

### 3 Steps to a Highly Productive Lifetime

Following these steps will help you make the most effective use of your time. They will help you focus your entire life. This focus will help maximize the impact of your life.

When determining which steps you will follow, take several weeks to pray, meditate and seek counsel. Meet with friends and spiritual mentors. Set aside focus time to take the following steps.

**Set a date by which you will complete the steps in this appendix:**

**Write down the dates and times you will set aside to work on these steps:**

#### 1. Determine Your Personal Life Vision

Botanist Jean Henri Fabre studied the habits of Processionary caterpillars. These unique creatures follow each other in procession, thus the name. He put them on the top of a flower- pot so that each one was simply following single file the one in front of it. He thought they would stop after a while but they did not. Finally he put some of their favorite food in the middle: pine needles. After seven days and nights of circling the pot they started dying from exhaustion and starvation.

While their behavior seems senseless, let us ponder this question: **"To what extent are we just doing what we are doing because we are mindlessly following the guy in front of us?"**

Have we discerned God's unique plan for our own lives? Are we following that plan?

One of the greatest problems we face managing our time is that we often do not know exactly what we should be doing in life. We are not just wasting minutes or hours, we are wasting years doing work that God did not call us to do. People who have not developed a Personal Life Vision need to step back. They need to find out exactly what God wants them to do.

Developing a Personal Life Vision is an exercise in future perfect thinking. It is discerning God's preferred future for you and your ministry. It is unique to you.

And the LORD answered me: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end--it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay. (Habakkuk 2:2-3 ESV)

The Lord told Habakkuk to "write the vision." He said that though it would take time, to wait, for it would surely happen. When the Lord gives a vision, it happens!

What is a Personal Life Vision?

**Definition: Your Personal Life Vision is a written description of what life looks like when your Biblical purpose and calling are fulfilled.**

It is not the same as the vision for your church. It describes God's calling on your life.

As you envision, think big. Pastor Rick Warren has written:

Many pastors try to drift through their ministry without goals or dreams. They just float with the crowd. And they're content with being average. But God created you for so much more! You need a dream that's so big you've got to depend on God. If you can do it without God, it's just not big enough. As long as your horizon is expanding, you're healthy.

You're facing new challenges, dreaming new dreams, believing God for greater things, growing and stretching, and facing new challenges. If your ministry isn't facing a big challenge right now, get one. Life with no challenges or dreams or ambitions is boring! You need a great dream.— Pastor Rick Warren<sup>6</sup>

Note: Your Personal Life Vision will go through a continual process of refinement as you grow in Christian maturity.

## WORKSHEET

To help determine your Personal Life Vision, answer these questions. Ask others their opinions about you:

- What has God uniquely gifted me to do?
- People who know me well believe I am most used by God when I am involved in \_\_\_\_\_ Why?
- Though I may have dismissed the thought many times for various reasons, at times I have felt I really should be doing. \_\_\_\_\_ Why?
- •What can I do to make the most significant difference for God in my lifetime?
- Why am I here on the earth?
- What is my single greatest strength or uniqueness as a person? What do others say it is?
- What single need or situation do I feel most deeply burdened by and uniquely qualified to meet?
- •What cause do I believe in strongly enough to live for or die for?
- •What am I uniquely equipped and positioned to accomplish?
- Who do I most admire and why?
- Where do I see myself ten years from now?
- What is the very best organizational context for my dream?

My Personal Life Vision is:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 2. Develop God-Honoring Personal Goals

Imagine playing basketball without hoops or soccer without goals. What would be the point of the game? Everyone would run around aimlessly. How could one measure scoring, success and winning? Could anyone win? Would not everyone lose?

Likewise, living without goals or objectives sets us up for purposelessness, failure and much wasted time.

On the other hand, establishing goals or objectives sets us up for success. It helps us make effective use of our time.

Studies show 35 percent of Americans have a written will, but less than five percent have written goals. People seem more prepared to die than they are to live! That is a sobering fact.

With an understanding of your Personal Life Vision, you can determine specific goals that will help you gain a laser focus of your time and use it effectively.

**Goals give a laser focus to the use of your time.**

Bible leaders had significant goals:

- Moses' goal was to lead the people out of bondage.
- Joshua's goal was to lead them into the Promised Land. David's goal was to establish the city of David. Solomon's goal was to build a temple.
- Nehemiah's goal was to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem.
- Jesus' goal was to die for the sins of the world and rise again to conquer sin and death. The Apostle Paul's goal was to take the Gospel to the Gentiles.

All of these leaders had other goals as well.

