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Do Setting Goals Really Matter? – Part Two

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In part one, I spoke about how goal setting must become a habit. Second, when setting goals, you need to understand how your R.A.S. (reticular activation system) works. This is the God-given nervous system containing a built-in screening device that allows or blocks information into your mind depending on how important that information is to you. Third, you must see the "final frame" of the goal when reached.

This month, let me share thoughts Four and Five about why goal setting is so vitally important and the "*Seven Steps to Achieving Your Goals.*"

Fourth: You must understand the importance of cognitive dissonance. That is what happens when you try to hold two conflicting ideas in your mind at the same time. "...how long are you going to waver between two opinions?..." I Kings 18:21 NLT. This state of disharmony (dissonance) having to do with conflicting thoughts (cognition) is always a challenge to leaders and the leadership they provide. You will have to make a choice or be frustrated with indecision. Great leaders inevitably have a strong desire and drive to resolve the conflict. Average to poor leaders are continually frustrated with this mental picture of how things are and how they should be. Whenever your system, your normal routines are thrown out of order, your real leadership ability is brought to light. It's then the importance of goals becomes evident.

As you become dissatisfied with the old, you will be energized and motivated to move beyond the old and resolve this conflict by bringing in the new. With great leaders, this cycle becomes a way of life.

Fifth: If cognitive dissonance keeps us focused on our goals and moving forward, something called ***reciprocal causation*** creates energy and enthusiasm to see our goals become a reality. Great leaders understand that the more you see your goals met and exceeded, the more energy and enthusiasm is created to see new ones set and the cycle continues. This is the essence of strategic leadership. The moment this cycle stops, you move from creating the future to managing the present. You stop being a goal-setter and become a problem solver. There are leaders who are great problem solvers and they are vital to the team. However, someone on the leadership team must lead the effort forward. These leaders have an intense desire based on a vision that has specific end results that are only accomplished by reaching the goals.

Having hopes, dreams, good ideas and even strong desires is not the same as having specific and clearly defined goals. Here are seven steps that will help you in achieving goals if they are properly set:



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One: *Write it down.* "...Write my answer (vision) in large, clear letters on a tablet so that a runner can read it and tell everyone else." Habakkuk 2:2 NLT. If your goals are not written down, they are not goals yet. When you write something down, you declare to yourself and your team - "this matters and we will achieve it with God's help."

Two: *Goals must have clarity and specifics.* In Mark 16 and Matthew 28, there was nothing fuzzy about the goals Jesus set for the church. Your goals must answer the Who, What, When, How and Where questions. If they don't, you need to revise them. If you cannot measure your goals, how will you track the progress and know when they are achieved?

Three: *Set some short-term goals.* Acts 1:8 says, "...first in Jerusalem then..." If you don't have some short-term wins, you and your team may get discouraged at best, demoralized at worst, and abandon your long-term goals. But without long-term goals, you may lose focus and never realize the ultimate dream.

Four: *Make sure your long-term goals stretch you but are attainable.* Nehemiah was a great leader because he understood this balance. Jesus promised he would never give us more than we could bear. If you want to run and finish a marathon, you don't start by running 26 miles the first day. Start small but stay at it.

Five: *Plan for obstacles and setbacks.* "We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed and broken. We are perplexed, but we don't give up and quit. We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up and keep going...so that the life of Jesus may be seen in us." 2 Corinthians 4:7-10 NLT. Walking by faith does not mean your life will be free of obstacles and setbacks. It means you know what to do when they come. Do not let a setback stand in the way of your faith to believe your goals will be achieved. As a good weld, we are always stronger at the broken places. Obstacles will cause you to be more determined or cause you to quit. The Bible says, "...the just man falleth seven times but rises again..." Proverbs 24:16 KJV.

Six: *Track your progress and reward your team.* To be a consistent goal achiever, you're always measuring the progress along the way. Identify how you are doing on a daily basis - not just once a month or occasionally. Reward your team and yourself for short-term achievements. Don't wait to throw the big party at the end. Little victories and celebrations keep everyone energized and focused.

Seven: *Affirm and visualize achieving your goals.* Moses "...he endured...seeing Him who is invisible." Hebrews 11:27 NKJ. "...Jesus, who for the joy (prize) that was set before Him endured the cross..." Hebrews 12:2. Affirmation is simply a statement that confirms the truth of something. Visualization is the supernatural ability to see the victory and achieving the goal before it happens. It is the God-given ability to persevere until the goals you have set are a reality.



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How long will it take? Some goals are easily met; others are not. However, the process is the same. The more you work at it, the better you become in the ability to set achievable goals. It took me 44 years to finally achieve my educational goals. Many times through the years, I felt like giving up, but I would re-focus and keep going.

What are your lifetime goals? Great leaders always have them. How about your goals for this year, this month or today? Don't be too hard on yourself or allow the judgment of others stop you. *"Being confident of this very thing that He who has begun a good work in you (Holy Spirit's goal for you) will complete it (goal achievement) until the day of Jesus Christ."* Philippians 1:6 NKJ.

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