

Establishing Biblical Goals and Priorities

For Yourself

Your Family

and

Your Church

Prepared for Faith Baptist Church
Adult Sunday School Class
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REDEEMING THE TIME

(Setting Biblical Goals and Priorities for Yourself and Church)

Objectives for this study:

- **To learn to distinguish what is important from what is urgent or trivial**
- **To guide us as individual Christians and as a church in establishing our personal and corporate mission**
- **To help us set and prioritize goals based on that mission**

Outline

- I. Distinguish among urgent, important and unimportant activities.
- II. Keep your eye on the outcome
- III. Defining (or clarifying) your mission
- IV. Set your goals accordingly
- V. Plan on purpose – make active, conscious decisions

I. Distinguishing among urgent, important and unimportant activities

Why is this important?
Psalm 103:15, 16

Ephesians 5:16

Not every activity in life is equally important. Some things present themselves as urgent while still being unimportant. We often get caught in those things. We also often waste time on the trivial.

Consider the following diagram:

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	I	II
Unimportant	III	IV

Quadrant I contains things that must be done. They cannot be avoided.

Quadrant III contains things such as interruptions, some phone calls, some mail, popular activities, close-up pressing matters. Quadrant II items sometimes take the back seat to Quadrant III items.

List some things in your own life that fall into Quadrant I.

List some specific typical things that consume time but are probably Quadrant III items.

We usually spend too much time on Quadrant III stuff rather than on the important things in Quadrant II.

List several important things that you are currently not doing, that if you were to begin doing, would have a significant impact on your walk with God, your family and your life in general.

Usually, the only place where we can free up time for important but not urgent activities is from Quadrant IV activities as well as some Quadrant III.

You will find that if you spend too much time in Quadrant I, it will consume your life and you will be constantly driven by trying to solve problems.

People who spend all of their time in Quadrants III and IV usually live irresponsible lives because they are devoting themselves to the unimportant.¹

As a Christian, what resources do you have for determining what things are important?

From Scripture we learn that God does all things for His glory. He created the universe and all things in it for his pleasure. Rev. 4:11

We need to see this one thing – God’s Glory – as the ultimate in importance. We were created for His glory and for his pleasure. Everything must be viewed in the light of this idea.

From Scripture, we can also see other things that God has established which He considers important in achieving His ultimate purpose.

Look up the following Scripture verses and list the things that seem to be of utmost importance to God.

1. _____ Hebrews 11:6

2. _____ Matthew 22:37

a. _____ John 14:15

b. _____ Matthew 6:33

3. _____ Matthew 22:39

¹ These very helpful diagrams and ideas are from the book The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, by Stephen R. Covey

4. _____ Mark 16:15
5. _____ Matthew 28:19a
 - a. _____ Matthew 28:19b
 - b. _____ Matthew 28:20a

What is at the bottom of God's list? Luke 12:15

_____ and _____ are more important than _____

Why are these five things so important?

Faith

- Without it we can't _____ Heb. 11:6
- It is the "stasis" _____ Heb. 11:1
- It is the _____ Heb. 11:1
- By it we _____ Heb. 11:3
- From it _____ proceed James 2:17

Biblical faith is the essence of having God and man in the right perspective. He has spoken. We accept and believe what He says.

Love for God

Among other things, God is love. Therefore, love is a reflection back to God of His own character. We love because He loved.

Love implies _____ John 14:15

Jesus said that this one command sums up many of the ten commandments. It means we will not substitute anything else before Him, not use His name in an empty way. It means we will worship Him in the way He prescribes and reverence the day set aside for Him.

Love puts the _____ of the other ahead of our own. I Cor. 13:5; Matthew 6:33

Love includes enjoyment. The Westminster Catechism says that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Deut. 28:47,48; Psalm 73:25,26; John 17:13;23;24

Love for Neighbor

We should love _____ . John 13:35

We should love each person

Jesus said that this one command sums up the rest of the commandments. We show God's love to the world when we demonstrate it tangibly by loving our neighbor. Furthermore, it prepares the way for the next step.

Preach the Gospel

_____ into the world we are to _____.

The first priority that we discussed earlier is **faith**. God says that faith comes from _____ which comes from the _____. How can they hear without a _____?

God wants people everywhere to repent of their sins and believe the Gospel. All have sinned by not glorifying God as God and not being thankful for what He has provided. God has appointed a day when He will judge the world by the Man He has appointed. He has given evidence of this by raising Him from the dead. We live once and after that the judgment. God wants people to know that if they repent and run to this one who is the judge, they will find Him to be a merciful and gracious Savior. How will they know unless we tell them?

Make Disciples

A disciple is a _____.

As we will discuss more fully later, God wants to demonstrate His character by being living examples of Christ-like people – sinners now being Godly.

This results from growth. God's design includes teaching. People must be taught the Word of God.

