

Organizing Our Lives: Establishing Spiritual Goals

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In Philippians 3:13-14 Paul the Apostle tells us he still was growing spiritually. This is surprising, considering his great spiritual accomplishments and position. However, it reveals to us all that we are all in a position where we still need to grow. Growing in Christ is the accurate description of spiritual success.

Spiritual success doesn't just happen, it requires planning. Successful plans (whether spiritual or worldly) need organization. Therefore, spiritual success requires spiritual organization. What is spiritual organization? It begins with setting priorities in a spiritual manner. This is how we are able to set smart goals in spiritual growth.

Spiritually Prioritizing is an area that many naturally know they need to do, but few correctly do so. Consider the priority of the man in Luke 12:16-21. His mind was set on retirement and enjoyment; this was his life priority. Many Christians plan only for their entertainment, their work, or their family. They fail to realize that the absence of spiritual plans is indicative of inappropriate priorities. Jesus spoke about setting correct priorities above all else in Matthew 6:19-20. In verse 33 He said *"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you"*.

Jesus is an example of spiritual priorities. We realize this by His constant statements that His purpose was to put the Father's will above His own (e.g. John 5:30, Matthew 26:39-42). As people who have put on Christ, we need to put on this mind (Philippians 2:5-8), meaning the will of our Father needs to be our priority around which our spiritual Goals are created.

Setting spiritual goals means setting SMART goals. In this case, SMART is an acronym used to describe goal setting. Spiritual goals need to be:

Specific: for example, they should NOT be generic goals like "I am going to increase my knowledge" or "I am going to pray more often", or "I am going to share the Gospel", or "I am going to do more in the church". Instead they need to be specific measurable goals, such as "I am going to read my Bible regularly", "I am going to start a regularly Bible study", "I am going to pray 30 minutes a day", "I am going to write lists for prayers", "I am going to send a letter to someone", "I am going to learn to lead a prayer", or "I am going to prepare to teach a class".

Meaningful: Is it something that will genuinely accomplish the goal we have set? Consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:22-23. On the Day of Judgment many will find that their works were without meaning.

Action Oriented: Goals need to be things on which we can act. Peter reminds us that we must prepared our minds for ACTION (1 Peter 1:13). Therefore, we must have something to DO towards achieving our goal.

Realistic: In setting a goal it needs to be something that can be reasonably accomplished. We need to honestly assess our ability. Scriptures speak often to remind us that we do not all have the same abilities (I Corinthians 12:6-9, Romans 12:6-8).

Timely: A timeframe is a means of setting an accountability of action. Without timeframes we do not act. Consider the timeframe Nehemiah set in Nehemiah 2:6. This may be the explanation as to his motivation to achieve the building of the wall in Jerusalem.

So you want to grow? Spiritual growth requires spiritual organization and planning. Spiritual organization begins with setting priorities, and spiritual organization sets smart goals.