

Set Your 'Spiritual GPS' for the New Year

At the beginning of every New Year I always reassess my goals, sharpen my objectives and pray for God's blessing. I ask myself: What do I want God to accomplish in my life this year? How do I want to grow personally, in my relationships and in my career? Then I seek the Lord to hear what He is saying to me about the next 12 months.

I call this exercise "resetting my GPS." I encourage you to try it. Here's how it works:

G stands for "Goals." People with goals have a sense of purpose, and they aren't easily distracted. On the other hand, those with no ambitions wander aimlessly. If you aim at nothing, you will surely hit it. Setting a goal is the first step toward success.

I see the power of goal setting in the life of the apostle Paul. He was motivated by a fiery passion to take the gospel to the Gentiles. In his lifetime he traveled on foot or by ship, chariot or horseback to what is now Turkey, Syria, Greece, Crete, Malta and Italy. His goal drove him forward.

He also set a goal to preach in Spain (see Rom. 15:24, 28). We don't know if he reached Spain or not, but that goal certainly stoked his zeal and motivated him to wake up every morning. When he wrote these words—"I press toward the goal to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14)—he was in chains in a Roman prison. Paul didn't let obstacles deter him.

There's a difference between a dream and a goal. Dreams can be elusive—always "somewhere out there"—if the person dreaming never takes a first step. Your most vital step is to write down your goal. State it clearly and aim at it. The prophet

said in Habakkuk 2:2: "Write the vision, and make it plain on tablets, that he who reads it may run." You can't run toward your vision unless it is clearly articulated.

P stands for "Prophetic Word." For many years I've developed the habit of seeking the Lord for a word for the coming year. Sometimes God gives me a verse from the Bible. Other times I get a phrase or simply one word. As I was praying for 2018, for example, the Lord said, "Advance" and "Take possession," and He gave me Joshua 1. He also encouraged me to study the book of Joshua during 2018.

You don't have to be a prophet to receive a personalized directive like this. God knows you, and He knows your future. He also knows the challenges you face and the storms that may come this year. Jeremiah 29:11 says: "For I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord, plans for peace and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." God loves you. If you seek Him, He will speak a word to your heart.

Once you receive that prophetic word, hold onto it no matter what happens. God gave Abraham and Sarah a promise about an heir, but it took 25 years before Isaac was born. God does not work according to your timetable; you must submit to His schedule. The prophetic word is certain; you can bank on it. It will fill your heart with the hope and encouragement you need to move forward, in spite of delays, setbacks, personal failures, relationship breakups, illness, job loss, miscarriages, deaths or disasters.

S stands for "Special Prayer." The most important part of resetting my spiritual GPS is setting aside time to pray. I call it "special" prayer because it's beyond the norm of my daily routine. I feel most prepared for a New Year if I can unplug and devote a block of time to commit my plans and goals to the Lord.

Setting goals is a great step toward success, but goals are

nothing if God did not inspire them. Proverbs 16:9 says: "A man's heart devises his way, but the Lord directs his steps." When we take our goals to God in prayer, we allow Him to override them if they are misguided; we also give Him permission to expand our goals if they are limited. We bow before God's throne and tell Him that we only want His plans, not ours.

Proverbs 16:3 says: "Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established." You can facilitate special prayer in several ways. You may want to fast for a few days; you might go away for a weekend prayer retreat; or you could stay up a few nights and have a prayer vigil. Some churches also organize special days of corporate prayer at the beginning of the year.

You don't have to adopt the same prayer routine every year. The important thing is to take your plans to God and ask for His grace, power and strength to overshadow you during the next season. Ask for big things. Seek God's wisdom and strategy. Knock on heaven's door for His miracles.

Expect God to speak to your heart. He will reveal His plans, rekindle your dreams, calm your fears and stir your faith so you can experience your best year ever.