

GOAL SETTING IN THE MINISTRY

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Two pastors were out in the woods squirrel hunting with .22's when they came upon some fresh bear tracks. Wanting to get a glimpse of a bear in the wild, they proceeded to follow the animal's trail. It soon became evident that the bear was not far ahead of them. Suddenly, they came to a large clearing and the giant beast stood before them. The pastors realized that their situation was hopeless. Their small firearms were not sufficient to kill the animal and their feet were not swift enough to make a hasty retreat. Then, one of the clergymen reached into his knapsack and pulled out a pair of tennis shoes which he quickly laced onto his feet. His colleague couldn't understand his actions and commented, "You'll never outrun the bear!" As the pastor finished tying his shoes, he looked up and responded, "My friend, the idea is not to outrun the bear, but to outrun you!"

Are you content if you outrun the next pastor? Are you content to be a participant in the ministry of the Lord but not really sure where you are going? How do you go about setting goals in the ministry?

What about our congregations? Our churches are pursuing <sup>THE MOST</sup> noble ends but often with antiquated means. They often drift along; they basically just exist. They go from one problem to the next. The only planning that takes place is when a problem arises and the council must decide what to do--a state of panic planning from one problem situation to another. It's a shame, for you either manage your church by planning or you will manage it by panic as you go from one crisis to the next. A church either plans things or things will end up running the church.

One emotion often present among church workers is frustration. It's frustrating when things run the church. It's frustrating when we don't know where we are going or what we should be doing.

Many congregations are starting to realize that they have been involved in panic planning and are changing to a congregation that sets goals.

It's a real shame, but the children of this world are much wiser than the children of light (Luke 16:8). There is a lot we can learn from them and apply the good principles to our congregations--and to ourselves.

Immediately we might ask, is this worldly principle of management by objectives(MBO), of keeping your eye set on a goal -- is this scriptural? First of all, in the area of methods in carrying out the Lord's work, we are often not dealing with doctrines but with what works best. Yet we also have some scriptural examples of keeping your eye set on a goal. "As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem"(Luke 9:51). Nothing could keep him from purpose, his goal of providing for our salvation. Paul is an encouragement for each of us when he writes, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus"(Philippians 3:13,14). Paul, the greatest missionary who ever lived, always kept his goal in front of him.

One such method for congregational goal-setting and execution is offered by Rev Donald Abdon(LC-MS) in his Parish Leadership Seminars under the theme "Organizing Around the Great Commission." What Abdon's whole program of organizing around the Great Commission boils down to is taking what works for the business world (MBO), and applying these principles to our congregations. What his reorganization attempts to do is put the priesthood of all believers into action and involve the congregational members in the work of the Church. I feel there is a great deal of merit in what he has, yet these need to be adapted to each individual congregation. Our congregation is currently involved in this reorganization and even though we are not completely there, the changes made have already had good effects on the members of our congregation and our ability to carry out the Lord's work.

What about our lives as individuals? As God's servants, do we go from one situation to the next with no long range planning? For some pastors their only goal is to have this Sunday's sermon and bulletin done by midnight on Saturday. What about my ministry? Would some goal setting improve my ministry so I could better do the work the Lord wants me to do?

This paper will attempt to briefly show the need for personal goal setting in our ministry and how to go about this by taking the principles involved in goal setting for a congregation and

applying them to us as individuals.

Before going any further, it is important that we are all speaking the same language--using the same definitions. Our MISSION is our reason for existence. A MAJOR OBJECTIVE tells what you wish to accomplish. GOALS are the steps you need to take to obtain your OBJECTIVE. For example: if your mission was to win a football game, a major objective would be to get the football across the goal line, and the steps to doing that (goals) would be the plays used to get those first downs. Another major objective would be to keep their offense from scoring and this would also have some goals, steps to accomplish this.

What would be the mission of the congregation? What is our reason for existence? Our voters approved and adopted the following as our mission:

The mission of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church is to make disciples of all nations, and to strengthen them in their discipleship. Our Lord Jesus Christ stated:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always to the close of the age. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Therefore it is his will that we, as His disciples, proclaim his word to the whole world by:

Worshipping the Lord together and individually  
Practicing Christian love and fellowship with one another  
Witnessing Christ to all men  
Growing in faith through the study of God's Word  
Being faithful stewards of all which God has entrusted to us, and  
Administering the office of the keys.

