Making the Most of the New Year

Setting Real Goals for Real Success

Adapted from Ron Edmondson’s *Writing a Winning Life Plan*
Keep in Mind:

“If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.”

Winston Churchill

First, Last and In-Between

I am a BIG fan of goal-setting. Corrie (my wife) and I have a running set of goals for our family. I make personal goals. I have goals for the ministry. When the goals are reached, I am on top of the world. I love the sense of accomplishment.

I am also a big fan of the process. I believe deeply that it is in the process where we see and engage God deepest. If I only engage God during accomplishment, I am greatly missing out on learning who God is through the process of living.

Life is a journey, not a destination. This guide is written to help with the journey. Even as you accomplish goals over the next year, don’t forget that even these are simply part of the journey moving us closer to the destination.

Being more like Jesus is the destination.

“This is the kind of life you've been invited into, the kind of life Christ lived. He suffered everything that came his way so you would know that it could be done, and also know how to do it, step-by-step”

1 Peter 2:21-22, The Message

As you work your way through this guide, know this...we can make plans. Using the wisdom God gave us, we can plan and pursue living accomplishing lives...yet, it is still God who moves according to His own counsel...and His counsel is what lasts!

“We humans keep brainstorming options and plans, but GOD's purpose prevails.” Proverbs 19:21, The Message

“Instead, make it a habit to say, "If the Master wills it and we're still alive, we'll do this or that." James 4:15, The Message

My hope in this guide is that you will find the courage to be intentional with life, prayerfully setting goals...all for the glory of God to be known in your life and the lives of others!
If God could do anything in you, for you or through you...what would you want it to be?

Don’t lose hope.
(You never know what tomorrow will bring.)

Make this your prayer today. As you work your way through this goal setting guide, keep this vision of God moving in your life in mind!
Day 1: Basic Goals

As we head into a new year, I want to help you think through life planning. I believe in purposeful living.

Here is a reality that I have experienced personally and in observation of so many others. Most likely, the degree of success you experience this next year will be directly proportional to the direction you head your life and the intentionality you have with the decisions you make. If you have an idea or goal of where you want to go and a plan of action coupled with discipline, you are more likely to achieve your desired results. You can’t control some of the things life brings you, but you will have a better chance of achieving your dreams if you create some organization in your life to help you reach them.

I also believe simple is good…so for the next few days, I want to offer segments of developing a one-year life plan. I’ll break it down a little each day to keep it from seeming overwhelming. At the end of the week, if you follow along, you’ll at least have a plan of action. (If you have a better way of doing this…I welcome your input…the key is doing it far more than how…)

Today, let’s set some goals for ourselves...

List three to five goals total...if you have too many, you’ll burnout trying to reach them, and too few will keep you from achieving all that’s possible.

Include a stretch goal, such as run a marathon, read through the Bible, learn to fly a plane, get out of debt, start a side business, or write a book.
Side note: For those who are thinking...God is in control of my destiny...so I’ll just let Him direct my paths...I don’t need a plan...

I couldn’t agree with you more about God being in control...as He should be.

All our plans and goals are futile without His input, but read through the Bible, and you’ll see countless illustrations of how God allows men and women who seek Him to create a plan of action: sometimes for good and sometimes not.

There are times God gives us clear and direct instructions, and other times (I would say most times), God allows us to figure out the best course of action based on the wisdom and experiences He has allowed us to have.

At this point, they can be very general. They shouldn’t all be “stretch goals”; limit that to one or two, but they all should be goals designed to take you somewhere you want to go in life, somewhere you hope to improve.

So spend some time today and list your goals. Remember, no more than five....no less than three...

Here are examples:

- Lose 10 pounds.
- Improve my marriage communication.
- Pay off my credit card.
- Read through the Bible.
- Write a book.

Are you up for the challenge?

List 3 to 5 simple goals, as exampled above, that are important to you:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Day 2: Bringing Definition to My Goals

I hear people talk every year about resolutions...some make them...some don’t...some hate them...some keep them...most don’t.

