

Gaining Direction for Ministry Through Setting Goals

Introduction:

A desire to receive and walk in God's direction is a constant that is ever present in the Christian life. Regardless of our position in Christ or the length of our service, without an ability to understand and follow the direction of the Lord, we will be hindered in completing the full will of God for our ministries. Uncountable sermons have been preached and a profusion of materials have been published as to various avenues available to the Christian in gaining the direction of God. The abundance of such gives witness to the desire of every minister of God to know the Lord's direction for his or her ministry. Without question such direction is tied up with our personal relationship with Jesus. Prayer, knowledge of the Word, the ability to hear the voice of the Spirit as well as the voice of godly counsel, all have a significant part in each saint's quest for godly direction. There is a practical side as well to acquiring such direction.

Godly direction can be thought of as not only understanding the will of God but also how we are to accomplish that will. It is the supernatural guidance of our actions and conduct so as to bring forth His will in our ministries. As the Apostle Paul writes; *(Eph 5:17 KJV) be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.* We need to be wise in knowing His will and understanding how to accomplish it. This is the essence of godly direction. Unfortunately, many of God's people lack a practical method for bringing His full and continued direction to pass.

Too many think that godly direction involves nothing more than praying and doing what the Lord speaks. It does begin with godly communication but this alone will not cause a believer to fully receive or walk in that direction. There are many reasons for this. We may not be completely open to hear. We may have hindrances from the flesh and from tradition. We may not be fully committed to acting on His leading. We may not be in complete spiritual order. We may not know how to do what He is asking, or we may not be connected in ministry or vision to a father etc. Receiving and walking in godly direction requires practical steps.

In my early Christian life I would often attend Church services and hear many wonderful sermons from many wonderful men of God. They would speak on knowing God, on God's plan for mankind, on receiving the promises of God, on the power of the Holy Spirit, on the need to live a righteous life and on many other marvelous

topics. They would speak on what I like to call the “what” of Christian preaching, but very little on the “why” and almost nothing about the “how to”.

Many times the longing for understanding that was in me made me want to stand up and shout, “What you are saying is awesome and inspiring but “HOW CAN I BRING IT TO PASS IN MY LIFE? DON’T JUST TELL ME ABOUT JESUS AND BIBLE PROMISES AND THE GREAT THINGS THAT ARE SOON TO HAPPEN BUT TELL ME “THE HOW”! The closest most could come was to admonish their congregations to ‘Pray!’ Stop listening to the enemy! Believe God! Be obedient! Trust and have Faith! And of course the universal answer in every situation, ‘Tithel!’ Such answers have become almost clichés, as the Doctor who tells his patient, “take two aspirin and call me in the morning”. These sorts of answers can give a real “spiritual headache” to someone seeking to know the “how” of godly direction. Of course it became apparent that most were well meaning but had never answered this one of the six fundamental, universal, spiritual, questions, at least not as “the how” pertained to godly direction.

Too often Christians fail to see the practical application of life in the Spirit. If God promises them a new car, some think it shows a lack of faith to work overtime in order to have the money to purchase it. To some the spiritual realm is little more than binding and loosing, commanding and demanding and letting the devil know who’s in charge. Some have never considered that going to work or washing the dishes may be a very spiritual activity. It has never occurred to some that taking authority over the enemy and walking in God’s will may involve personal changes and a willingness to allow God’s process to establish in us a natural as well as spiritual order.

The following pages are not intended to list all there is to know about godly direction or even a large portion. What are listed are just a few practical approaches to growing in godly direction. As is often the case in gaining spiritual understanding; we don’t have to know a great deal about any given subject, but if we apply ourselves to the little we do understand, great and awesome vistas of His truth are opened unto us. With the right application not only do we gain knowledge but also more importantly we gain understanding that brings us into order and the clear direction of God.

Gaining direction through establishing goals:

In the world of business and in the business of self-improvement much is made of goal setting, and for an important reason, it works! Statements such as “Plan your work and work your plan”, and “we don’t plan to fail, we fail to plan”, have become common axioms in our culture for the simple truths they contain. Now Christian ministry is not conditioned upon being successful in business but it is conditioned upon successfully *ordering* our ministries according to biblical principles and patterns established by many other notable biblical characters and even Jesus Himself. It’s a surprise to some that many of the noteworthy Bible leaders demonstrated a plan and a method for accomplishing that plan, (goals), in their ministries. They didn’t just wake up in the morning and say, “OK God, what’s next?”

