

Leadership Letter 17

(Note: this is the 17th in a series of "Leadership Letters." You can read previous letters at our web-site. Go to www.GraceGlobalNetwork.org and look under the "encouragement" section.)

Goals

It didn't happen this way, but it might as well have. One day a man sat down at his desk, pulled out a sheet of paper, and wrote across the top: "*Goals for My Life.*" Then he began to list the goals that would shape the direction of his life:

1. To live in a lawless, immoral environment
2. To forfeit all spiritual authority in my home
3. To exert no influence for good in my community
4. To lose everything and everyone dear to me

That's ridiculous, right? Right! But consider this: there was a man who never wrote down any such goals, yet accomplished everything on that list. His name? Lot ... Abraham's nephew. I've been reading through the book of Genesis recently – and I had to stop and ask myself why this man's life ended in such disaster. The disastrous results were the natural consequences of his worldly choices.

But consider all that Lot had going for him:

1. Lot had Abraham as a spiritual influence and example
2. Lot was given the choice of land that he would inherit (Genesis 13:8-13) and he chose the most pleasing, well-watered land that he could imagine (v. 10)
3. Lot was rescued by Abram after he was taken captive by the king of Sodom (Genesis 14:14-16)
4. Lot had been delivered from judgment by the grace of God before God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:29)

After its destruction by brimstone and fire (19:24-28), Sodom never occurs again in the Bible as an occupied city. Today its location lies somewhere beneath the waters at the southern end of the Dead Sea. A nearby free-standing pinnacle is appropriately named "Lot's Wife."

Lot's life should have turned out very differently than it did. But he made a series of very bad choices ... all springing from the vacuum of spiritual values in his life. His bad choices came because he never set his sights on making the right choices.

Lot may not have had spiritual goals in his life, but you should. Written goals help prevent the kind of purposeless drift that set Lot up for disaster. Leaders must set personal goals, because they know if they stop growing, they will stop leading. What do you want to accomplish specifically in the area of Scripture memorization ... time in God's Word ... reading good Christian books ... sharing your faith? What kind of husband or wife do you want to become? What changes must happen for you to get there?

The Power of Examples

I don't know about you, but I get inspired by the lives of other people. Sometimes those are people that I know personally. I watch their lives. I seek to emulate their examples. I want to learn from them. Sometimes the people I learn from are those I've never met. Maybe I read about them in a biography (I just finished reading about the life of Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric). I also get inspired by certain movies (most recently *We Are Marshall*, and the impact of their football coach, Jack Lengyel). Certainly the biblical biographies of men like Moses challenge me to be a better man. I remember hearing Dr. Howard Hendricks speak in 1982 about how the Scriptural accounts of God's men and women will make us thirsty to be God's people in this generation.

So let me ask you a few questions:

1. Who are you watching?
2. What are you learning from them – positively and negatively?
3. What kinds of questions are you asking to probe deeper into the lives of those who are your examples?

What Should Goals Include?

To be most effective, goals should be tangible, specific, realistic and have a time targeted for completion. There must be realistic plans to achieve the intended goal. For example, setting a goal to go to Mars on a shoe string budget is not a realistic goal, while setting a goal to go to Hawaii as a backpacker is a possible goal when coupled with realistic plans. Good project-management-technique states that goals and objectives can be better defined by following the guidelines from using the SMART acronym:

Specific - Objective or goal can't be diffuse or nebulous but should be precisely defined

Measurable - Define a method of measuring the objective/goal

Agreed-To/Achievable - All parties need to agree to the objective/goal, and it also must be achievable

Realistic/Rewarding - It must be a realistic objective/goal, and it must make sense to do it

Time-related - without a schedule and due date, it will just keep going, and going, and going.

How to Get There

Goals provide a sense of direction and purpose. Psychologists examined the behavioral effects of goal-setting, concluding that 90% of laboratory and field studies involving specific and challenging goals led to higher performance than easy or no goals. So how do we get there?

1. **Write your goals down.** Put pen to paper and take the time to think your goals through long enough to make them clear on a sheet of paper. If you just think about them, they often remain nebulous and undefined.
2. **Hang your goals up.** Take that paper and put it on the wall. Look at them daily. Let that paper serve as a reminder and a road map of where you are going in the future.
3. **Pray your goals through.** Bring them before the Lord and ask Him for wisdom and blessing. It's often at this stage where God refines our goals so that they will be ones that bring Him glory and praise.
4. **Watch your goals happen.** With God's help, your goals will become reality.

Remember, we never see the target a man aims at in life; we see only the target he hits. What a you hitting?