I’m confident the main reason most do not keep them and many refuse to make them is that they never put a plan of action together or applied enough discipline that would ensure success. Why make a goal if you can’t ever keep it....right? We don’t like continual failure.

The point of this guide is to put some feet to the idea of goal setting. In Part 1 you were asked to list three to five goals you have for the new year.

If you have your goals listed, today we’ll get more specific with them. The key here is to further define your goals into something that is measurable; something where you can clearly track your progress and success.

To help with this part, ask the question for each goal:
- What would success look like for this goal?
- What would make me feel I’ve completed this resolution?

For illustration purposes, I’m using the same goals I listed in the example yesterday. First is the stated goal, followed by the more specific description of that goal:

**Lose 10 pounds** – I want to lose 10 pounds by June 1, by eating less and exercising more.

**Improve my marriage communication** – I want my wife and I to argue less about things, simply due to poor communication. I want to understand her better and find more times when we are on the same page without arguing to get there.
Pay off my credit card - I want to pay off $7,000 worth of debt by Thanksgiving.

Read through the Bible - I want to be able to say I have read the entire Bible and finish all of it this year, without losing interest in three months. I want to read the Bible consistently throughout the year at least 5 days per week.

Write a book - I want to finish one of the many book ideas I have, have it completely written, and either have a publisher for the book or decide to self-publish.

Do you see the progression to a more measurable, specific goal here?

At times, while completing this second step it may redefine, shape, or even change the original goals. That’s okay...keep in mind this is your life plan...no one else’s. The hope is that you complete a plan this year that you are pleased with and that you make progress towards achieving your life ambitions...not that you complete it in a way that pleases others.

Again, the goal here is to take this in steps and make it simple. Tomorrow we’ll take this another step forward.

Using your goals from yesterday, add definition. What do you really want to see with that goal in mind? Use the two guiding questions to help along the way.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.
Day 3: Setting Up Steps to Accomplishment

This week we are writing life plans for the coming year. The purpose of this guide is to help you start the year on a good path towards reaching those goals.

Today we add another step. Let me be honest. This step is not as fun as setting goals...at least for people wired like me.

This is a little more difficult and will take a little more time to complete, but it is a vital step to the success of your plans. Chances are good that if you fail to keep your goals, not doing this step well is the more likely reason.

In this step, we will write some action steps, which will help us reach our specific goals. The question you should attempt to answer here is: **What specific action steps do I need to take to ensure I reach my goals?**

Be specific here. The more specific the action step the greater chance you have of completing it. We’ll continue to use the same hypothetical set of goals for illustration purposes. Below you will see the specific goals followed by the action steps.

**Lose 10 pounds** – I want to lose 10 pounds by June 1, by eating less and exercising more.
- Exercise on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays
- Limit eating fast food at lunch to twice a week
- Stop drinking diet soft drinks and drink more water
- Keep track of calories, attempting to eat less than 2,000 calorie per day

**Pay off my credit card** - I want to pay off $7,000 worth of debt by Thanksgiving.
- Limit eating dinner out to once a week
- Work to refinance the house
- Write a realistic budget by Jan 30th
- Participate in Dave Ramsey’s *Financial Peace University*
**Read through the Bible** - I want to be able to say I have read the entire Bible and finish all of it this year, without losing interest in three months. I want to read the Bible consistently throughout the year at least 5 days per week.

- Get the YouVersion application for your phone or computer
- Use one of YouVersion’s daily reading plan
- Not check Facebook or email until I’ve read the Bible
- Follow along with my small group curriculum

**Write a book** - I want to finish one of the many book ideas I have, have it completely written, and either have a publisher for the book or decide to self-publish.

- Write a book proposal by January 30th
- Send out proposal letters to book publishers and agents by March 1st.
- Outline book chapters by Feb 15th
- Write a chapter every two weeks beginning March 1st

**Improve my marriage communication** – I want my wife and I to argue less about things, simply due to poor communication. I want to understand her better and find more times when we are on the same page without arguing to get there. I want us to be able to talk through issues without raising our voice at each other.

