

GOAL SETTING AND A NEW YEAR

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Setting annual personal goals for myself and Kingdom goals for the ministry I lead is something I have done for years. These goals help me focus on what I need to do to be a good steward (Matthew 25) of the life and responsibilities that God has given me. They also help keep me from drifting and simply going through the motions. I usually have to discipline (i.e. force) myself to do this because it takes energy and identifying goals always opens the door for possible failure... and failure stirs up some fears in me.

I like what God says in Jeremiah 29:11, *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you, and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future."*

That verse reminds me that goal setting is a spiritual exercise. It is not a process where I simply decide what I want to focus on and accomplish. It is a time of listening to God, discerning His heart and desires for my life and ministry, then identifying His goals for me. Then I have to own those goals. I'm sure my hearing is not always 100%, but I think God is gracious when I misfire. And most of the time I think what I hear is consistent with what He wants me to become and do.

As 2012 begins, I want to challenge you to spend some time listening to God and setting a couple of personal goals and ministry goals. Don't be afraid to dream big but season the dream with some realism. Then develop strategies or action plans for how you are going to pursue those goals. Share them with someone else who can ask you how you are progressing in accomplishing them. That will help you stay on track. Then watch God work!

I was recently reading some information from my friend and colleague Dr. Greg Wiens about goals. He challenges us to think in HARD terms about the next year.

HARD goals are:

- **Heartfelt** — My goals will enrich the lives of somebody besides me, such as people who don't know Christ yet, people in my church, people in the community, and even people outside my world.
- **Animated** — I can vividly picture how great it will feel when I achieve my goals – and how pleased God will be.
- **Required** — My goals are absolutely necessary to help the ministry I lead accomplish God's purposes. If I don't pursue these, I will be missing the mark God has set.
- **Difficult** — I will have to learn new skills and leave my comfort zone to

achieve my goals. But that's OK because real growth only occurs when I commit myself beyond what I can do. I'm going need lots of help from God for this to happen.

Why not take a few moments right now and ask God to guide you in the initial step of setting 2012 goals. Think of the ministry you are responsible for. Now identify a specific outcome you would like to see in 2012 that is different from the present. Set a goal based on what you can improve or do differently that will significantly propel the ministry towards a great impact.

When it comes to goals for a ministry and for a local congregation, there are three that I think are very important goals that you need to annually set for each ministry:

1. How many new leaders can I/this ministry develop? Kingdom effectiveness rises and falls on leadership development. It is a critical part of the business we are in.
2. How many people will I/this ministry seek to win to Christ? A central part of our assignment as Christ followers and ministry leaders is to depopulate hell by winning people to a life-long journey with Jesus.
3. How many new people will I/this ministry seek to involve? Discipleship is about involving people, not just getting people in a pew.

Let me challenge you to state your goals in outcome terms. In other words, write them in such a way that you can clearly tell whether they have been accomplished or not. Goals end up as wishes unless they are specific and measurable.

It is amazing what God can accomplish through us when we are willing to let him guide us in setting goals. There are things He wants to accomplish in you and through you in this new year. Goals often become an avenue through which God works.

Have a God-directed and God-blessed 2012!