

Goals

J. THOMAS FYANS

What you were when you went to bed last night is about what you are this morning. When you awakened, there was not much of a change during the night. You had certain talents last night; you still have those talents this morning. So, I think we can conclude that what we will be tonight, we will be tomorrow morning. In fact, the scripture tells us that same spirit that possesses your body at the time that you go out of this life will have the power to possess your body in that eternal world (*see* Alma 34:34). Where do you want to be in the eternal world? What you are today? Do you have a goal or a target in mind? Would you like to make some changes?

We are told once again in the Doctrine and Covenants (88:22) that he who is not able to abide the law of the celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory. We find ourselves moving into a circumstance where we feel comfortable. You are here because this is the environment in which you want to find yourself. All our activities of life will prepare us to live in a celestial kingdom, or a terrestrial, or a telestial. It's up to us.

How Do You Set a Target?

Several law enforcement officers were returning home after attending a special school in marksmanship. As they drove through the

countryside, they noticed a large barn covered with painted bullseye targets.

It aroused their curiosity to the point that they pulled off the freeway and found the lane that led to the farm where the barn was located. They drove over to the barn and were greatly surprised to see a bullet hole precisely in the center of each bullseye.

The farmer came out to see what the men wanted.

They told him they had never seen such excellent marksmanship. "Who is this person with such outstanding ability? Is it you?" they inquired of the farmer.

He said, "No. It's my son."

"Is he here? May we see him?"

"Well, yes, he is around somewhere."

"Could he show us how he is able to shoot in such a superior way?"

The farmer said, "Well, my son isn't quite bright. He has a learning difficulty, but if you would like to see how he has done this, let me see if I can find him."

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Soon the farmer returned with his son. He said, “Son, show these men how you shoot your rifle.” The young man walked some distance from the barn, turned, pointed his rifle, and shot. Then he walked over to the barn, found where the bullet passed through the siding, picked up a can of paint, and promptly painted the bullseye around the hole.

You would be wise to aim toward the eternities and know that your marksmanship would place you in the presence of your Heavenly Father.

A meaningful scripture counsels us to—

1. learn our duty,
2. act in the office in which we are appointed
3. [act] in all diligence (*see D&C 107:99*).

What process can we use to accomplish this?

“Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established” (Proverbs 16:3).

- Committing requires action; action carries us toward our goal.
- Without appropriate goals, life can be very drab and commonplace.
- Write down your major aim in life. From this very act comes power.
- Using a magnifying glass to zero in on a particular spot will create tremendous energy.
- Concentrating light on a specific object will bring about an explosion of progress.
- The establishment of goals in our lives is of extreme importance; without them we are blind.
- There is a difference between a wish and a goal.
- We should make our days count, not just count days.
- Perhaps there should be more doing rather than more knowing; let’s work within the framework of all we know.

A computer is a wonderful tool. It has tremendous power for solving complex

problems. Even with all this latent power, if it is not properly programmed, is without direction, or remains unstimulated, it will not serve its purpose and proper progress will not be made.

What Is Our Goal?

We ask ourselves, “Why have goals? Why have something to shoot at?”

The answer is, “Our goal ought to be to become a worthy son or daughter of our Heavenly Father.” Our Father has a plan to help us accomplish this goal.

In fact, we were present and accepted the Lord’s plan. There is a heavenly goal clothed in these words:

For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. [Moses 1:39]

Satan’s objective is to destroy this plan. He does everything in his power to place obstacles in our path that we might stumble. Goals are daily, weekly, yearly—yes, they cover a lifetime. They are vital to us as youth and as adults. But they are only wishes unless we put them into action. As we fashion our lives, we should look beyond the veil.

Why Have a Goal?

A person with goals is the master of his life.

If the standards on the football field were taken down and the zero-yards line erased, how would you know if you had made a goal? How would you know if you were winning? Without a goal, one doesn’t know if he has arrived.

Goals that are challenging and yet attainable draw performance upward.

The disciplined spirit is the master of the body.

Goals become an organizing tool to achieve. They eliminate meandering behavior.

Goal setting is an art, and pursuing goals is a skill.

Reading the scriptures is a great aid to understanding our goal. The gospel gives us direction and purpose in life.

Now, there are a number of approaches in creating goals, but may we consider at least one process today? It is composed of seven points.

The Process of Creating Goals

1. Select your goal prayerfully. Get a confirmation from the Lord. He asks us in the sixth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, “Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter?” (D&C 6:23), showing how he lets us know the rightness of our choice. Have peace in your mind as you prayerfully select your goal.

2. Lay out a plan for attaining the goal. Get a road map. Put it in writing.

3. Break the plan into logical steps. There are short-range, medium-range, and long-range goals. If you are going to carry the ball into the end zone, there must be training, exercising, body preparation—of course, you know we are talking about both the physical and the spiritual body in the eternal goals.