In addition, God wants people to be baptized. He wants them to take a visible step of identification with Christ. It is as if to say, "I'm done with the old life. I am dying to it. I am now a follower of Christ."

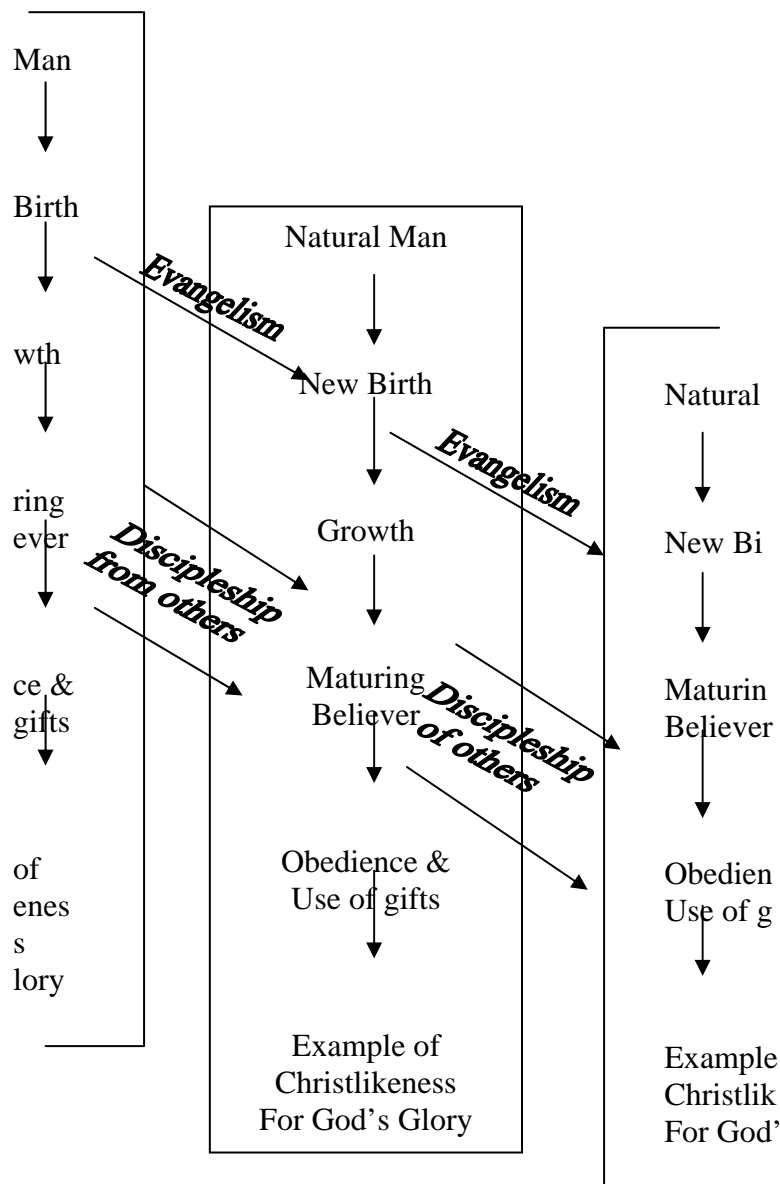
The world is in a lost and condemned condition. We find in Romans 1:18-32 that the condemnation and wrath of God have fallen on the human race because people have:

- Not glorified God as God
- Not been thankful to Him
- Substituted a false god for the True
- Have exchanged the Truth for the lie
- Worshiped the creature rather than the creator
- Not liked to retain God in their knowledge

God's goal is to show to the angels, demons and the lost world the wonders of His majesty and grace. (Ephesians 2:7; 3:10)

In order to do this, He established a plan whereby sinful and fallen people could be redeemed from their fallen condition and be made new creatures and sons of God. As children of God, their priorities would be the same as God's priorities and His glories would be demonstrated to the world. They would exhibit characteristics exactly opposite of those which brought the wrath of God on us in the first place. As a result, others would be brought to faith in Christ and the process would be repeated and God's glory would be spread and demonstrated throughout the earth.

Therefore we have a plan that can be diagrammed like this:



II. Keep your eye on the outcome.

Look at each of the following passages, and list the outcome that God is seeking.

Ephesians 4:11-16

Ephesians 2:7

Philippians 2:15

Matthew 5:16

Colossians 1:28-29

I Peter 2:9 - 15

II Corinthians 2:14-16

John 13:35 and John 17:20-23

II Timothy 3:14-17

We've seen that God's goal is to have a people of faith who love the Lord with every fiber of their being. They demonstrate their love for the Lord through obedience and seeking His kingdom as their first priority. They show the world that God sent Christ by demonstrating their love for their fellow Christians. They further show God's character by loving their neighbors in the same way they love themselves. They spread the good news of the Gospel of Christ to everyone and use their gifts to teach and train those who come to Christ. The result is more and more people radiating the image of God to the world.

It is important to realize that it is a process of growth. It is not instantaneous. But God does give the command to grow.