- Write out questions for our date nights to answer together...
- Read one marriage book together and do one Bible study together
- Attend a marriage conference this year
- Have a date night every week

As we said earlier, during this step you may decide to alter some of your goals...or even scrap one of them...that’s okay...they’re your goals. You are far more likely to follow through with goals you fully believe you can accomplish!

*What do you think? Is this difficult? Is this helpful?*

We’ve been writing a life plan this week. I hope you are following along and writing your own plan. I’m looking forward to hearing the goals you have and the success you see in attaining them. I have tried to keep it simple, hoping that will improve your chances of following through to completion.

**Now, use the space provided on the following pages to write out your action steps to accomplishing your goals!**
Goal:

Definition:

Steps to Accomplish My Goal:
1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Goal:

Definition:

Steps to Accomplish My Goal:
1.

2.

3.

4.

5.
Goal:

Definition:

Steps to Accomplish My Goal:
1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Goal:

Definition:

Steps to Accomplish My Goal:
1.

2.

3.

4.

5.
Day 4: Accountability

Today we add another step in the process... **Accountability**...

If you want to see your goals become reality, you need to build a system of accountability into your plan.

If you are confident you want to complete the detailed goals you’ve set, and you believe the action plan you have written will help you meet them, then you must find a way to hold yourself accountable to completing the action steps.

You’ll need to add accountability you are comfortable with and makes sense for your goals and action steps, but here are some suggestions to consider:

- Put action items on your calendar for the next year. I have some items that repeat throughout the year.
- Print your life plan and share it with someone. Give them permission to check in with you throughout the year.
- Find a partner. This is especially helpful when exercising or in weight loss. (This is what makes Weight Watchers successful.)
- Use an application/program such as Things, Google Calendar, or Outlook, to schedule tasks and set alarms to remind you of your action steps.
- Post your goals on Facebook or in a blog. There’s something about going public that builds a stronger desire for completion.

The key here is to build a system that will hold you accountable to completion of your goals. As you repeat the actions and see results towards your goals, you will develop habits in these areas and in the process of doing so you’ll find you are completing more of your goals.

**Take some time today to develop accountability: put things on the calendar...share your goals with a trusted friend...you decide what steps work for you!**
Day 5: Celebrate

It’s day 5 of our life planning series. This week we’ve attempted to take it step-by-step, in a simple format, to write a plan that will help us achieve some specific goals for the new year.

Today we have our final step...and it’s a good one...in fact...it’s my favorite....

Possibly yours too!

The last step in our life plan is to....CELEBRATE THE WIN!

In fact, you must! It’s critical to any long-term success. Build a reward in for the completion of each of your goals... The size of the reward can be based on the size of the goal and the size of your budget, but it should be enticing enough to keep you motivated.

It’s been said that what gets rewarded gets repeated...and that seems to be true from my experience.

Find a way to celebrate achieving your goals this year.

Using our hypothetical goals, here’s an example of what this might look like:

**Lose 10 pounds** - Buy a new outfit...or two...

**Improve my marriage communication** – Plan a special vacation together or eat at your favorite restaurant...

**Pay off my credit card** – Buy a new couch...but pay cash for it...

**Read through the Bible** - Give a Bible to someone who needs one.

**Write a book** - Get a weekend away to do nothing....absolutely nothing.

Keep in Mind:

Celebrating is so critical...reach your goals...enjoy them...celebrate and give God the glory!
These are just hypothetical. You can come up with something better for you to celebrate. It is important that you reward yourself though.

Obviously you may need to get help accomplishing some of these rewards, but that’s part of the beauty of Step 4. As others are included in your progress they will be enticed to help celebrate your win.

That’s the planning process. *Simple enough?*

**Write out your goals with matching celebrations...make it something to look forward to!**

1. Goal:
   - Reward:

2. Goal:
   - Reward:

3. Goal:
   - Reward:

4. Goal:
   - Reward:

5. Goal:
   - Reward:
It’s 2012...what will you do with your year?

This guide was written to help you maximize your year! With a bit of focus...applied wisdom...and prayer—2012 could be your most effective personal year ever!