The Bible says that "A wise man thinks ahead; a fool doesn't and even brags about it!" (Proverbs 13:16 TLB)

Jesus affirmed goal and planning when He said,

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, "This fellow began to build and was not able to finish." Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? (Luke 14:28-31 TLB)

We must always set goals with an understanding that they will happen as the Lord wills: "What you ought to say is, 'If the Lord wants us to, we shall live and do this or that.' Other- wise you will be bragging about your own plans, and such self-confidence never pleases God." (James 4:15-16 TLB)

A goal is a faith statement of a specific result in a specific time.

To be effective, goals should be:

Measurable—"I want to be a better person" is not measureable enough to be meaningful. However, "I want to memorize 10 verses this year" is measureable and therefore meaningful.

Time-bound—meaning there should be a date for achievement. Example: "I will be enjoying intimacy with

God on a prayer retreat by November 15 this year."

One problem with goal setting is that most people are not goal setters, they are problem solvers.

But there is a solution: If you have a hard time setting goals, then imagine them instead as problems that you must solve in order to accomplish your purpose and vision. Those problems to be solved can become your goals.

For example: a problem might be your church is not growing. Solution or goal: Begin an out-reach program to reach more people. Or, start more small groups in order to assimilate people.

Another problem in goal setting is that some leaders become out-of-balance. They accomplish a lot in their ministry, but destroy their health or neglect their family. Some even neglect their relationship with their Lord Jesus by focusing solely on the tasks of ministry.

We should seek to balance six goal areas in order to lead a holistically healthy life.

Here are the six goal areas. We included the potential consequence of neglecting that area:

Six Goal Categories:

**1. Spiritual goals**

For example: I will read through the Bible in a year or take at least three prayer retreats this year.

Potential results if neglected: spiritual burnout, serious sin, disqualification from ministry

**2. Family goals**

For example: I will take my wife on a date each week or take a trip with each of my children.

Potential results if neglected: lose marriage & family

**3. Career/Ministry goals**

For example: I will mentor a leader to take over a ministry.

Potential results if neglected: Unfulfilled purpose and calling.

**4. Physical goals**

For example: I will exercise at least 3 times per week.

Potential results if neglected: Low energy, loss of health or even early death.

**5. Financial goals**

For example: We will save 5% of our family income.

Potential results if neglected: Financial strain, not able to pay bills.

**6. Social goals**

For example: We will get together to fellowship with friends at least one time per month. Potential results if neglected: Miss the joys and the support of relationships.

One or two goals in each of these six areas will propel you toward balanced achievement. Balance is not always achievable, but it is a worthy aim.

## WORKSHEET

After determining your Personal Life Vision, develop one or two goals in each goal category

1. Spiritual goals

2. Family goals

3. Career/Ministry goals

4. Physical goals

5. Financial goals

6. Social goals

Follow this process after you develop your Personal Life Vision.

### **3. Make Plans to Reach Your Goals**

Proverbs 16:9 (TLB) says, "We should make plans...counting on God to direct us." God directs Spirit-led planning, not just spontaneous efforts.

"Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants." (Amos 3:7)

"Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed." (Prov.16:3)

You will not reach your goals without strategy and effort. You will accomplish your dreams with Godly strategy and effort, through the power of the Spirit.

But, how should we plan to achieve our goals?

#### **Five essential steps for reaching your goals:**

Taking 15-30 minutes to list the following for each goal will provide the basic planning that will propel you to achievement.

1. List the obstacles you need to overcome to reach your goal.
2. Identify people and groups you need to work with.
3. List the necessary skills and knowledge you need.
4. Develop strategies to reach your goals. You might want to attach dates to the accomplishment of these strategies.
5. List the benefits you will receive when your goal is achieved. 9

According to Brian Tracy, people who went through the above process, even if they never referred back to it again, usually accomplished their goals. Now for each of your goals, write down the five essential steps:

## WORKSHEET

Goal:

Essential Steps for Achieving Goals:

1. List the obstacles you need to overcome to reach your goal.

---

---

2. Identify people and groups you need to work with.

---

---

3. List the necessary skills and knowledge you need.

---

---

4. Develop strategies to reach your goals. Attach completion dates to each of these.

---

---

5. List the benefits you will receive when your goal is achieved.

---

---

## CONCLUSION:

Consider securing a consultant or mentor or other training to help you work through these steps.

It may take ten to fifteen hours to complete this process. However, once you have done the process above, determining your Personal Life Vision, Goals and Strategies will sharpen the focus of your time and save weeks, months and even years by helping you accomplish what God has specifically called you to do!