(II Peter 3:18)

God has given us three primary means for growth to maturity:
Family, Church, Personal disciplines

A. Family

The family is a laboratory, a micro-society where members learn, practice and grow. It is also a picture for the world to see as to what God is like through its portrayal of oneness, love and cooperation.

Study the following Scriptures. As you do, keep your eye on the goal and the five things that God puts importance on: faith, love of God, love of neighbor, evangelism and teaching all aimed at bringing glory to God through mature Christ-like Christians. Write your thoughts as to how the idea of a family as a laboratory and a picture relate to the overall goal.

Psalms 78:1-8

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-21

(The concept of the Covenant Husband is an important one. We will touch on it in this study. For further reading and resources, see <http://www.faithful-men.org/studies/husband/husband.htm>. Also see Douglas Wilson, *Federal Husband* (Moscow, Idaho: Canon Press, 1999))

Malachi 2:14-16

Hebrews 12:10

Philippians 2:3-4

I Thess 4:11; II Thess 3:10

Romans 1:21

I Corinthians 10:31

B. Church

The church is another micro-society that is to be an example to the world.

God has given five practices to the church as a basis for its corporate ministry. These are:

- Teaching
- Breaking Bread/Worship
- Fellowship
- Prayer
- Evangelism

These can be seen in passages such as Acts 2:42, 46; Acts 8:1, 4; Colossians 3:16

Just as in the section on the family, think through and meditate on the following passages with respect to the five important items we have been studying. How do the truths of these passages move us toward the goal?

Ephesians 4:7-11; 16

II Timothy 2:2

Titus 2:1-8

I Corinthians 3:9-17

John 17:20-23

Hebrews 10:24, 25

Hebrews 13:17

C. Individual Disciplines

God has given certain principles and disciplines to individual believers in order to promote their growth.

These are:

- Praise/Worship
- Bible reading/study/meditation
- Prayer
- Personal Obedience
- Witnessing

As you read and meditate on the following passages, make a note as to how these things fit into your own personal life and what they have to do with reaching the goal and the five important components of it.

Matthew 4:10; John 4:23

Psalm 1:2, 3; Psalm 119:105

John 14:15; Luke 6:46

Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6

Matthew 28:19

James 1:22

III. Defining our Mission

We have discussed the fact that since time is short and the days are evil, we need to be sure that in our personal life and in our church life, we are spending our time on the things that are actually important. It is easy to get involved in things that appear to be urgent but are not all that important.

God's first priority ought to be our first priority. We have seen that that is glorifying Him and spreading His fame and declaring His greatness. We have seen that God has given us at least five things that are of utmost importance. They are faith, loving God, loving our neighbor, spreading the gospel and teaching others. All of this is aimed at bringing more and more people to faith and spiritual maturity so that God's character can be seen throughout the earth.

We have also seen that God has given us three avenues for spurring on growth in Christians' lives. These are the family, church and personal disciplines.

In this section we will discuss ways to help us clarify and state our mission in terms that get at these important issues. In the next section we will discuss ways to set goals that will put important things first.

Most of us have a mission we are using whether or not we realize it. Most of the time, the center of that mission is not where it should be. We are trying to fulfill a mission that is not equal to the mission for which God created us. In addition, because of the uniqueness we each have, the central core of God's goal and the things that are of utmost importance to Him will manifest themselves in ways which are unique to us. Thus we can have valid, Godly and spiritually centered missions which differ from those of others in the way they are expressed and worked out in the world.

In order to help you to define and clarify the mission God has given you, we are going to work through three parallel tracks at the same time. The first is an exercise that will help you focus on the five priorities that we discovered from God's Word. We will do this using the Role Chart. While you are thinking through this, we will be studying two key issues that will remind us of

the fact that our decisions do matter and that we need to focus on the things we can actually have an impact on.

We'll summarize these three tracks as:

1. Role Chart
2. Be Proactive
3. Focus Your Efforts

1. Role Chart

In the back of this book you will find a chart that consists of six columns and several rows. At the top of the first column is the word "Role". At the top of each of the other columns there is one of the priority areas that we have discovered in our study.

Down the left side of the chart list the various roles that you have in life. Include such things as "Individual", "Christian", "Husband", "Mother", "Employee", etc.

You should fill this in before you read any further.

The next thing you should do is to fill in as many of the boxes as you can with the ways that the particular priority relates to the particular role. Before I give you some suggestions, you need to understand that you may not be able to find a particular statement to make about every single category. Also, there is no correct answer. No one is going to go through your chart to see if you are doing it right. The purpose is to focus your attention on how the priorities God has given relate to the various areas of your life.

Now a couple of examples are in order. Under the category of Love the Lord, we discussed the fact that we are to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. That implies obedience and seeking first the kingdom of God. How does loving God that way relate to my being a husband? First of all it means that in my role as husband I need to be obedient to God's command about loving my wife, being sensitive to her as the weaker vessel and treating her as Christ does the church. I need to be sure that I let her know in words and by example that I love the Lord with my entire being.

