

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?

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