Harvard University did a study in 1953. The study showed that only three percent of the graduating students wrote down their specific career goals. Now most if not all graduates tend to have goals such as a good job, a nice home, time and money for

travel, and the like but if goals, (like vision), are not written down they tend to become wishful thinking rather than attainable objectives. Twenty years later researchers interviewed that class of 1953 and found that the three percent who wrote down their goals were worth more than the other 97% combined. Not that material wealth should be the mark of our ministries, but completed vision and ministerial order must be and they require a biblical plan and method to bring them to pass.

The ministries of Moses, Nehemiah, Jesus, and others show the need for establishing a plan and a method to accomplish that plan in our ministries. They are a pattern for those of us to follow in completing our ministries. There was a method to the way these men understood the will of God and accomplished the work given them. Because they were in order they can become a pattern for us as Paul writes; *(1 Tim 1:16 KJV) Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.* Not only was he a pattern but his sons were to provide one as well, as Paul exhorts Timothy; *In all things showing thyself a pattern.*

Fathers establish patterns for sons. A ministry father's vision becomes the wellspring from which the sons must draw their individual visions. It is impossible to speak about spiritual goals without first understanding something about vision. As written in an earlier article, most ministries equate vision with the promises of God. This is why some ministries speak of visions being similar to the following; "We are going to win this city for Christ and show the power of the Holy Spirit to all in need" or "The Lord is going to spread our ministry through home fellowships and programs for the needy and as we seek to help the lost they will see the love of God". These may be godly promises if they come from Him but they are not really visions. Unless a Church has a well-defined vision from God the saints will have difficulty in setting an accomplishing spiritual goals for their individual ministries. For more on acquiring and ministering true vision see the May 2000 Bloodline article on vision.

In order to accomplish the vision given each of us from the Lord involves us setting written spiritual goals. As any godly vision must be written and clear in order for it to become completed and generational, so spiritual goals must be put down on paper if they are to be effective. A goal that is not in written form is not a goal at all but a wish. Since the foundation of all spiritual goals find their source in godly vision, the first step to setting such goals is breaking down the vision into it's basic parts. What are the parts of the vision and what goals will lead to completing its various parts?

(Phil 3:14 KJV) I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

(Deu 1:23 NKJV) "The plan pleased me well; so I took twelve of your men, one man from each tribe.

(Luke 4:16 KJV) And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

(1 Cor 9:24 KJV) Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

The above scriptures speak of the need to do things in order, according to a plan, with a prescribed goal or result in mind. The Apostle Paul had set a mark, (goal), before him. It was the thing that gave direction to his ministry. All he did in God was in one way or another linked to achieving the goal of the *high calling of God in Christ Jesus*. When Moses sent the twelve spies into the Promised Land it was according to a plan. He was given a vision by God of leading His people into a land of promise. To do this Moses had in some manner to establish goals, such as the suggestion to survey of the land. This goal led to a plan to send forth spies, one from each tribe to check out the land and bring a report of what they found. In the episode there is a lesson to be learned about not having people committed to the vision of God given leadership. Because of fear, the people were turned against the vision.

A plan lists the details of how we are to accomplish stated goals. Bible leaders always had a plan from which they worked. Setting goals forces us to communicate with God on establishing plans which will bring those goals to pass. It clarifies God's direction and helps us understand His timing and the steps we are to take. Ministries without goals are ministries without an effective plan for bringing God's will to pass in their ministries. Even in the ministry of Jesus we see He didn't minister randomly but had a method or plan as indicated by the phrase, *as His custom was*. The Gospels teach us that He had a plan or a method to His ministry. All Christians are involved in a race but only those who run the race effectively will achieve the object - prize. Establishing spiritual goals help us to achieve the prize.

God has given all His people great and precious promises but not all His people obtain all the promises of God meant for them. This is not because they don't have a right to these promises but because they don't walk in a God given plan that would bring those promises to pass in their lives. Bible personalities are continually directing us in the formation of goals and an ordered plan for life and ministry. Jesus in the sermon on the mount, Paul in his exhortations to his son in 1st Timothy chapter two, Peter in his direction to the church in 2nd Peter chapter one, all speak of establishing patterns in the Christian life. Many sections of scripture similar to these are given us as a means to give the believer direction, order and the achieving of spiritual goals.

