

Discover: Coaching!



The Power of Goal-Setting

by Tony Stoltzfus

Have you ever thought that God sets goals? For instance, when He told Abraham that his descendants would be like the sand on the seashore, God was proclaiming an objective he was committed to reaching. That's what goal-setting is: declaring a specific future objective and committing yourself to reach it.

Jesus set goals as well. Luke 9:51 states that, "When the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem." Jesus knew clearly that he was headed for the cross: he told his disciples ahead of time that he "would suffer many things...and be killed, and on the third day be raised." By verbalizing his intentions and "setting his face" to go, Jesus made a decisive commitment to that goal. Though he faced opposition (his first step toward Jerusalem was blocked by the Samaritans and he had to make a detour), his mind was made up. Each of the towns and villages of Gallilee he visited (Luke 13:22), down through Jericho and along the winding road to Bethpage and up the Mount of Olives, was a milepost as he drew nearer and nearer to his objective.

The story of Jesus journey to Jerusalem is a good example of what is accomplished by setting a goal: it makes your intentions *clear*, *solid* and *measurable*. Goal-setting is making a decisive choice to do something specific. Jesus' goal *clarified* where he was headed: every step he took after that was toward Jerusalem. When you share your objective with others, as Jesus did, that act of will *solidifies* your choice into a robust commitment that can overcome obstacles and endure through detours and delays. It's the same reason we ask new believers to testify publicly about their faith: our decision for Christ becomes a public, accountable commitment instead of just a private experience that can be reevaluated at any time. And just as we can track Jesus' journey toward his Jerusalem sacrifice on a map, setting a clear goal made Jesus' progress *measurable*. It's immediately clear whether or not he is on track.

Clarifying, solidifying and measuring commitment is what a goal does for you. But even more important is what it allows God to do on your behalf. God has chosen to involve us in His work as co-laborers. That means that some things he intends to do (often things he wants to do for you!) depend on your cooperation.

Stop for a moment and think of something that you need to start doing in the next few months—something that is on God's agenda for your life. At this point, you have an *idea* of what you want to do, maybe even an *intention* to do it, but you probably haven't made a *commitment* to do it. Turning that idea into a goal is a decisive choice: it turns your "want" into "will". And when you align your will with God's will for your life, your decision unleashes the power of God on your behalf. For instance, if you say, "Someday I'd like to start a small group for guys," that's a nice idea. However, if you say, "I will start a small group for guy who are seekers in the next 60 days," you'll likely be amazed at the people God sends you who are looking for just that kind of thing. When we choose to act, God begins to act on our behalf.

Several years ago I set a 40-year goal to replicate myself intensively into 400 leaders in my lifetime. As I began reorienting my life to reach that goal, God began to act, too: on a far larger scale than I was envisioning! Less than a year later I was invited into a much larger leadership sphere, and in only five years I'd achieved that goal and more. So I reset the target, much higher this time. And again I see God beginning to move on a scale that I didn't have the faith to think possible.

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Setting goals for your walk with God can have a powerful impact on your future. It's a worthy aim to earn a bonus at work, get in shape, or save for your kids' college fund. But Paul says, "Train yourself in godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come" (1 Tim 4:7-8). As you think about setting a goal to work on with your peer, ask yourself, "What does God want to do in me this year?" It could transform your life!

From The Peer Coaching Workbook by Tony Stoltzfus