4. Share this goal with others. Make an open commitment. Get others involved to help you succeed.

5. Measure your progress. How far is it to the goal?

6. Evaluate your successes and your shortcomings. Ask yourself, “How did I gain the greatest yardage?” Another question would be, “Why did I fumble?”

7. Adjust plans to take advantage of the successes and overcome the shortcomings. You may think that you perhaps should make your offense more vigorous. Maybe we better pass more. At that point you can start the process over again: Get a reconfirmation. Keep it constantly before the Lord.

We Must Keep at It

Living the gospel is somewhat like combing your hair—no matter how well we did it yesterday—we have to repeat it today.

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:

He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.

But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great. [Luke 6:46–49]

Sometimes we pamper ourselves with self-indulgence. We satisfy our short-term wants in place of real heartfelt commitment to our long-term goal. Be sure, as you are climbing to the top rung in the ladder of life, that it isn’t leaning against the wrong wall.

We are in this life to develop spiritual character. Character is what we are; reputation is what people think we are. Abraham Lincoln once said, “Character is like a tree and reputation like its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing. (Burton Stevenson, comp., *The Home Book of Quotations*, New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1956, p. 234). Sometimes a shadow is much longer or shorter than the tree, depending on the lighting or our angle of observation. In a storm when the sun is obscured by clouds, there is no shadow, but the tree still exists. The tree is real. Spiritual character is the real you. It is what is taken with you into the eternities when all else is left behind.

Climbing a Mountain

A vision is given us in this invitation: “Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob” (Isaiah 2:3).

Climbing mountains is an arduous challenge. As we prepare to climb a mountain, our first step is to select a mountain, and then we should ask, “What is the mountain like?” We will acquire a guide who knows the way and learn from him some of the requirements for the ascent. An important preparation will be to secure the proper equipment and clothing. We will plot the campsites on the side of the mountain. We will set intermediate goals on the way up.

We will plan how we will ascend the perilous heights where cold winds chill our bones. Where are the stepping-stones carved into the almost vertical face of the mountain where we will have to move with great care? We are told that we will have to make the final ascent alone. Communications with the guide on a two-way radio will be established.

We will through prayer attune ourselves to the heaven above the mountain that we might have the constant companionship of the Spirit. We must do more than stroll through life. We must climb.

In your trek up the mountain of life, don’t carry the additional weight of unrepented foolishness. Don’t be breathless in your climb burdened by this unneeded pack. Discard it; throw it down the mountainside. Forget it. The Lord says he will forgive and forget. Let us merit forgiveness; then with the help of the Lord, we can forget.

What are some of the specific pitfalls that we must watch for as we climb?

No one ever smoked his first cigarette or took his first drink or tried drugs because he needed the cigarette or the alcohol or the drugs. Everyone who tries tobacco or alcohol or drugs does so because he needs something else. He may think he needs the approval of

his friends. He may think he needs to rebel against authority. He may think he needs the excitement of experimentation. Or he may think he needs to avoid being called “chicken” or “square” or “turkey” or whatever term is apropos at the moment.

What he really needs to think of is how to deal with feelings of insecurity, how to measure and appropriately respond to peer pressure, how to recognize destructive rebellion, or how to build a positive self-image. If you never take the first cigarette or the first drink or the first drugs, you’ll never suffer the consequence of subsequent results.

Now, if you have stumbled, try to learn from adversity. If the only thing you have gained from this experience is the bitter taste of being broken by gospel principles, then resolve that never again will you partake so you can avoid the anguish, the desperation of noncompliance with eternal laws. You may *know* your duty but when you *act* contrary to your knowledge, you bring upon yourself the bitter fruits of broken laws. Your soul will be seared, but there is hope:

“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

Avoid the environment in which the wrong crowd places you in a circumstance where temptation abounds. Then you won’t have to say: “Why did I get myself into this stupid situation?”

Help Is Available

When did you have your last toothache? It was probably very painful at the time. Or has time erased the distasteful feelings? To ease this discomfort, you sought help from the expert hands of one who was competent to administer relief. Perhaps the treatment to relieve the pain hurt, but you were so anxious to normalize your condition, it was worth it.

How long ago did you last have a heart pain caused by nonadherence to your

knowledge of duty when you didn't act in all diligence? To ease this discomfort, did you seek the haven of expert hands of one competent to administer relief. Were you willing to accept the treatment of repentance with its making right the wrong? Did you resolve to know your duty and act in all diligence?

Thoughtful priesthood leaders are spiritually prepared to bind up the wound if it be necessary to only apply a little Mercurochrome and put on a Band-Aid while healing occurs. If the wound is deeper, perhaps iodine will have to be administered. It will sting. Maybe you will have to have stitches to close the gaping hole. Whatever the treatment, the renewed spiritual health will be worth it. Everything done will be founded on the pure love of a caring Father in Heaven.

