

Tools for Wise Leadership

A programme of TWR-Africa, produced by TWR-Zimbabwe, presented by Rev Dr Roy Musasiwa

Series 14: Personal Development Planning

Talk 4: Personal Development Planning - Goals and Strategies

Welcome to the programme Tools for Wise Leadership. In this series I am taking you through the issue of personal development planning. We are saying you have to take responsibility for your own personal development. You have to be intentional about it; you are not a tree that just develops by itself as long as the environment is conducive to such growth. You are a person created in the image of God, with a mind and a will. Therefore your development should be a matter of intelligent planning.

We have so far pointed out that your personal development plan should consist of the following four elements:

- Your vision of the future
- Your life mission
- Your goals and strategies
- The values you live by

We have already looked at vision and mission. Now we are starting to talk about personal goals and strategies. A goal is what you intend to achieve. A strategy is how you intend to achieve it. For example your goal is reach a certain destination within 12 hours. How will you do it? The moment you ask that question you are now seeking a strategy. Will you board a bus? Will you perhaps drive your own car or go by air? You see goals by themselves without accompanying strategies will not lead to achievement. So today we are going to be talking about the development of your personal goals and strategies.

Personal goals must be for a balanced life rather than being one sided. In John 10:10 Jesus assures us that he came that we might have life to the full. This life, in order to be full, must cover all aspects of our well-being. Your life has a number of important facets or dimensions, all of which deserve some attention in your personal development planning. It is necessary to come up with goals in life that cover physical, spiritual, work or career, family, social relationships, financial security and mental improvement. We intend to discuss goals to all these dimensions as they are important to a leader's self-development planning.

But first let us answer the question of why we need to set goals? Well firstly, goals make us better people, quite apart from helping us to achieve our vision and helping us to live according to our mission. When we set goals, those goals in turn mould us into certain types of people. Leadership guru Jim Rohn says it well, "The major reason for setting a goal is for what it makes of you to accomplish it. What it makes of you will always be the far greater value than what you get... Goals are great because they cause us to stretch and grow in ways that we never have before. In order to reach our goals we must become better. We must change and grow."

We have biblical examples of people who became better people in themselves as a result of setting goals for their lives. In Ezra 7:10 we read, "For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel." That is three major life goals: to study the law of the Lord, to obey the law and to teach that law in Israel. We know that as a result of setting out to meet those goals Ezra became a giant in the Old Testament. The same applies to Nehemiah who set out to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem within 52 days. What about Paul in the New Testament. He set out to reach the gentile world with the gospel. That made him into a traveller and

Tools for Wise Leadership, Series 14: Personal Development Planning

a writer. In fact half of the New Testament books owe their origin to the pen of Paul as he set out to meet his evangelistic and discipleship goal.

But goal setting is necessary for another reason. Apart from helping us grow, goals help us to achieve more and better results. Without goals you may be a very busy person who accomplishes little or nothing. Dowson Trotman reminded his followers that “activity is no substitute for production, and production is no substitute for reproduction.” I am sure you have heard the common leadership saying, “If you aim at nothing you are likely to hit it” – which means to hit nothing.

Such sayings are trying to show that we cannot achieve much if our activities are haphazard. We may find ourselves at the end of the year saying how packed with activities our year has been, and yet not seeing any meaningful results from our activities.

On the other hand, with goal setting we become focused and intentional. Goals give us the ability to focus on the exact actions we need to perform to achieve what we desire in life.

With goals we achieve more because those goals help us to overcome short-term obstacles. In the present we can experience many difficult obstacles. But powerful, inspiring and believable goals will help us to continue despite those obstacles. Why? Because we are being driven to the exciting future. We will not give up because of the pain of the present. Isn't that what it says about Jesus in Hebrews 12? Because of the joy set before him, he endured the pain of the cross. He had a vision of what the future glory would be like, and he was achieving the goals that would take him towards that exciting future.

Now this does not mean we should now just rush into making goals or imitate the goals set by other successful people. Too often New Year resolutions are made and soon broken. Goals are made and then not adhered to. The result is discouragement. Some then think it is not worthwhile having goals. But that's not actually true. The truth is that very often we come up with goals that do not really reflect who we are and God's purpose for our lives, and those goals do not have driving power.

Rick Warren in his “Purpose Driven Life” writes¹:

Unless you assume a God, the question of life's purpose is meaningless. It is not about you. The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. Its far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by his purpose and for his purpose.

So the best advice is that before coming up with our life goals we must first reflect on who we are and what God wants us to be and to do. You need to listen and reflect on the deep desires the Lord puts into your heart. Don't let others impose their dreams on you. No. Your dreams must be rooted deep within you, and must express your true identity and God-given purpose. Then when you make goals, those goals will become a means of realizing God's purpose for your life.

Then when we write our goals they need to be SMART goals. And what are smart goals? Well, SMART is an acronym that stands for:

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Realistic

¹ The purpose-driven life: What on earth are you here for?

Tools for Wise Leadership, Series 14: Personal Development Planning

Time-bound

Next time we meet on this programme we will explain on this acronym before applying it to the different areas of our lives where specific goals must be set. Our main emphasis today is has been that personal development planning is not adequate just when you have a vision and a mission. To that we then need to add goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound. Those goals must align with God's will for your life as a leader. Therefore there is no way you can come up with credible goals without bringing God into the picture.

Until we meet again please start thinking seriously about what your life goals should be for your physical, emotional, intellectual and professional development.

Now that you know these things, blessed are you when you do them. I thank you.

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