At the same Voter's meeting the following objectives were adopted, to be given high priority attention over the following 18 months:

1. All boards and functions of St. Paul's will be organized around the Great Commission as recorded in Matt. 28:18-20.
2. 30% of the congregation will be presented with a program that teaches stewardship of time, talents and treasure.
3. We will increase attendance at all Christian educational programs by 20%.
4. An evangelism program will be planned and implemented to reach into our community with Christ.

Before these or any other objectives can be set, there needs to be planning. We need to know where we are going, why, and how we are going to get there. We need to decide what steps are necessary, when to do each one, who's going to do it, and also

how we know if we are doing it. We need to plan so everyone is pulling in the same direction and we can accomplish specific results.

These objectives should be derived from the purpose or mission of the congregation. They are needed in every area that is crucial to the operation of the church. They should be able to be converted into goals. They must be realistic and obtainable.

In order to tell if you've accomplished your objective(s), they must be measurable. One way of doing this is by numerical verification: The Evangelism Board will increase our church membership by 30 people during the year 1984. But especially in churchwork, not everything can be broken down into numbers. So another way of measuring is to determine if a certain action was taken: The Board of Lay Ministry will prepare a committee of visitors to lead delinquent Christians back to Christ through the Word.

Goals are the steps necessary in reaching the objective. Goals state what must be done, who will do it, how it will be done, when it will be done, and how well it will be done. Or, expressed another way, a goal is SMART.

- S = Specific--states exactly what will be accomplished
- M = Measurable--how well it will be done
- A = Accepted--everyone agrees on doing it this way
- R = Realistic--using the resources available
- T = Timed--states specifically when the goal will be met.

For example, if there was an objective: "Set up a three year program for the refurbishing of the external portion of all church property," a possible goal would be: "By December 31, 1984, the Board of Church Property will develop a list of the specific repairs necessary to the external portion of all church property." Another goal could be: "By January 31, 1985 the Board of Church Property will prioritize the list of external repairs."

It's important that we always keep our purpose in mind. A man walked up to several workmen. He asked one, "What are you doing?" and the man answered, "I'm laying bricks." He addressed another, "What are you doing?" and he replied, "I am installing glass." Finally he spoke to a man pushing a wheelbarrow, "What are you doing?" and the man replied, "I'm building a cathedral."

Remember the words of Paul, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal!"

Now let's apply these principles to our personal goal setting. As a pastor, do I just sort of exist, drifting from one Sunday to a meeting to the next Sunday--or is there a real purpose in my life? Do I preach on Sunday because I have to or because I want to serve God by preparing others for eternity? Do I just take care of things as they come up, from one week to the next--or is there some long range planning in my life? Does my life need to be fine tuned so that I can better serve the Lord? Does a certain area of my life need a major overhaul? Would some goal setting improve my ministry so I could better do the work the Lord wants me to do? Do I know where I'm going with my life? When I stare death in the face, will I look back on my life and wonder what it ever accomplished, or will I see a purpose to it? As my wife and children stand by my deathbed, what will they remember? Is that what I want them to remember? What can I do right now to change? Will goal setting help me live a better life as a husband, father, and pastor?

Realizing that there are areas of our lives which need definite improvement, how do we go about it? Even though we realize the need to change and the value of planning and goal setting, because it's something new to us we might be reluctant to attempt it.

In order for a proper and meaningful change to take place in my life (as in the life of our congregations), it must be earnestly desired. The other reason for initiating a change is if something severe or disastrous would happen that would force us to realize the need to change. In order for a proper and meaningful change to take place in my life it will take the proper motivation--do it for God, not for myself.

In order for a proper and meaningful change to take place I must set realistic and logical goals. It's similar to New Year's resolutions. Don't try to change too much at one time; work on one priority area, then add another. Remember, just as a resolution to get in shape by dieting, exercising, and losing weight will take time and effort, changing and improving my life will also take time and a real effort. I will also want to seek the support and encouragement of others.

In order for a proper and meaningful change to take place, it will take the strength which only God can give. With Paul we can

confidently say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"(Philippians 4:13). In order for a proper and meaningful and proper change to take place we must work with God's Word, not apart from it. Just as Jesus tells us, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing"(John 15:5).

Like our life of sanctification, our goal setting will be an ongoing process. We will stumble and fall short of our objectives but we must not use that as an excuse to throw away our objectives or forget where we are heading and why. Knowing that the improvement of our life so that we can better live for God is something God wants us to have, and knowing how worthwhile it is, we will want to keep striving for it.