I would take those ideas and summarize them in the box where the husband role intersects the Loving God column.

I am sure that you can think of similar examples for your other roles.

Take some time each day to think this through and begin filling it in over the next week or two.

2. Be Proactive

The first thing we need to do is to define the term “proactive” and distinguish our sense of the word from that which the world has. Being proactive is the opposite of being reactive. The idea is that you can make choices regarding your activities, behavior, attitudes and reactions. It is the realization that your decisions have consequences and you are prepared to accept those consequences. Most of us spend most of our time in the reaction mode rather than the proactive mode. We’ll discuss this more later.

Our definition of proactive is different from the humanistic, business-oriented approach used in our culture today. In most modern uses of the word, the word conveys the meaning that man is all powerful and controls his own destiny. Little thought is given to the fact that there is a God who is involved in every facet of our lives. This view holds that it is within the natural man to change himself. We can be anything we want to be. We just need to set our mind to it. It is the “mind-over-matter” approach. Throughout this entire discussion in these lessons we are NOT using the word in this sense. Remember that as you read through the next several paragraphs.

The thinking of many modern Christians has taken on the feeling of discouraged resignation. “Let go and let God.” is a phrase that encourages this sense. I just sort of sit and wait for God to do something. If He doesn’t move me, I’m not going to move. What I decide to do isn’t important and doesn’t matter. When God decides to change me, I’ll change.

This idea affects our planning as well. We tend to wait for some sign from heaven to show us what God’s perfect will is. We are looking for the “handwriting on the wall” or some other sign.

What we want to discuss in this section is that our deeds and choices matter. Remember, we are not talking about the powers of the natural man to control his fate. We are talking about Christians, indwelt by the Spirit of God making decisions and moving forward for God.

First then, I would encourage you to listen to your self-talk (or even your actual talk for that matter). Look for language that says you are reacting rather than acting. Some common expressions are: “I just can’t help it.”; “He makes me so angry.”; “I had to...”; “I didn’t have the time to...”; “If only they would have...”.

Such words are saying that you can do nothing about your actions or feelings. Other people control whether you are angry or not. Time controlled what you did in a day. You had no choice but to do such and such.

God puts a lot of weight and responsibility on us for our decisions and choices. Look up each of the following verses and think through the verse in the context of this discussion. I have put some key comments next to most of the verses to give you a start.

Philippians 4:8 We can control what we think about
Joshua 24:15 God holds us responsible for our choices

I Corinthians 10:13 Temptations are not overwhelming.

James 1:22 What we do

Philippians 2:12 We are responsible for the fruit of our salvation

John 4:14 We have an abundant supply of the Spirit of God

Genesis 22:7 He asked for an indication of God's will, but did he wait at home?

I Corinthians 9:26 Fighting

II Peter 1:5, 10 Give diligence

Compare Caleb (Deut 1:36) and Saul (I Sam 15:23)

What do these additional verses add to the discussion?

Deuteronomy 28:45-47; Jeremiah 39:18; Ezekiel 28:6; Luke 19:17

It is important to realize that forgiveness and even love are commands rather than feelings. Certainly there are emotions attached to these, but God expects action and rewards action. Our lives are not to be based on our feelings and we certainly are not to pretend that we can't act.

It is a sobering thought to remember that God rewards people (both saved and unsaved) for their deeds. Because we have emphasized (and rightly so) salvation by faith alone, we have also de-emphasized (and wrongly so) the importance of our deeds.

II Corinthians 5:10 says: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things **done** in the body, according to what he has **done** whether good or bad."

Romans 2: 6ff "who will render to each one according to his **deeds**.: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory.... But to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, ...but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good.

See also Hebrews 13:21; Titus 2:12-14; Philippians 2:13

Jesus said in Matthew 16:26-27 "And how do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul in the process? Is anything worth more than your soul? For I, the Son of Man, will come in the glory of my Father with his angels and will judge all people according to their deeds."

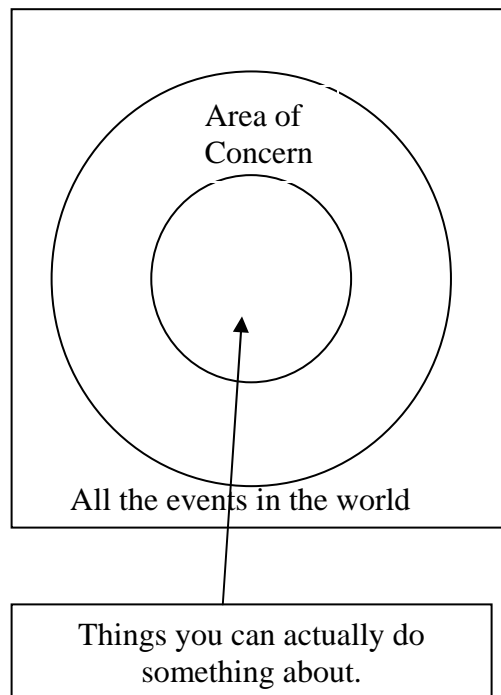
If God judges us and holds us accountable for our deeds and if He has told us that He has provided for the lack of goodness and power that we have in our natural selves by providing us with a new nature and the very presence of the Holy Spirit, then we need to begin acting on what we know is right. We must make decisions in the proactive sense rather than cowering back with a reactive mentality.

