

# The Limits of Control: A Deeper Look into 'The Hobbit's' Worldview

Boromir, in the movie *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), muses that "it is a strange fate that we should suffer so much fear and doubt over so small a thing. Such a little thing."

With the release of the second installment of Peter Jackson's retelling of Tolkien's *The Hobbit*—with its dramatic action sequences and its epic settings—it is more essential than ever to remind ourselves of the smaller things representing the core of Tolkien's whole enterprise. Whether it be seven companions, a lesser wizard, Halflings, Gollum, or the One Ring itself, the large and empty spaces that surround the journeys of these characters seems to press in and emphasize the singularly inner and personal nature of the fate and doom of Middle-earth.

Chance encounters, fortunate falls, simple wisdom, poetry and song seem to triumph over the cunning, strength, numbers and mechanisms of the great and powerful. In fact, it is in the forgotten character of Tom Bombadil that the great antithesis to the notions of progress and control represented by the One Ring is most emphasized by Tolkien.

The forging of the One Ring coincides with the creation of many rings. These rings were made for a seemingly good purpose—that of increasing the utility and power of the Kings of Men, Dwarves and Elves to preserve and sustain their way of life; to hold at bay the failing of the world.

Sauron's secret forging of a master ring is the tragic incarnation of the wrongness of this approach. Ironically, this ring is not only the undoing of Sauron himself, but of the power of the remaining rings held by Galadrial, Elrond and

Gandalf.

The point of Tolkien, I will argue, is not that good must triumph over evil through great power, but that the very philosophy of control and utility ultimately brings about its own destruction through its ignorance of the nature of true power. If the One Ring is the incarnation of the desire of both good and evil to be “lords” over time, nature and life, the ignored and mysterious character of Tom Bombadil is the personification of true “mastery” rooted in harmony and a true understanding of the nature of things.

First, let’s re-introduce ourselves to this character. In the book *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the Hobbits meet Tom Bombadil in a moment of extreme need; both Merry and Pippen have been swallowed whole by a tree. Tom appears, dressed in a feathered cap, blue coat and yellow boots singing what seems to be nonsense: “Hey dol! merry dol! ring a dong dill!/ Ring a dong! hop along! fal lal the willow!/ Tom Bom, jolly Tom, Tom Bombadillo!”

He identifies the perpetrating tree as the rotten-hearted Old Man Willow, but comforts them that this predicament is easily mended as, “I know the tune of him.” He promptly sings them free, and sends the tree into sleep.

In response to their queries as to if he had heard them call for help, he replied that—as he was singing at the time—he had not heard them, but had come upon them by chance “if chance you call it.” He will save the Hobbits again from the Barrow-Wights when summoned by a song he taught them.

Though mysterious, claiming to have been in Middle-earth before Elves, trees, or even before the “Dark Lord came in from Outside,” he is the only character of the books that isn’t tempted by the One Ring.

“Show me this precious ring,” he asks Frodo, and promptly makes it disappear, then tosses it back to Frodo dismissively.

Frodo, a bit annoyed by Tom's flippancy and suspecting a trick, tries to sneak away wearing it, but Tom seems unaffected by the invisibility powers of the ring as well, much to Frodo's surprise.

Later, at the council of Elrond, it is asked why Tom was not beckoned, and why he could not carry or conceal the ring himself as he seemed to have power over it. Gandalf replies, "No, I should not put it so ... say rather that the Ring has no power over him. He is his own master. And, if he were given the Ring, he would soon forget it, or most likely throw it away."

The Elf-lord Glorfindel adds, in answering the question further as to whether Tom could protect and conceal the Ring within his forest, "I think not. I think that in the end, if all else is conquered, Bombadil will fall, Last as he was First; and then Night will come."

Though Tom Bombadil cannot be the solution to the crisis that faced the free-peoples of Middle-earth, he stands as a symbolic reminder that not all things lie beneath the shadow of its power.

