

Establishing Your Ministry-Building Goals

There are many goals in a person's mind when he or she sets out to build a ministry. The list can seem endless. These goals will inevitably reflect the dreams and visions of the person who sets them. They also should reflect the needs, hopes and aspirations of the people whom he or she hopes to serve. Dreams and visions can take us in many directions. The critical issue when building a ministry becomes how we might prioritize our goals, so we walk the path to which God calls us. We also need to discern what actions are most important if we are to achieve our goals. Above all, we must ask ourselves whether our goals match God's will. How can we answer these questions with confidence that the goals we set are on track to take us to our destinies?

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave us clear guidance to answer these questions. This lesson will focus on three verses of Matthew, Chapter 5. The beauty of these verses is that they inform us of the direction and structure needed to set every goal. They cover all the circumstances we may face - yes, all of them. When unpacked, these three verses will allow us to drill down into them to find the patterns we need to follow to establish and fulfill our goals. Here are two translations of these three verses.

Matthew 5:14-16 (NKJV)

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. {15} Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. {16} Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:14-16 (NLT)

“You are the light of the world--like a city on a mountain, glowing in the night for all to see. {15} Don't hide your light under a basket! Instead, put it on a stand and let it shine for all. {16} In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

As we look more deeply into Matthew 5:14-16, we will find the two primary goals that God set in His eternal plans for us. These goals are the measure of every other goal we set. Whatever our goals may be, they must agree with and submit to God's two primary goals. Otherwise, they will miss making the eternal difference they could have made, and fail to align with God's will. This is a bold statement. Let us see if it is true.

Our Two Primary Goals

Consider these statements. Every goal we set must offer us, and those we lead, the opportunity for success. In addition, every goal must offer us, and those we lead, the opportunity for significance. If these statements are correct, we can say the following. *God's two primary goals for all His children, all of the time, are that we would have (1) success and (2) significance.* To understand what this means requires that we understand these two key terms. We will begin with validation for God's definition of success.

Success

The world defines success this way: It is...

- “1. The favorable or prosperous termination of attempts or endeavors
2. The attainment of wealth, position, honors, or the like”¹

God defines success in this way:

Success is becoming progressively more like Christ. This is an issue of both the mind and the heart.

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV)

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. {2} And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

¹ Random House Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Word Genius software.

Again - Matthew 5:14-15 (NKJV)

***“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. {15} Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.*”**

Jesus is careful with His choice of words. He says, “You are...” These words begin a statement that defines who we are to be. Take careful notice that these two verses label us as “*the light of the world*.” Jesus is saying that we are to be just like Him. Of course, we cannot become completely like Him, but the attributes of His character can be ours to embrace.

John 8:12 (NKJV)

“Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.””

The Apostle Paul wrote this to the Corinthian church.

1 Corinthians 11:1 (NKJV)

“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”

Jesus’ words, in Matthew 5:14-16, are statements of our potential. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul tells us how to achieve this potential. We do so through imitation. Being “*the light of the world*” fits the pattern of God’s primary goals for us. A goal is something to be achieved step-by-step. In order for it to be achieved, it must follow a plan that we can accomplish. The plan is to imitate those who imitate Christ. Here again is God’s definition of success.

Success is becoming progressively more like Christ.

As you accept this definition for success, and make it the first of your two primary goals, you must ask yourself what it takes to get you on this path to success, as God defines it. Here is another way to state this is. You must ask yourself if you are becoming a shining light, as Jesus said in Matthew 5:14. Look once more at this part of Verse 14 in the NLT. It says...

“glowing in the night for all to see”

Now that we have established God's first goal, which is to always be a light to the world, ask yourself if all your other goals really fit under the measure and guidance of this first one. Now, let us look at significance. It is the second of God's two primary goals for us.

Significance

The world defines significance this way: It is...

1. Importance, (having) consequence
2. Having meaning"²

God defines significance this way:

Significance is being a person of godly influence. Your influence has eternal value and makes an eternal difference.

Here again is Matthew 5:16.

(NKJV) "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

(NLT) "In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father."

Verse 16 can only happen if we allow the potential of Verses 14 and 15 to become reality. A light cannot shine unless it is lit and not hidden. Therefore, to become lights of the world, we need to reach for our potential to be like Jesus. Sanctification,³ or becoming a light to the world, is an ongoing process as long as we are alive. Once we have achieved a measure of this first goal and have submitted to the process of sanctification, we qualify to let our *"lights so shine."*

As you can see, we shine for a purpose - to do something. God's second goal is that what we do influences others so they can also become lights to the world. What we do become demonstrations that result in eternal significance. Notice that the first goal (becoming progressively more like Christ) has to do with who we are. The second goal (becoming a person of

² Random House Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Word Genius software.

³ Sanctification means, "To be separated *from* evil and set apart *to* God, as we progressively realize our potential *in* Christ" (Dr. Abramson's notes).

godly influence), depends on the first. It has to do with what we do as we accomplish God's will for eternity. The first goal is about "being." The second goal is about "doing." Together, they form the set of goals that allow us to fulfill the will of God. Combine the success of who we are with the significance of what we do, and we fulfill the will of God. Now, look at the final words of Verse 16. These words give us the ultimate purpose of our call to ministry, as we act to fulfill this call.

(NKJV) "that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

(NLT) "let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father."

You have within you the God-given potential to bring glory to Him. It is your utmost purpose in life. Being a light that shines in this darkened, sin-soaked world is the way you do this. (Being leads to doing.)

Addendum: A Final Thought of Encouragement Concerning Your Goals, Dreams and Visions

It seems that every person who has visions and dreams places excessive demands upon themselves in an effort to reach their goals. Yes, we all do this. How can you accomplish your visions and dreams without being like a light that burns itself out? Below are my personal thoughts that answer this question. The answer is vital to your future success and significance. Take the time to absorb these thoughts into your spirit.

"It is vitally important to understand that God does not expect perfection from you. He simply expects you to honor Him with who you are; and do your best, as you trust Him to do the rest. I was recently talking with a church planter who I have mentored. Like all church planters, he has many questions about how to become a light to this world and effectively shine himself upon it. I encouraged him with this simple statement. I leave it with you and pray it will encourage you. I discovered it within the words of Proverbs 4:18, which you read earlier. Here it is.

"As you travel the path along the highways of life on the way to your destiny, let God fill in the potholes and take you across the gaps. He will make your way secure and take you to your destination."