God's will is worked out in our lives as we faithfully trust and obey Him.

3. Target Your Efforts

We usually focus most of our time and mental and emotional energy on things we can do nothing about. My dad used to quote a saying that went something like this: "Lord, give me the strength to change the things I can. Give me the grace to accept the things I cannot change. Give me the wisdom to know the difference."

There are many things we can do nothing about. Take a look at this diagram:



List some of things that you can do nothing about:

1. The past
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

In the same way, list things you can control:

1. My own decisions
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

In Philippians 3:13, Paul says, “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,”

There is nothing that can be done about the past. Yes, the consequences of the past continue into the present, but past events cannot be undone. Paul says he is forgetting those things. He is actively forgetting them and focusing on what is ahead. We need to do the same.

In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus basically tells us that there are things we can't do anything about. We can't control what tomorrow will bring, we can't control how tall we are or how long we live. He promises to meet all of our actual needs and we are to trust Him with that. He concludes by telling us to seek His kingdom and His righteousness. These are things we can do on a daily basis. He tells us not to worry about tomorrow because each day has enough trouble of its own. In spite of these admonitions, we persist in focusing our time and attention on the past and on the future when neither one is under our control. (Check out Luke 12 also)

In Philippians 4:8, Paul tells us to think on things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, good, virtuous and praiseworthy. This is something we can do. We might not be able to control what other people do or say, but we can control what we think about. Then, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. These things are within our control.

Read through Hebrews 12 sometime this week. Notice the things we are asked to do:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Verse 1 | Lay aside every weight and the sin that besets us
Run the race with patience |
| Verse 2 | Look to Jesus |
| Verse 5 | Do not despise the Lord's chastening
Do not be discouraged |
| Verse 12 | Strengthen the hands and knees
(In other words straighten up!) |
| Verse 13 | Set a straight path
(Look to the future and make right choices) |
| Verse 14 | Pursue peace and holiness |

We can make the right choices and our choices matter. We can make the decision to focus on making choices in the areas where we have control.

Here is the question. “Are you going to continue being reactive? Are you going to continue pretending that you don't have the power to do the right thing and to make choices that count?”

Your choice and decision on this question will reap consequences. God is going to judge each of us – not on what we say or what doctrines we agree to (although those are important too) but on what we **do**.

Go back now and revisit your role chart. Have you filled in as many of the boxes as you can?

In our earlier lessons we learned that God's priority is His glory and the spread of His fame. We learned that He is primarily going to do this through people that are like himself. In order for that to occur, people have to come to Christ through the preaching of the Word and they need to be disciplined so that they grow in grace to become more and more like Christ.

We further learned that there are three primary venues where this takes place: personal disciplines, the family and the church.

Look at the results of your role chart. Begin to think about it now in terms of these three venues. You can either develop three separate charts, or use different colored pens or just in your thought process think in terms of the three venues. In other words, I need to look at my "Loving the Lord" in relationship to my being a husband from three dimensions. How do my own personal disciplines impact this? How does it relate to my family life? How does church life impact it? In order to help you do this, perhaps the following outline of the key points would be helpful at this point:

- I. Faith
 - Believe God exists
 - He rewards those who seek Him
 - We are to glorify Him as God and be thankful

- II. Love God
 - All of our heart, soul, mind and strength
 - He and His kingdom are to be my primary concern
 - This all implies obedience

- III. Love neighbor as self
 - My neighbor's general welfare will be my concern
 - Seek to meet both spiritual and physical needs
 - Concern for poor, orphans, widows, etc.

- IV. Spread Gospel
 - Tell people about their need of Christ
 - Help finance and support missions
 - Pray to the Lord of the harvest

- V. Teach
 - Explain God Word and life applications to others
 - Teach what God is like through the course of normal daily activities

- VI. All of this to be accomplished
 - Through our personal disciplines
 - Through our life in the family
 - Through our life in the church

Hopefully by now you have taken the time to fill in most of your role chart. You will probably discover that there are areas where you focus most of your attention. I'm calling these the **hot spots**. These will help you in a couple of ways. First, this will help you to focus on the areas that you naturally consider to be most important. These may give you an indication of the mission God has for you at this stage of your life.

Second, the hot spots indirectly show you areas where you may need to focus more of your energy. We already agreed that the column headings represent areas of importance to God. The hot spots show you areas that you already recognize as important. The non-hot-spots are items that God considers important but perhaps you have not focused on as much as you should.