The book of Nehemiah recounts the history of a man who had a vision from God to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and to reestablish a consecrated people in the land. The work of ministry must always start with a clear vision - a vision not of man but of God. As you read the history of this particular event you'll notice that Nehemiah had to have established some goals and a plan to bring them to pass. He had many goals. One of his goals was to go to Jerusalem and oversee the work, another was to gain the aid of King Artaxerxes. These goals led him to establishing plans to bring these goals to pass. He had a plan in how he was going to come before the King. When he was granted permission to return to Jerusalem, he had a plan. He didn't just say thank you and wonder about what he should do next but he knew exactly what he wanted from the King. His plan included asking for protection and letter of passage from the King; it also included the King granting him materials necessary to complete the task. He had thought it through. He had a plan because he had

spiritual goals based upon godly vision. Without the establishment of goals and plans to bring them to pass, the walls of Jerusalem and the reconsecration of the people would never have come to pass.

Some Benefits to Establishing Spiritual Goals:

Spiritual goals help us address our fears: Fear is the opposite of faith. When we lack certainty about who we are in Christ or what it is we should be doing, when we lack direction and understanding, we open ourselves up to various kinds of fear. When we see progress toward accomplishing our spiritual goals, it builds faith. We have a clarity about our ministries and a confidence about those things the Lord is speaking to us.

Spiritual goals help us avoid procrastination: Procrastination delays the process of God in our lives and causes frustration in our ministries. Written goals give us a clear list of what needs to come to pass through our ministries. They establish a timetable for action and we never have to wonder what it is that we should be doing. They keep us focused and help keep us out of a daydream existence.

Spiritual goals help us break down our visions into workable segments: Visions by their nature encompass a large work and require time to bring to completion. If we are not able to break down our visions into manageable portions we may become discouraged and lose heart. As we are able to accomplish our goals we will see little by little the achievement of our vision.

Spiritual goals help us keep from being distracted: Paul tells us that there are, *many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification*. Many things are continually speaking to us. The daily activities of life are constantly drawing on each of us. There are many good things we could be doing. In fact we can get so busy in doing good things that we fail to do the better things and even fail to do those things which are most important for our ministries. Goals keep us focused. Goals help us have confidence that our ministries will become completed and ongoing.

Spiritual goals help give those associated with our ministry the ability to see their part in the work: Leaders need to give people direction. It is impossible to give adequate direction without goals. People need well-defined goals so they can clearly see the objective and understand 'how' the vision of the church will be accomplished. This will give those following your vision, confidence and an avenue to be involved in the work.

Spiritual goals help us understand the will of God: When we write down our goals it becomes readily apparent, whether those goals are directed by God or born out of our wishful thinking or fleshly desires. As we seek the Lord for a plan to accomplish each goal the Spirit brings confirmation as to whether this is a goal from God or whether it is in His purpose for this particular time.

Spiritual goals help us separate our ideas from His purpose: As we commune with the Lord over our goals and plans He increasingly refines, clarifies and defines the vision given us. In ministry there is the constant quest of separating that which is of

self from that which is of the Spirit. Establishing goals clarifies and reinforces our purpose.

Spiritual goals help us know where we are in achieving our visions and completing our ministries: It is a sad commentary on much of modern church leadership that some do not know what needs to be done to complete their ministries and therefore have little idea when or if those ministries will ever be completed. If we have a vision that is from the Lord we need understanding as to what to do to bring that vision to pass and where we are in that process. Only written goals can show us what we have accomplished and what is yet to be done. At some point in every ministry there ought to be a time when the minister can say with confidence, *I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*

A Few Practical Steps in Writing Spiritual Goals:

Spiritual goals as mentioned earlier must be in written form or they will, for the most part, be just wishful thinking. If you have not written down your goals, the following are a few steps you can take to establish workable written spiritual goals.

1. Take your written vision, break it down into it's various parts and ask God what goals need to be implemented to make those parts functional.
2. Take a notebook and list your short-term goals – those requiring six months or less and your long-term goals – those requiring more than six months to complete. Ask the Lord for a plan to complete each. What is it that you are going to do to make these goals a reality? Your goals will form the basis for prayer related to your ministry and gives those associated with your understanding of how to pray.
3. Make a daily To Do List. A simple To Do list is to take a note card and list those things related to your goals that you need to do today. List them by order of importance working from the top to the bottom. At the end of each day make your list for the following day. Include on that list any items not completed from the previous day's list. In a short time you will see the order it brings and the encouragement that comes when you see these goals being accomplished. This kind of list will help you allocate your time far more effectively.
4. Reevaluate your goals regularly. Your goals are something that can be incorporated into you daily prayer. Make it a point to take a few minutes each week to look at your listed goals and make adjustments as needed.

Of course the points above are only one method among many for establishing written goals and effectively bringing them to pass. They are only listed as one practical way to bring their effective implementation

Next Month: “Kingdom Patterns”

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bloodline
network newsletter



February 2001
