

Jordan Peterson: The 'No. 1 Thing' Americans Need to Accomplish Goals

Without vision—apart from obedience to all the Lord has commanded in Scripture—the thread of our lives quickly unravels. Missteps and mistakes are, more often than not, the result of a failure to plan.

Clinical psychologist Jordan Peterson recently spoke with author and talk radio host Dave Ramsey about the value in and importance of financial planning—something many Americans fail to do.

“I’ve had lots of clients who were much better off when they had no money at all,” Peterson said. “Those were often people who had addiction problems, because, as soon as they had any money at all, they were in the bar and into the cocaine until they were face-down in the ditch. So there’s all sorts of causes of poverty and certainly one form of poverty and one cause of poverty is absence of a plan.

“You need to develop a vision for your life and that makes delaying gratification, for example, and not engaging in impulsive momentary pleasure worthwhile because you’re building toward something you actually want to attain,” he continued. “We’re very bad in our society—appallingly and miraculously bad—at helping people develop a vision.”

The Canadian professor and renowned speaker chastised the school system for failing to teach children how to effectively plan for their futures, calling the number of people now living in poverty a “miracle of stupidity” that could have been avoided.

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“Our school system was set up to produce mindless, obedient workers,” he told Ramsey. “We haven’t updated our notion of what schools are for 140 years.”

A failure to plan, Peterson asserted, is a major reason people in the U.S. end up trapped in poverty. In fact, choosing to plan—in any area of life—seems always to improve one’s quality of life.

Peterson claimed those who use “future authoring”—the practice of taking time to map out with a pen and paper one’s future goals—improve their grade-point averages by 35% and decrease their dropout rates to 50% below the national average.

“It’s the No. 1 thing we should be teaching people—and we don’t do it at all,” said Peterson. “Who do you want to be and why? What do you want your life to look like in five years?”

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