4. Spiritual Gifts

There is not enough time in this study to focus our attention on Spiritual Gifts. However, I strongly encourage you to take a look at the Spiritual Gifts listed in I Corinthians 12:4 ff. And Romans 12:3 ff. In these passages, God lays out the fact that He has gifted each Christian. You have one or more spiritual gifts which God has given to you for your use in the Body.

Prayerfully evaluate your life in light of these gifts. Ask God to show you which gift(s) He has given you. Think through comments people have made to you over the years. Do these comments give you any indication as to how God is using you? If so, this may help you in clarifying your mission.

Your Mission

Begin to write out your mission. Take into consideration all that has been said about what things are important, the focus areas of the role chart and your spiritual gifts. Mission statements by their very nature are rather general. You won't be able to cover every area of your life in detail. They should give the general sense of the reason God has placed you on this earth. It should be specific enough to be individualized to your situation and the time and place where you live.

Some may question the need to do this exercise. After all, you know what you are here for, don't you? We as human beings seem to just live life by going with the flow. You have heard many people get to the end of their life and say, "I wish I would have..." It's wise to do the planning and thinking now so that you do the things that are actually important and that actually fulfill the purposes for which God put you on the earth.

Here are some sample mission statements. Some are better than others.

My mission is to glorify God by being an example of Godliness to my family, my church and my community.

My mission is to seek God's kingdom first in all areas of life – my home, my church and my work.

My mission is to glorify God by being an example of Godliness in every area of my life and by helping others to understand the principles of God's Word.

My mission is to glorify God by worshipping Him as God and by showing thankfulness to Him in all areas of my life.

My mission is to show my love to God by spending time with Him, introducing others to Him and helping them to grow in their Christian life.

My mission is to show my love for God and my neighbor by being a faithful witness of His grace and by building up my fellow-believers through faithful teaching of His Word.

My mission is to live in such a way as to be a faithful witness of Christ and to lead others to a higher level of spiritual maturity. My primary focus will be on my wife and children followed by others God has brought into my life.

IV. Set Your Goals Accordingly

Now that you have taken the time to think through and pray about your mission, you should begin to set some goals.

1. Make them measurable

The question to ask yourself is, "How will I know when I accomplish the goal?"

If your goal is for example, "Become a more spiritual Christian.", there is no way to measure it. I'm not suggesting that this is not a worthwhile goal to pursue. It is more a result of other goals that you could choose that would be measurable. For example you could set a goal to spend 15 minutes a day in prayer. Or you could have a goal to include the reading of one hymn in each day's devotional time.

2. Make both long and short term goals

A long term goal might be to read the books on a certain book list over the next five years. Another example might be to have each of your neighbors in your home over the next couple of years.

Short term goals are goals that could be reached within a month to a year.

3. Subdivide them into bite-sized pieces

Once you've thought through your goals, subdivide them into smaller pieces. If your goal is to read certain books, decide which one you will start with and make it a goal to read a chapter this week.

4. Make sure your goals fit the criteria we have been studying in this class.

a. Make sure the goal distinguishes between the important and the unimportant.

- b. Make sure it is designed to achieve the outcome of glorifying God by helping you become a mature Christ-like person or by assisting others in becoming mature Christ-like individuals.
- c. Make sure the goals reflect God's priorities of faith, love for God, love for neighbor, spreading the Gospel and discipling others.
- d. Make sure the goals enhance your personal disciplines and provide for your ministry in the home and church.
- e. Make sure the goals recognize the fact that God holds you responsible to DO.
- f. Make sure they ignore things that you can't do anything about and focus on the areas that you can do something about.

Remember that a person's life does not consist of the things he possesses.

Remember that we are to be doers of the Word and not hearers only.

Each individual needs to set goals that relate to where they are in life and where they are in their relationship to the Lord. However, it might help you to get started if I recommend some areas to begin.

- Take a look at your personal spiritual disciplines. These were given on page 9. They consist of Praise/Worship; Bible (reading, study, memorization, meditation); Prayer; Personal Obedience, Personal Witnessing.

These are foundational and basic. Sometimes when we are trying to decide how to make changes in our life we look for something new and powerful. We want someone to give us a new insight, method, or secret. However, if you take a good look at the list I have just given you, these are the basics. Yet we so often look elsewhere for the answer.

Take a hard look at your personal spiritual disciplines and set some goals related to these. Make goals to strengthen the areas that are weak and make goals to begin those that are missing.

- Second, if you are a parent of children still at home, set goals related to that area of your life. If you gain everything and lose your own children you will not consider life to have been worth living when it is all over.

Have your children been born again? If not, what are your plans for sharing the gospel with them in a consistent manner? How much time do you spend praying for them and their salvation? Make a goal related to that.

