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Do Setting Goals Really Matter – Part One ***By Dr. David Robinson, Founder***

"If a man proceeds confidently in the direction of his dreams and endeavors to live the life he has imagined, he will meet with success unexpected in common hours."

Henry David Thoreau

I meet leaders all the time who have no clearly stated goals. Most are extremely busy with managing the work and ministry they have on their radar screen on any given day. Few are able to rise above the pressure of providing solutions on a daily basis and focusing on the next step critical to fulfilling their vision. That next step always has a goal that you must meet on the journey to fulfilling your vision.

When you never set realistic goals, give up on your goals in discouragement, or have no clue on how to set a goal, your system shuts down. In some cases, depression sets in and some leaders even become physically ill. Prisoners of war have been known to simply lie down and die when their hopes for the future were exhausted. Unfulfilled expectations still brings life's greatest disappointments.

In 1953, a study was done on Yale University's graduating class. Among a long list of questions were three relating to setting goals. "Do you set goals?" "Do you write them down?" In addition, "Do you have a plan to accomplish them?" Only three percent answered yes to the questions.

Twenty years later, a follow-up study was done. It turned out that the three percent who had answered yes to goals reported they were more happily married, more successful in their careers, had a more satisfactory family life and better health. Above all that, ninety-seven percent of the net worth of the class of '53 was in the hands of that three percent who had started setting goals twenty years earlier.

When you have specific goals and accurate feedback about your progress, you open yourself up to a steady flow of opportunities that remains closed to those who have no clear goals and a plan to reach them. Remember, the Holy Spirit did not come to be a labor-saving device but a labor-enhancing Partner. He can only help you reach your goals if you have them and they are properly set.

Does setting goals really matter? Will it make a significant difference in what I'm doing? Absolutely yes! It did for the class of '53 at Yale. It did for Jesus... "who for the prize set before Him, endured the shame of the cross." Hebrews 12:2. It did for Paul who "fought a good fight...finished my course...kept the faith." 2 Timothy 4:7. It did for President John Kennedy whose leadership in 1969 sent a man to the moon and brought him home.



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Five thoughts about goals and goal setting

First, goal setting must become a habit. Never get involved in an endeavor without setting goals and developing a plan to reach them. Goals are much different from hopes and wishes. Goals focus our mind, energy and resources. Goals, properly set, are much more likely to happen than wishes, hopes or good ideas.

Second, you need to understand your God-given (R.A.S.) reticular activating system. Your nervous system contains a built-in screening device that blocks out or admits information, depending whether that information is important to you. It is a network of cells called the reticular activating system, or R.A.S. Its job is to determine which of the thousands of sensory messages bombarding you every second are going to get through to your awareness. Without it, we would be totally overwhelmed. We wouldn't be able to focus on any one particular thought or task. God has so designed us that it operates without us even being aware of its blessing.

For instances, when mom wakes and dad sleeps on, not because the baby's cry is louder than other sounds, but because these sounds are important to her. It works the same for you. Whenever you declare something important because it possesses value or poses a threat, you put your R.A.S. on alert to let that information through.

When you set a goal, you make a commitment. The number one reason average and poor leaders do not set goals is fear of failure. Therefore, to avoid failure, they simply avoid setting goals because all goals require commitment. Commitment is the key to successfully reaching your goals.

Commitments do at least three things:

- It means you have a choice and that you take the time to be fully engaged with that choice.
- It means you are willing to give your best without reservation and pay special attention to the results and progress.
- It requires a significant investment of your time, energy and resources if you are to reap the dividends of your investment.

Third, you must see the "final frame" of the goal when reached. Your action plan may not have all the answers before you take the first step but never let that prevent you from taking the first step. When you set a goal, you are telling your R.A.S. and everyone around you, this matters. This is important. Favor and resources will start appearing that weren't available before because your R.A.S. screened them out. However, after you have set a goal and are committed to its success, the system God created in you will help you see it happen. First, you set the goals, and then God will



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help you see how to do it. Proverbs 16:9 (NLT) says, "We can make our plans (set goals), but the Lord determines our steps (action plans)."

Next month in part two, I will share thoughts four and five and the "Seven Steps to achieving any Goal."

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