To understand more deeply the importance of Tom to Tolkien's whole enterprise, we must understand his title of "Master." In a remarkable interchange between Frodo and Tom's wife, Goldberry, much is revealed as to the nature of this mysterious title:

"'Fair lady!' said Frodo again after a while. 'Tell me, if my asking does not seem foolish, who is Tom Bombadil?'

"'He is,' said Goldberry, staying her swift movements and smiling.

"Frodo looked at her questioningly. 'He is, as you have seen him,' she said in answer to his look. 'He is the Master of wood, water and hill.'

“Then all this land belongs to him?”

“No indeed!” she answered, and her smile faded. ‘That would indeed be a burden,’ she added in a low voice, as if to herself. ‘The tree and the grasses and all things growing or living in the land belong each to themselves. Tom Bombadil is the Master. No one has ever caught old Tom walking in the forest, wading in the water, leaping on the hill-tops under light and shadow. He has no fear. Tom Bombadil is master.’”

Tom, in being “the master,” bears no burden or ownership or control. His power is in his freedom, and knowing the tune or song for everything. Just as Tolkien’s universe was created by Illuvatar, the “father of all,” through the songs of the Valar, so Tom and many other characters within Middle-earth sing as a revelation of true power rooted in the very nature of things.

Poetry seems to be at the heart of courtesy, light and laughter in *The Lord of the Rings* while being noticeably absent in any place of darkness. Though Sam, Frodo, Aragorn and many others sing in Elvish, Tom’s songs are onomatopoeic (words that sound like what they represent), and far from being nonsensical, seem to be at point where language and sound become one.

Tom is a being of contentment and song, who is so far from possessing anything that nothing possesses him. In a universe where snares, webs, prisons, malice, and corrupting knowledge and power abound, Tom stands as the personification of natural mastery rooted in the knowing, but not in the possessing, of things and beings. He is no lord; he is master.

Immediately, upon hearing of this title, we are conscious of a contrast between the concept of Master and Lord. “Nothing is evil in the beginning,” said Elrond of both Saruman and Sauron, “as long as [the Ring] is in the world it will be a danger even to the Wise.”

It is clear from the Council of Elrond that the "Master" will care nothing for it, but any who desire to use it, even for good, will either be suborned by the true Lord of the Rings or will simply become "another Dark Lord."

Though nothing is evil in the beginning, according to Elrond, the Ring itself is "altogether evil." Within the Ring is much of Sauron himself: his power, his malice, his will to rule. Like all things that turn evil, mad, or weak in the Tolkien universe, the desire for control or possession seems at its root. Elves that shut themselves off from the world, Dwarves that hoard its riches, or men that seek to preserve their power or life—all find that control cannot preserve life, provide fulfillment or prevent disaster.

Those that bear the One Ring are scarred by its "burden" and are marked by restlessness and darkness all their unnaturally long lives. Unless they give it up quickly enough, the monstrosity and addiction to control is manifested in their bodies and split personalities, like that of Gollum. The peace of Tom Bombadil's house, his centered self, his songs, and his mercy speak to the mastery that he represents.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, the One Ring's incarnation of the concepts of lordship and control are contrasted with the personification of mastery and freedom in the character of Tom Bombadil, revealing Tolkien's mythic warning against any who, in seeking control, lose both themselves and the world.

Indeed, at the core of the mythic enterprise of Tolkien, Dorothy Sayers, C.S Lewis, and many others of their time was a warning against holding progress over permanence, of utility over nature, of control over harmony, of information over virtue, of certainty over courage, of rationality over faith and reason.

A world obsessed with method and technique without recourse to the nature of a thing, and therefore ignorant of ultimate

ends, or current harm. I will not specify how these ideas apply today, though of course they do. I will simply ask that each lover of truth and goodness think carefully about how what has been presented may affect our thoughts about such things as marriage, the environment, education, church organizations, media, government, international relations, business, parenthood, dating and family, etc.

Natural harmony is central to a life of freedom, as Tolkien knew well. His warning is found most clearly in the deeply inculcated though, granted, provincial wisdom of the Hobbits who exclaim, "it will have to be paid for ... it isn't natural, and trouble will come of it."

**Jonathan Cuncell** *is a contributing writer for Movieguide. [Click here for the original article.](#)*

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## **French Priest Kidnapped in Cameroon Set Free**

A French Catholic priest kidnapped in northern Cameroon last month was released on Monday and said he had spent the weeks pacing his tent prison, torn by a mixture of boredom and anger.

France said it had not paid any ransom for his release.

The Nov. 13 kidnapping of Georges Vandenbeusch, 42, was one of a series of attacks on French targets in Africa since France launched a military intervention in Mali in January to oust al-Qaida Islamists who had forged links with Boko Haram militants.

He had chosen to remain as a priest in northern Cameroon, a zone where Nigerian Islamist sect **Boko Haram** is known to operate, despite the security threat.

Arriving at the airport in Yaounde, Vandenbeusch, looking tired and dressed all in white, expressed thanks to authorities in Cameroon, France and Nigeria for his release.

“I am in good health and so grateful to those who worked for my release,” he told reporters before being taken to the French embassy. “(It was) terribly boring. I spent seven weeks with nothing to do, pacing in circles in my tent under a tree without a book to read or a person to talk to.”

He said he had felt sadness and anger at his kidnapping because he is very attached to inhabitants of the parish where he works, Christians, animists and Muslims alike.

“I was quite sure that many people were thinking of me, were working and praying for everything to turn out alright,” he said.

French President Francois Hollande thanked Cameroonian and Nigerian authorities for their work in securing his release and highlighted the “personal involvement” of Cameroonian President Paul Biya, according to the brief statement.

Nigerian authorities did not respond to requests for comment. Six French nationals continue to be held hostage in Mali and Syria.

The statement said Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius would travel imminently to the Cameroonian capital Yaounde to bring Vandenbeusch back to France.

Asked by RTL radio whether France had paid a ransom, Fabius said that was against its principles, adding: “There are always discussions which are complex and long and which, as it turns out, are not financial discussions.”

Hollande has said Paris ended a previous policy of paying ransoms for hostages. But suspicion that it still does so, despite repeated official denials, has been a source of tension with governments such as the United States.

Boko Haram kidnapped a French family of seven on holiday in northern Cameroon in February and released them in April.

A confidential Nigerian government report seen by Reuters said Boko Haram was given the equivalent of \$ million by French and Cameroonian negotiators. Hollande denied at the time that a ransom had been paid.

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*Editing by Natalie Huet and James Regan*

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## **One-Third of Americans Reject Evolution, Poll Shows**

One-third of Americans reject the idea of **evolution** and Republicans have grown more skeptical about it, according to a poll released on Monday.

Sixty percent of Americans say that “humans and other living things have evolved over time,” the telephone survey by the Pew Research Center’s Religion and Public Life Project showed. (Click [here](#) for the full survey.)

But 33 percent reject the idea of evolution, saying that “humans and other living things have existed in their present form since the beginning of time,” Pew said in a statement.

Although this percentage remained steady since 2009, the last time Pew asked the question, there was a growing partisan gap on whether humans evolved.

“The gap is coming from the Republicans, where fewer are now saying that humans have evolved over time,” said Cary Funk, a Pew senior researcher who conducted the analysis.

The poll showed 43 percent of Republicans and 67 percent of Democrats say humans have evolved over time, compared with 54 percent and 64 percent respectively four years ago.

Among religious groups, white **evangelical Protestants** topped the list of those rejecting evolution, with 64 percent of those polled saying they believe humans have existed in their present form since the beginning of time.

“This has been a staple of evangelical Protestantism for nearly 100 years,” said Alan Lichtman, an American University history professor and author of *White Protestant Nation: The Rise of the American Conservative Movement*.

A quarter of those surveyed told Pew that “a supreme being guided the evolution of living things.”

The survey of 1,983 adults in all 50 states was conducted from March 21 to April 8. The margin of error was 3 percentage points, meaning results could vary that much either way.