What are your plans for teaching them God's Word? Are you acquainted with the resources that will help you do that? If not, make it a goal to talk to someone about resources and methods. If you are, make goals as to how you are going to proceed. Remember to look at long term goals and then short term goals.

What books will you encourage your children to read? If you don't know, who will you ask?

Do you provide an environment where good music is played and enjoyed? Children should be exposed to good classical music. The singing of hymns and listening to them should be a part of your home life. Children should be familiar with the great hymns of the faith. Make sure the texts are consistent with and faithfully teach the Word of God.

Is there an atmosphere that emphasizes missions and a sense of mission in your home? Are they familiar with great missionaries of the past? Do they know their stories? Is there a focus on current missions and the struggles to bring the gospel to people all over the world?

- If you are married (with or without children), take a good look at your marriage and set some goals with respect to that. Make sure you know the Biblical responsibilities and roles which God has given you as a husband or wife. Are you fulfilling those roles?

As the husband, are you developing your own spiritual life and then the spiritual life of your wife? What is your plan?

- Identify key people in your life. Who are the people that you have frequent contact with? Are they believers? If not, how are you going to get the gospel to them? If so, how are you going to help them grow in their faith.

You don't have the relationship with every person that will allow you to be their spiritual adviser. You have to earn that right by being a friend and involving yourself in active listening and caring for them as a friend. Set some goals related to these individuals and your contact with them. Use the "Reaching My World" sheet for listing people God has put into your world. List those who are lost on the left side and those whom you could influence for growth on the right side. Look at the "Links in Discipleship" on page 27. List the people who have a direct responsibility to disciple you in the top section. List the people whom you disciple in the bottom section.

- Finally, when you listen to sermons and teaching from God's Word, there should be adjustments to your life. You should consciously add or modify your goals according to the truth you receive.

There will be goals related to things we don't often think of as Spiritual. Healthy eating, exercise and maintaining a clean and pleasant home and surroundings should be included. There are plenty of Proverbs that speak to the comparison between foolish and wise living in very practical ways.

V. Plan on Purpose

Now comes the difficult part. If you have followed along throughout this study and have faithfully worked through all of the steps, you should have a mission statement written and several long term and short term goals written out. If you haven't done these things, the rest of

the process won't be very successful. I strongly encourage you to go back and take the necessary time to work through the process.

Life has a way of grabbing us by the collar and moving us along. Unless we take the proactive step of stopping and thinking through what we are doing and where we are going, we will just be carried along.

Here then are some suggestions for planning on purpose.

Choose a set time each week to go over the next week's schedule. You might choose Sunday afternoon or evening. You might choose Saturday morning or evening. Whatever time works best for you, set it aside and make it a priority.

Get out your planner or to-do list. Also get out your mission statement and goals. Spend some time in the Word and in prayer, asking God to guide you as you think through the events of the week. Pray over your mission statement and your goals, asking God to show you how best to fulfill His will in your life this week.

A large portion of the time may already be spoken for. If you are employed, you probably have specific times and hours that you are expected to work. A certain amount of time is used for meals and other basic daily activities. Set up a page that shows the hours for a typical week day. Mark off the time that you are away at work. Mark off the time scheduled for sleeping.

Read through your goals and plug as many of them into time slots as you can. If you don't schedule by time, create a "to-do" list. Break down your goals into steps and include some of the steps in your list. As you go through the week there will be a tendency to replace these planned activities with things that seem urgent but may be unimportant. Make a conscious decision not to let that happen.

The next week when you sit down to plan for the following week, take a few minutes and evaluate how the previous week has gone. Were you successful in following your plan? What kind of things came up that got you off track? Are there ways to avoid these problems in the future? Did you get involved in things that were urgent but unimportant? How are you going to keep this from happening again?

There are some activities that are necessary and important that need to be done even though you don't have a goal associated with them. I'm thinking of such things as mowing the lawn, washing windows and other similar chores. The book of Proverbs teaches us that laziness results in weed infested property and broken down fences. Proverbs 24:30-34.

The truth of the matter is that there is not enough time in the week to make progress on your goals, work at your job, do the normal and extra chores that come up, accomplish the normal routines of life, etc. It can't all be done. You will be required to make choices. When you choose to work on the spiritual needs of your children, there may be some windows that don't get washed. Usually however, it isn't chore responsibilities that use up the time. It is usually the TV or some other similar activity that is the time hog.

You may not be able to make steps toward every goal every week. Some weeks you won't be able to read that chapter in the book. But don't put that off every week otherwise the book will never get read.

Balance your goals week by week. Some weeks spend more time on one goal and another week spend time on another goal. Obviously some goals are so important that progress must be made every week.

Ask God to give you strength to put your plan into action. Recognize that you have chosen to accomplish these goals because it will bring glory to God and increase His Kingdom.

The more you begin to think this way, the more second nature it will become. There will be times when you sit down in your chair and you would normally grab a magazine to skim for no real reason other than it is there. Once you begin to think more in terms of your goals, you will realize that you could grab the book that you have in progress and read several pages of it rather than the magazine.