More than a hundred years ago in a small remote place in Arizona lived a family sent there by President Brigham Young to make peace with the Indians.

The father of the family was away on Church business when an impression came to him that something was wrong at home. He responded to this feeling by heading there at once. He arrived at about four o'clock in the morning. His wife had cuddled in her arms their little baby daughter who had fallen into an open fireplace. She was severely burned. The mother, in grief, said, "Let her die. She will be so disfigured."

The father took this little infant in his arms and gave her a blessing. He promised her that she would live, that she would not be disfigured, and that she would sing before the prominent of the earth.

This baby girl did live, she matured in life, was not disfigured, raised a family, and sang in the Tabernacle Choir. The powers of heaven gave life to that tiny child. That sweet baby girl, in maturity, gave me life. She was my mother.

I owe my very existence to the power of prayer.

President Reagan on Prayer

At the meeting of the religious leaders of the United States in Washington, D.C., a luncheon was held in the state dining room. President Reagan had addressed us, and then we had lunch.

After lunch, the meeting was opened for questions and comments. One of the persons present said, "Mr. President, we want you to know that we pray for you."

President Reagan's response was, "Thank you. I have great faith in intercessory prayer." Then he paused and thoughtfully expressed his feeling, "Sometimes when we pray, we then wait for the Lord to do something. I suspect that when we pray the Lord is waiting for us to do something. And, by the way," the president added, "if you ever find the line busy as you wish to pray, know that I am on the line."

Sprinkle your lives generously with the uplifting experience of communion with our Heavenly Father. How great is the power of prayer!

*If radio's slim fingers can pluck a melody
From night—and toss it over a continent or sea;
If the petalled white notes of a violin
Are blown across the mountains or the city's
din;
If songs, like crimson roses, are culled from thin
blue air—
Why should mortals wonder if God hears
prayer?*

[Ethel Romig Fuller, "Proof," *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*, ed. by James Dalton Morrison (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), p. 407]

How Long Is Eternity?

As we look forward to living in the eternal world, perhaps this question comes to our mind: How long is eternity?

If you were an ant with a goal of building a nest of pine needles in the football stadium here at Brigham Young University and had the capacity to carry one pine needle on your back,

and you crawled the hundreds of miles to the state of Washington, placed a pine needle on your back, and returned to the stadium to deposit the pine needle and begin the nest, then you would have a hint of the length of eternity. Next, if you were to crawl the thousands of miles to Massachusetts to get another pine needle, your return to the stadium would give you a greater inkling of eternity.

Then go down to Florida and return with a pine needle and then to southern California and back to the nest you are building. Then go to Alaska and then to Argentina, returning each time with one pine needle. A more profound understanding of eternity would come to you.

Contemplating the gathering of *all* the pine needles from all the states and all the nations in all the world would allow the length of eternity to finally dawn upon you.

Life is eternal. Today is a part of that eternity. The decisions and acts of today influence our arrival at the final goal.

I asked my wife what she would say to you if given the opportunity to speak at a BYU Devotional. I wanted her to feel some of the pain of preparation and have her sympathize with me. She was silent in thought for a moment or two.

“Would you really like to know what I would tell them?” she asked.

“Of course,” I replied.

What it has taken me thirty minutes to say she could tell you in three words: “Live the commandments.”

You can forget my talk, but don’t forget hers.

For our journey through this life and the eternities, we have a partnership with our Father in Heaven. He has given us a key to guide us in knowing the truth of our plans and goals to be achieved. If you will ask God, the Eternal Father, recognizing the tremendous power in prayer,

in the name of Christ, . . . with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. [Moroni 10:4]

On your trek up the mountain of life stay close to the Spirit.

Your faith will be tested. You will face obstacles that will seem almost insurmountable. Others have gone that same course.

Do As the Children of Israel Did

When the children of Israel had wandered in the desert for forty years and now it was time for them to cross the Jordan and go into the promised land, they found a condition that was very adverse. The Jordan was swollen to overflowing, and in the book of Joshua we find this:

And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan [and they knew from their mental processes that walking into the Jordan River would cause them to lose their lives, but here was a test of faith], and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,)

That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap . . . and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho.

And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan. [Joshua 3:15–17]

You will have to dip your feet into the brim of the water, but move forward, having full and complete faith in your heavenly father. (1) Learn your duty. You have a marvelous opportunity here at this institution to do that. (2) Act, move, climb the mountain. (3) Do it in all diligence.

The beautiful rendition at the beginning of this program with the theme of the Savior

suggests that there is the pattern of life. I witness to you with every fiber of my being that he lives, he is real, and because he lives today, we will live in the eternal world. May the Lord

bless you that you will attain the goal, climb the mountain, I pray humbly in the worthy name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.