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*Reporting By Chris Francescani; Editing by Ian Simpson and Jonathan Oatis*

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# 7 Lessons From Rose Parade's Gay Wedding Float

**Editor's Note:** *Americans For Truth About Homosexuality (AFAH) President Peter LaBarbera offers the following seven lessons from the first-ever homosexual wedding occurring on a float in the annual Rose Parade in Pasadena, Calif, on New Year's Day.*

**1. The Homosexual 'Marriage' Movement Is Evil.** Moral-minded Americans need to face the truth of what the homosexual "marriage" movement is: a social evil—anti-Christian to the core—that celebrates what the Bible calls an egregious sexual sin as a moral good.

Homosexual activists are desperate to "normalize" their aberrant lifestyle. Their movement has become the Left's vanguard in undermining and redefining civilized Judeo-Christian principles. The LGBT lobby has become what historian Paul Johnson calls a "Monster in our Midst," trampling over and appropriating society's wholesome traditions and institutions—even Christianity itself—to achieve its godless goals.

**2. Platform to Corrupt Children.** The homosexual "marriage" movement corrupts impressionable children by teaching them that wrong is right (see Isaiah 5:20) and that erotic "love" between two people of the same sex is "equal" to natural marital love as ordained by God. Jesus Christ had strong words for anyone who promotes sin and corrupts the souls of innocent children.

**3. Even 'Conservative Aspects of LGBT Agenda Are Radical.** The Rose Parade's live homosexual "wedding" again illustrates that even the supposedly "conservative" side of the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) agenda is revolutionary and destructive—primarily because legalized, "domesticated"

homosexuality provides a very public platform from which to redefine God's wonderful institutions of marriage and family.

"Gay" activists and their liberal allies co-opt noble institutions like the Rose Parade and use them to indoctrinate children in the Big Lies that homosexuality is just another kind of love and a mere "civil rights" issue. Similarly, schools across America are being used to promote immoral same-sex conduct as an "equality" issue.

**4. Symbolic of America's Decline.** The "gay wedding" float is symbolic of America's ongoing moral disintegration: In the name of "tolerance," "diversity" and "inclusion," we proudly parade our sin down our streets—defying our Creator and aggressively corrupting the minds and souls of future generations.

As historians have documented, sexual immorality, escalating fornication and the abandonment of fidelity in marriage bring about the collapse of civilizations; the United States will be no exception. No wonder developing nations like Jamaica don't want to emulate us.

**5. Folly of Secular (Pro-'Gay') Conservatives.** The homosexual "wedding" float clearly demonstrates the folly of secular "conservatives" (like atheist S.E. Cupp) and libertarians who argue that legalized homosexual "marriage" is a conservative proposition. Radically remolding God-given institutions to celebrate sin—and modeling such deviance and confusion as normal to impressionable children—is hardly "conservative." In fact, it is the essence of the Left's destructive Sexual Revolution. Republicans will seal their own demise if they foolishly embrace counterfeit "marriage" and other aspects of homosexuality, replacing their pro-family Platform.

**6. Demonizing Christians as 'Haters' and 'Bigots.'** As the Phil Robertson/*Duck Dynasty* controversy shows, homosexual groups like GLAAD regularly smear moral and religious critics with

malicious slurs like “Bigots, Haters, and Homophobes.” Opposing homosexuality (the ideology of proud homosexuality as a “civil right”) in all its forms is not “hate.” Rather, it is being faithfully obedient to our loving, holy Creator. True Christians should offer the hope of the life-changing gospel—not counterfeit “marriage”—to homosexuals. Jesus has helped many people like Michael Glatze abandon homosexual sin.

**7. Faithful Christians Must Speak Out Now.** The unbiblical “progressive evangelical” and liberal Catholic movement to affirm unrepentant homosexuals as “Christians” serves Satan’s agenda, not God’s. (Substitute another sexual sin for “gay” and see if it makes sense: Would the Rose Parade allow a live incestuous “union” atop one of its floats?)

Bible-believing Christians must speak out against the agenda to normalize homosexuality—especially since children are its target. If Christians will not resist the evil specter of homosexual “marriage,” who will?

*Peter LaBarbera, president of Americans For Truth About Homosexuality, has more than two decades experience fighting and exposing the powerful, well-funded homosexual lobby. Find him on Twitter at @PeterLaBarbera.*

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## **Pope Has Not Abolished Sin, Says Vatican**

The Vatican felt compelled on Tuesday to deny that Pope Francis had “abolished sin”, after a well-known Italian intellectual wrote that he had effectively done so through his words and gestures.

The singular exchange began on Sunday when Eugenio Scalfari, an atheist who writes opinion pieces for the left-leaning La Repubblica newspaper, published an article titled "Francis' Revolution: He has abolished sin".

Scalfari, who held a long private conversation with the pope earlier this year and wrote about it several times, concluded in the complex, treatise-like article that Francis believed sin effectively no longer existed because God's mercy and forgiveness were "eternal".

Vatican spokesman Father Federico Lombardi told Vatican Radio that "this affirmation that the pope has abolished sin" was wrong.

"Those who really follow the pope daily know how many times he has spoken about sin and our (human) condition as sinners," Lombardi said.

It was not the first brush between the Vatican and Scalfari, who founded La Repubblica newspaper in 1976.

Last month the Vatican removed from its website the text of Scalfari's transcript of his conversation with the pope, saying parts of it were not reliable.

Scalfari said he had not used a tape recorder or taken notes when he met the pope but reconstructed the long session from memory afterwards and made additions to help the flow of the article.

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# Iron Dome Manufacturer CEO: 'I Sleep Well'

The security situation in Israel has grown increasingly tense of late, with a spike in terror attacks carried out on numerous fronts, and through various means, by both recognized terror groups and presumed "lone wolf" assailants. But such developments don't rattle VADM (ret.) Yedidia Yaari.

"I sleep well because I know we (Israelis) have the capability to outsmart our enemies in every respect," says Yaari—president and CEO of Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd., Israel's second-largest government owned defense company—in an interview with .

Recent attacks on Israel include Qassam rockets fired by Palestinian terrorists in Gaza last week, and a Dec. 29 barrage of Katyusha rockets fired at northern Israel from Lebanon. There were no injuries reported in either incident. The Israel Defense Forces responded in the south by targeting Hamas terror targets in Gaza, including a weapons-manufacturing facility and a weapons-storage facility. In the north, the IDF launched artillery shells targeting the source of the rocket fire. The IDF, fearing further escalation, has also reportedly redeployed the Iron Dome system in several southern Israeli towns.

Rafael—the Iron Dome's manufacturer—researches, develops, manufactures, and supplies a wide range of air, land, sea, and space application defense systems for domestic use and for IDF soldiers in the field. The company's 2012 sales amounted to \$1.8 billion, with a backlog of orders worth \$4.2 billion.

Since its deployment in April 2011, the Iron Dome has had a success rate of better than 90 percent, intercepting more than 500 short and medium range rockets and missiles fired at

southern Israel within 100 kilometers from Gaza. In partnership with Raytheon Missile Systems, Rafael has also developed the David's Sling system to defend Israel against long-range artillery rockets, short-range ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and other traditional air-defense threats. In November, the system successfully completed its second interception test against a short-range ballistic missile. Yaari is hopeful that David's Sling will be fully operational by 2015.

Yaari has been in his current role at Rafael since December of 2004, after an illustrious 39-year career in Israel's Navy during which he served as commander in chief since 2000. The Iron Dome and David's Sling, he explains, are the first two components within Israel's "three-tiered umbrella defense system," which also includes the joint Arrow Weapons System, already deployed to intercept long-range surface to surface ballistic missiles while they are still outside of the earth's atmosphere.

But how is Rafael—a relatively small defense company when compared to other similar companies around the world, with just 6,500 employees—able to compete in the global marketplace? Yaari tells , "Our secret to compete with the U.S., Russia, France, in this brutal competition is simply the skill set and excellent engineering corps developed here for the past 60 years in our R&D (research and development center. [With] our variety of technicians, their depth of knowledge, [and] such a variety of technologies, we are a unique company, and while we are small [we] can compete with these giants."

Another advantage Rafael has is "the spirit of the people," according to Yaari.

"Rafael has retained a special type of personal commitment from everyone who works here, which has enabled us to form a concentrated effort," he says.

Yaari says Rafael developed the Iron Dome system in a way no one else has done—from scratch. “This was accomplished with hundreds of people working together around the clock for three years,” he says.

At one point while the Iron Dome was being developed, Yaari recalls that those working on the project took a break and were bused down to the beleaguered Gaza-border town of Sderot, where thousands of rockets have fallen since the year 2000.

“We went down to Sderot for a day, to meet with the residents and get an intimate feel of who we were working for. That visit made us push even stronger [to finish],” he says.

Yaari explains that the Iron Dome—currently with six operational batteries available for deployment at short notice, based on threat assessment—is a relatively inexpensive, yet highly efficient, solution against different types of “mass rocket-based artillery that the opposition is using, including Qassam rockets as well as Grad and Fajr missiles, which is our current problem.” He says the Iron Dome “exceeded all expectations” during Israel’s 12-day Operation Pillar of Defense mission against Gazan terror in November 2012. During that time, when more than 1,500 rockets were fired at Israel, Iron Dome batteries were strategically deployed and programmed only to shoot down rockets that were headed directly towards Israeli civilian population centers. The Iron Dome deemed two-thirds of the rockets fired at Israel during Pillar of Defense to be non-threatening, and the system intercepted 90 percent of the threatening rockets.

Thanks to the Iron Dome, Israel was “still able to function in the midst of a war” during Pillar of Defense, says Yaari.

“The trains were running, people were going to work, the port at Ashdod was open, everything became sustainable,” he says, adding that the Iron Dome’s presence meant that the Israeli government’s decisions during the war were made “in a

controlled manner.

“They didn’t have to make hasty decisions, as the entire situation was manageable,” Yaari says.

Rafael’s CEO feels deep gratitude to the U.S. government for providing Israel with the funding necessary to deploy an additional four Iron Dome batteries once the first two were in place.

“We should be thankful to the United States and the president,” Yaari says. “Whenever I travel to the U.S. and meet with Congress I say, ‘Thank you.’ It was really life-saving, and we all have to be grateful for that. It was a special gesture, and [for those who doubt the U.S. commitment to Israel], it is wrong to downplay the effect [U.S. support] has on our defense.”

Since the Iron Dome is specifically geared towards countering one type of threat, Yaari says the joint David’s Sling system is necessary “to intercept the cruise missiles, and short to medium range ballistic missiles, which are becoming more and more relevant.” He says that David’s Sling also has the capability to defend against “UAV’s (unmanned ariel vehicles, also known as drones), jetfighters, and helicopters—any flying object within the atmosphere.”

Shifting the focus of the conversation to the Iranian threat, Yaari says that the current challenges posed by the Islamic Republic—not only for Israel, but also for other countries who might be targeted—are “Iran’s unlimited funding, skill sets, manpower, and huge amounts of resources which for quite some time have been directed towards defense.”

Yaari describes a fierce and competitive race for technology, where in the coming years he says Israel “must distance itself” from Iran by making greater military advances. He believes Israel is up for that challenge.

“I think it’s feasible [for Israel to outpace Iran], I really do,” Yaari says. “The real problem is what eventually will be translated into practice on the battlefield. In other words, how much of [Iran’s] potential capabilities will we have to confront. But I believe we are capable.”

*For the original article, visit .*

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## **Darlene Zschech Faces Battle With Breast Cancer**

Christian singer-songwriter Darlene Zschech recently posted a blog announcing that she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

The malignancy was discovered after a routine mammogram on Dec. 11.

Zschech said she’s already had surgery and was released from SAN hospital in Sydney on Christmas Eve.

Despite her challenges during recovery, the singer said she’s found comfort in the Holy Spirit and the Bible.

“Even though the past days have been very tough at times, the Holy Spirit has brought me endless comfort and the Word of God is literally holding me moment by moment,” she wrote.

The singer added that her family, both spiritual and natural, has also been a blessing.

“My husband and children have been heroic and I can’t thank my family enough for their love and support through this. Our church leadership team have anointed me with oil and prayed with unity and authority, a band of trusted friends have

helped me prayerfully and practically,” she continued.

Zschech boasted about two miracles in her body she’s experienced thus far. She didn’t provide details about the miracles but declared that she’s confident there are more to come.

Please join us in praying for her speedy recovery.

For updates go to .

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## **What’s God’s Purpose for You in 2014?**

New Year’s Day is a good time to do something most of us never do—set some goals. Most of the time we call them “New Year’s Resolutions” and we abandon them within a few weeks. Yet I believe God wants us to do more than that. We must determine God’s purpose for our life and for this New Year.

I’ve done this for nearly four decades by setting long-range and short-range goals. Maybe you can learn from my experience in writing goals and letting God use that to set priorities and to accomplish more than you would without them.

Most people spend more time planning their annual vacations than they do planning their lives. My observation is that even most believers drift along in life with no clear direction. It’s been documented that the people who actually write down and work on the goals they set are the most successful in life. I believe they are usually the happiest too, because they have a sense of purpose and fulfillment.

Myles Munroe believes that God wants us to become people who

have plans. He believes that plans are documented imagination. If we can document an imagination, we've developed a plan for action.

"If you are having real problems in your life, you probably don't have a piece of paper on which you have documented your plans for the next five years," he says. "You're just living from day to day in the absence of a concrete, documented plan. You've been dealing with the same issues and habits and struggles for years. You slide forward a little only to slide backward again. Whenever things get hard, you start reminiscing about 'the good old days' and fall back into habits you had conquered. Progress requires a plan of action. Ideas must be put down if they are to influence the way you live."

It's important to know how to set goals.

Are your goals written down? Do other people know about them? Does your spouse? Do your friends?

**Begin with general goals.** I set written goals every week. In the "notes" portion of my iPhone, I have goals for the year—spiritual, family, physical, professional.

**Break your general goals down into specific daily tasks.** Mine are written in my iPhone so that I have them with me wherever I go. Each month I make the general goals specific and break them down to daily tasks. I probably only finish 80 percent of them because as I complete them, I set more.

The times I get away from fulfilling my goals are the times when I drift. Goals give me a sense of direction, boundaries and priorities.

**Set some life goals.** I like to talk with people about theirs. One of my favorite ways to relax is to get a bite to eat with a friend and ask them about their goals. I might ask how much money they want to make in five years, or what career path

they want to take. I'll ask what they want people to say in their obituary.

Most people have an opinion about these things, but few actually have a plan.

**Establish a personal mission statement.** Many people go through a difficult mid-life period, which may rob them of goals or make them feel as if what they have achieved is ephemeral. Patrick Morley, author of *The Man in the Mirror*, says that midlife is like a lake.

“Early in our lives we run swift like a river, but shallow. As we put years behind us, though, we deepen. Then one day, we enter the opened jaws of midlife,” Morley says. “Where once we felt direction and velocity, suddenly we find ourselves swirling about, sometimes aimlessly, or so it seems. Each of us, like individual droplets of water, will take a different path through this part of the journey. For some of us it will only be a slowdown. Others will feel forgotten and abandoned by the father of the river. Some, unable to see where the waters converge and on again grow strong, will despair.”

Morley's crisis started at 36. He says that it can occur well into your mid-50s. (Remember, in our diverse culture there is no singular mid-life experience anymore). “You come to a point that you feel somehow imbalanced—like something is missing,” he says, “like it's not enough. All the years of pressure deadlines have taken a toll. You have discovered a vacuum in your soul for meaning, beauty, and quiet.”

He recommends writing a life mission statement that includes four elements:

1. A life purpose: Why you exist
2. A calling: What you do
3. A vision or mental picture of what you want to happen

#### 4. A mission: How you will go about it

Morley takes us full cycle through the birth of one vision, the implementing of that vision, the setting of goals to attain it, the commitment to a personal mission statement and on to the birth of a new vision that is greater than the first.

“A new vision must spring up from a foundation of gratitude for what God has already done to use us and make us useful,” Morley says. “The motivation cannot merely be wanderlust; not more for the sake of more. Rather, one chapter has closed and another beckons to be opened. A vision is a goal—a big one. Visions are not the work of today or tomorrow or even next month. Rather, a vision has a longer term.”

He reminds us that visions rarely turn out exactly as planned. The apostle Paul had the vision of going to Jerusalem and then to Rome. He didn't consider that he would make those visits as a prisoner, but that's how it came about. Often, God must delay the fulfilling of a vision or desire until He has prepared us to be people who can handle it with grace and humility. It is not God's nature to give us greater visions and accomplishments if they work to our destruction. Instead, God allows us to be hammered into the shape of a vessel that can gracefully contain the vision.

What God-inspired goals do you have for your life? Are you a scientist or doctor who can set a goal of finding a cure for a disease? Are you an entrepreneur who can pledge to give several million dollars to a credible missions organization? Are you a board member or pastor who can start a program for the poor in your city, or network churches to meet the need?

What would do you if there were no boundaries on your imagination or budget?

If you haven't had big goals and dreams before now, I pray you will learn to set goals for 2014 and give them deadlines. Keep

in mind that when you stand before the Lord, He will hold you accountable for the talents, resources and dreams He bestowed upon you. You stand to lose nothing by going for God's highest plan for you. On the day when He says to you, "Well done, you good and faithful servant," you will know that you attempted and accomplished much for your Savior.

Please leave your comments. Do you agree with me? Did I motivate you to set some goals? What is a goal you achieved because you wrote it down? What are the biggest things you hope to accomplish in 2014?

**Steve Strang** is the founder and publisher of Charisma. Follow him on Twitter at @sstrang or Facebook (stephenestrang).

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## **Franklin Graham on Father's Health, Pope Francis and Homosexuality**

Franklin Graham recently opened up about his father, the pope and controversial social issues in an interview that aired Sunday.

"I've never really been one to try to be politically correct. I just feel truth is truth, and sometimes I probably offend some people," told reporter Harry Smith on NBC's *Meet the Press*.

Graham, president of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and the humanitarian aid organization Samaritan's Purse, said Pope Francis is not the judge on homosexuality, but God is.

"God's Word is the same yesterday and today and a million

years from now, that it's sin," he said when asked about Pope Francis' remarks on homosexuality. "To tell somebody that it's OK, I know the consequences of what will happen one day when they have to stand before God. I want to warn people, and I think the pope is right when he says he is not the judge. He is not the judge. God is the judge."

Pope Francis made headlines earlier this year when he said, "If a person is gay and seeks God and has goodwill, who am I to judge them?"

Graham also spoke about his father's health. Billy Graham has been in a weakened state since the celebration of his 95th birthday on Nov. 7.

"He's very weak," Franklin Graham said. "His vitals are good—blood pressure, heart rate, these things are good. And he's eating a little bit, but he's just extremely weak. So I've asked people to pray. People who are watching this program, I hope they would pray for him. He would appreciate it very much."

As part of a nationwide campaign that culminated on his birthday, *My Hope with Billy Graham*, the famed evangelist preached what will likely be his last sermon.

"Help my father finish well," Graham said. "I feel that's what God wanted me to do is to help him finish well."

Graham also said that sermon received more response than anything his father had done before.

"And when I told him," Graham added, "he was quiet for a second, then he just said, 'Praise the Lord!' And he said it real strong with a loud voice, and he was excited."

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# **The Juice Lady's Secrets to a Successful Juice Fast**

Watch Cherie "The Juice Lady" Calbom share her testimony and offer specific tips, recipes and principles for a juice fast.