

Have You Set Your 'GPS' for 2021?

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

I'll admit this has not been an easy exercise for me this year. 2020 was exhausting, and the first two weeks of 2021 have already been incredibly intense! But I'm not going to let fear, discouragement or spiritual warfare hinder me from walking in faith. God has a plan for you and me, and a pandemic can't stop it.

Every year I engage in an exercise I call "resetting my GPS." I encourage you to try it. Here's how it works:

1. **G stands for "Goals."** Setting a goal is the first step toward success. 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.

I see the power of goal setting in the life of the apostle Paul. He was motivated by a passion to take the gospel to the Gentiles. In his lifetime he traveled 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 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.

But remember 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. 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 stated.

2. 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 2021, for example, the Lord said, “This will be a year of reaping.” He also spoke to me from Habakkuk 3:17-18 that I must rejoice even when I don't see fruit.

You don't have to be a prophet to receive a personalized directive like this. God knows you. He also knows the challenges you face and the storms that may come. 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.” If you seek the Lord, 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. A prophetic word will fill your heart with the hope and encouragement you need to move forward, in spite of delays, setbacks, personal failures, relationship breakups, illness, political turmoil or the loss of a loved one.

3. 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 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. My home church in Georgia is encouraging people to fast and pray the first few weeks of 2021.

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 GPS coordinates. Seek God's wisdom and strategy. Knock on heaven's door for His miracles. Ask for big things.

Expect God to speak to you. He will reveal His plans, rekindle your dreams, calm your fears and stir your faith so that 2021 will be a victorious year. {eoa}