Some of you are thinking that this is an awful lot of work and seems like it takes the fun and spontaneity out of life. There needs to be time for relaxation and spontaneity in life. Most people though don't suffer from too little relaxation or spontaneity. Most people spend their time reacting to circumstances with no plan or purpose behind what they do. The purpose of these lessons has been to help us to realize that the days are evil and life is short. We are to redeem the time for the glory of God. It is Him we live for, not ourselves.

I trust that these principles have been helpful to you and that you will find that you can serve the Lord better having put some of these ideas into practice.

Appendix

Here are some thought provokers in setting goals for various areas of your life. These are not necessarily measurable but are meant to spur your thought process toward writing important goals.

Husband/Wife

Are you spending enough time together?

Is your spouse saved? What can you do to witness?

Do you pray regularly for your spouse?

What is on your prayer list for your spouse?

Do you share what God is teaching you?

Do you love your spouse as yourself?

Husband: What can you do to build your wife spiritually

Do you talk enough? ...about important things?

What good books are you reading? Do you share what you learned with your spouse?

Do you love her and treat her like Christ does the Church?

Wife: How's your meek and quiet spirit?

Are you responsive to your husband's leadership

Do you ask spiritual questions?

Parents

Are your children saved?

Do they know how to have a personal time with the Lord?

Are they learning the important doctrines of Scripture?

How will you set the vision for the boys to become spiritual leaders and the girls to develop a meek, quiet and submissive spirit?

Do the boys understand that they will need to prepare to provide for their family?

What Christian examples of faith do you want them to have learned about or read by the time they leave home?

How will you teach them to put God first in all of their decisions?

Do they understand how the world's philosophy differs from Christianity? i.e. evolution, humanism, materialism

Do they know how to keep themselves unspotted from the world?

What do they know about the biblical teaching on money?

Can they stand against the cults? Mormonism, Jehovah's witness, etc.

Do they understand the difference between what the Bible teaches about salvation by grace through faith and what the Catholic church and other churches teach?

Do the boys understand that they will be the leaders of the church and therefore need to prepare themselves accordingly?

Personal Disciplines

Do you have a regular time of prayer and Bible reading?

Do you have a plan for Bible study?

Do you know of books and other resources that will help you in your Bible study?
What is your memorization plan?
Where does meditation fit into your personal plan?
Have the people in your world heard the gospel?
In what ways could your prayer time be improved?
Are you faithful in your obedience to the Lord in the areas of tithing, Sunday observance, what you watch or read, etc.
What about healthy eating habits?

Church Participation

Are you using your gifts in the body of Christ?
Do you attend regularly?
Is your goal to learn as much as possible from God's word?
Is your worship of the heart?
Do you give faithfully?
Do you come with expectation?
Get with other Christians to pray.

Hopefully these ideas will be thought provokers for you. There is a lot here so don't let it get you down. Pick a few weak areas and make them priorities as you write out your goals. Make it a goal to seek help in areas where others may have the information and skills that you need.

Links In Discipleship

Your Discipler:

Pastor?
S.S. Teacher?
Parent?
? _____



YOU



S.S. Students?
Children?
? _____

Review and Challenge

We have been discussing the importance of setting biblical goals and priorities for our lives. As we finish this series, here are a few important reminders and challenges.

- Make sure you discern whether something is really important – or just urgent.
- Make the things that are important to God important to you.
- People are more important than things and others are more important than yourself.
- The development of mature believers is very important to God.
- Establish personal spiritual disciplines and make them a priority.
- Do not forsake assembling with other believers for worship, teaching, fellowship and prayer.
- Carefully examine your roles in life and ask God to guide you into fulfilling His will for you in them.
- With Christ in us we can DO. Do not be deceived into thinking you can't do. We are told be doers of the word and not only hearers.
- Distinguish between the things you can do something about and the things you can't.
- Take a good hard look at your spiritual gifts.
- Write out your mission.
- Establish goals – both short and long term.
- Your first goals should be related to your spiritual disciplines. Do not forsake Bible reading, study and meditation; your prayer life; your personal worship; your witnessing; your corporate worship; your family worship.
- Your next most important goals should be related to the spiritual welfare of your family.
- Plan your life based on your goals, not based on the urgent. Set a time each week to plan for the next week.
 - You should include personal health and exercise.
 - You should maintain and care for your property.
- Most of all, do these things. Do not put them off.
- Go over this study with another person.
- Remember, life is short and the days are evil. Redeem the time.
- Don't give up and don't be discouraged. If you fall down, get up and keep going. See Hebrews 12.

Reaching My World

Love Neighbor, Present Gospel, Disciple to Maturity

Family

Family

Relatives

Relatives

Close Friends

Close Friends

Work Associates/Neighbors

Work Associates/Neighbors

Acquaintances

Acquaintances