Before we set our personal goals, we must also be aware of some dangers of goal setting. One is the statistic trap. The numbers game is not always a valid assessment of our progress or faithfulness. Twice a year our mission pastors submit a detailed report of their congregation's income, attendance at worship, Bible class, communion, adult information classes, catechism, etc. While this information is helpful to our Home Mission Board there is a danger that we get so wrapped up in the numbers game that we start to do the Lord's work to fill a quota or meet a goal instead of for the salvation and strengthening of souls. God doesn't always let us see the results of our work (or, God doesn't let us always see the results of His working through His Word which we proclaimed). God doesn't hold us accountable to increase the statistics but only to sow the seed and watering the plants: "What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe-- as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow"(1 Cor. 3:5,6).

Another danger is that when we reach our goal, our sinful pride gets an inflated ego and we feel what was done couldn't have been done without ME. Rather, "our competence comes from God"(2 Cor. 3:5).

One of the criteria for a good objective or a good goal was that it be realistic. If my objective is to evangelize the whole world, that is not being realistic. My expectations, and those

expectations which others have of me and my time might not be very realistic. It is often difficult for us to set realistic objectives and goals. It is difficult because I might not be able to do all that Paul or Luther did in a day or in their lifetime. I might not be able to do what another pastor does as well as he does. Or I might have gifts and abilities that another pastor doesn't have but that doesn't mean that I only have to match his output in that area. God wants us to be faithful: "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2). We all know that verse, but it's important that we also remember the verses which follow: "I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not ever judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me" (2 Cor. 4:3,4). Prof. Irwin J. Habeck addressed this in an article entitled "A Pastor's Conscience--reflections on 1 Tim. 1:19" (WLQ, Jan. 1972, pp.233-241):

At times pastors feel guilty because they have so much unfinished work or neglected work. There are delinquent members who should be visited, prospects who should be followed up, there is private studying to do, but where to find the time? They know that they must devote time to their families, they feel the need for some recreation and for a vacation, but when they devote time to these purposes they feel all the more guilty because of their unfinished work.

There is no denying that a pastor needs to evaluate his priorities periodically and to scrutinize the efficiency of his work habits. But he must realize that his Lord doesn't demand more than he is able to do, nor ought he. When our Lord Jesus said: "The night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4), He was taking for granted that His Father has given men a time for rest. There is no guilt involved in using that time. Sometimes pastors assume too much responsibility. Without minimizing the importance of going after the straying sheep, it needs to be remembered that delinquent members have been instructed in the truths of the Word and acquainted with its warnings before being received into communicant membership. For a pastor to blame himself for their continuing delinquency because he has not found time to call on them is assuming too much. The Lord has His way of getting us where He wants us to be and pressing our attention the tasks which He has for us to do. If He has given us a family... (we have) the duty of devoting time to one's family. The example of Jesus hallows the time set apart for relaxation and vacationing: "He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while" (Mark 4:31). (pp.235,236)

↑ (sic) - SHOULD BE MARK 6:31



Coming back to our main topic, what is our mission? How would you express your mission, your purpose as an individual Christian? as a pastor? as a husband? as a father? As an individual Christian we might use the words: "Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31) or "Declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9). As a pastor, our mission could be equated with our call. As a husband we might think of the words: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25).

With your mission in mind, what would be appropriate objectives for you? Are these realistic and obtainable? What would be appropriate goals? Remember, a goal is SMART--specific, measurable, accepted, realistic, and timed.

At this point we will split into smaller groups to work together and try our hand at writing some goals. Look on the back of your paper for a number. Those with the same number will work together discussing a general objective, change it to a realistic and obtainable objective, and then set some goals for obtaining it. Then we will share our objective and goals with everyone.

Group #General objective

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | Make better use of my time   |
| 2 | Seek to better possess and show the fruits of the Spirit in my life (Gal. 5:22,23) |
| 3 | Increase the number of calls made  |
| 4 | Make better use of my time   |
| 5 | Seek to better possess and show the fruits of the Spirit in my life (Gal. 5:22,23) |
| 6 | Increase the number of calls made  |

Suggestions for groups 1&4--how do you determine where your time is being spent? Which area(s) to concentrate on improving? Ideal structure for week?

Suggestions for groups 2&5--which specific fruit of the Spirit do you wish to concentrate on? What other Bible passages relate to this?

Suggestions for groups 3&6--What kind of call do you wish to increase? evangelism, shut-in, delinquent, other?

Remember, set up goals which are, if at all possible, specific, measurable, accepted, realistic, and timed.

GOAL SETTING IN THE MINISTRY

MAJOR OBJECTIVE:

GOALS to achieve this objective:

