (NLT)

"This is what the LORD says to Zerubbabel: 'It is not by force nor by strength, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of Heaven's Armies.'" Zechariah 4:6 (NLT)

4. Goals that God guides us to make require faith and endurance.

"Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory. We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love." Romans 5:1-5 (NLT)

Note: Goals keep us going when we face setbacks, opposition or failure.

"What strength do I have left that I can go on hoping? What goal do I have that I would want to prolong my life?" Job 6:11 (GW)

"So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time, we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up." Galatians 6:9 (NLT)

Note: We must keep praying while we are pursuing our goals.

“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.” Matthew 7:7-11 (NLT)

5. Goals that God guides us to make are motivated by love.

“Let love be your highest goal!” 1 Corinthians 14:1 (NLT)

“Do everything in love.” 1 Corinthians 16:14 (NIV)

C. God will reward us for pursuing the goals He has for us.

“In a race everyone runs, but only one person gets first prize. So run your race to win. To win the contest you must deny yourselves many things that would keep you from doing your best. An athlete goes to all this trouble just to win a blue ribbon or a silver cup, but we do it for a heavenly reward that never disappears. So I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step. I fight to win. I’m not just shadow-boxing or playing around. Like an athlete I punish my body, treating it roughly, training it to do what it should, not what it wants to. Otherwise I fear that after enlisting others for the race, I myself might be declared unfit and ordered to stand aside.” 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (TLB)

“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” Matthew 25:23 (NIV)

JOHN SCHMIDT • 09-15-19 • john@centeringlives.com

Connect Group Questions:

1. How good are you at setting goals? How good are you at achieving them?
2. Read Ecclesiastes 5:7. Then discuss the following differences between dreams and goals:
 - Goals require action – Dreams don’t
 - Goals have a cost – Dreams are free
 - Goals require focus – Dreams don’t
 - Goals have deadlines – Dreams don’t

How does this list make you feel? Why?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 & Philippians 3:12-15. Why do you think the apostle Paul compared himself to a runner and a boxer? What parallels do you see between a Christian setting life goals and an athlete setting sports goals? What differences do you see?
4. Read James 4:13-16. What’s the difference between praying before we set our goals and asking God to bless the goals we’ve already set?
5. The first half of 1 Corinthians 14:1 says, “Let love be your highest goal!” What does this mean to you?
6. Share one personal goal you have been working on this year. Why is this important to you? Are you on schedule? What obstacles have you faced?
7. Read Zechariah 4:6. Then spend some time as a group praying for each other. Ask God to guide you to reveal His goals for your life, to give you the strength to accomplish them, and to help you endure through opposition, setbacks and failures.