



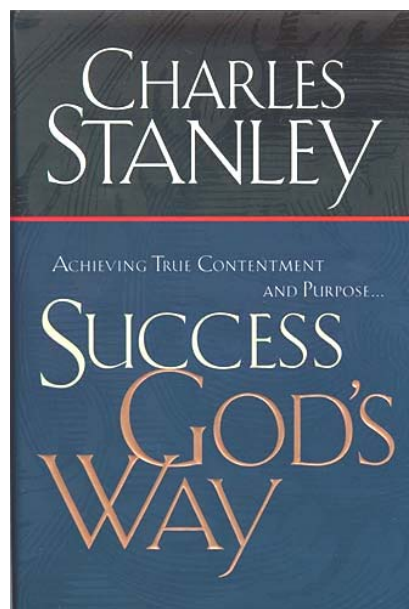
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**WHAT'S IN THE BOX?
LOCATING THE MAIN SPRING**
[SETTING GODLY GOALS]

WEEKLY SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

OCTOBER 8, 2006

FROM THE *MASTER WORKS* SERIES STUDY OF:



WHAT'S IN THE BOX? LOCATING THE MAIN SPRING *[SETTING GODLY GOALS]*

A seventy-year-old man walks down the aisle to receive his college degree. A fifty-five-year-old woman marries for the first time. A forty-year-old former housewife settles into a career. Even though it seems as though our lives follow similar patterns, everyone operates on a different schedule. Have you ever known someone who reached a milestone in life at a non-traditional age? Did you wonder what took so long or assume something must have been wrong with him or her?

Too often, we get caught up in traditions that tell us when certain things should be accomplished. Society says we should graduate, start a career, get married, buy a house, have a child, and retire—in that order, and each at a certain age. In following guidelines that our culture sets before us, we tend to rush into life-changing decisions without considering what God wants for us. Have you ever wondered why so many people are unhappy with their careers, why divorce is so rampant, or why people are often completely unprepared to raise a family?

When we shortcut God's timing and attempt to accomplish our goals within our own strength and on our own schedule, we will fail every single time. We will not live a life of contentment or experience the peace that comes from a sincere understanding of God's purpose. To truly be in God's will, we must synchronize our clock with God's clock. We must be willing to do what He asks of us when He asks us to do it.

How many of you make New Years' Resolutions every year? What are some of them you make? How many of you keep them all year? Why? If you knew with absolutely no doubt that you could not fail in accomplishing your choice of **three** goals, which three goals would you set for your life?

Tom Landry, former coach of the Dallas Cowboys, was once asked by a reporter, "What makes a champion?" Landry's answer was power-packed. "A champion is simply someone who didn't give up when he wanted to." He went on to say: "Success is not accidental. We LEARN how to achieve it." He then listed 4 short steps it takes to be a champion in the field of sports. "1. Faith – believing you can win. 2. Training – the Cowboys work out 4 times a week. 3. Goals – all winning teams set goals. 4. You must possess the will to reach the goal you set for yourself. This is probably the most important quality of all champions."

Did you hear what Landry said? To be a champion, **YOU'VE GOT TO SET GOALS AND THEN HAVE THE WILL TO REACH THE GOALS THAT YOU SET.**

I'm not talking about goals like cleaning off your desk at work, or washing your car, or weeding your flower bed. Those may be worthy goals, but are not significant goals in your Christian life. Cancer survivor Greg Anderson once said, "When we are motivated by goals that have deep meaning, by dreams that need completion, by pure love that needs expressing, then we truly live life" We've got to set some goals in our spiritual life that will move us toward being the champion Christians that God desires for us to be.

Today, as we continue our study from Dr. Stanley's book, *SUCCESS GOD'S WAY*, we're looking at the key to success: setting Godly goals. In your present spiritual condition can you honestly ask God to help you achieve the three goals you thought of if you knew you couldn't fail? Do you really want the *best* that God could provide for your life? These questions lie at the heart of a Christian's pursuit of success. They are the questions that lead each of us to ask, *"What goals does GOD desire for me to set and to achieve and, in the process, to be a success in His eyes?"*

One of the most goal-oriented people in the Bible is the apostle Paul. In writing to the Philippians, Paul spoke plainly about the number-one goal he had set for his life. Open your Bible to **Philippians 4:7-14 (NKJV)** and follow along as I read.

⁷But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

¹²Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴I **press** toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul was not a man who wasted time or energy. He was extremely focused in his life. He had an overwhelming sense of purpose and direction. Do you remember what Paul was like BEFORE his conversion? He was focused on the destruction of Christian believers. His goals were of his own creation and were not of God. After his conversion, Paul was focused on a new set of goals—goals that were in keeping with *God's* desire for his life.

So, just what is a GOAL? Is there a difference between a goal and a dream? A goal, according to Dr. Stanley is *AN AIM, A PURPOSE, OR A SENSE OF DIRECTION TOWARD WHICH YOU MOVE ALL OF YOUR ENERGIES, DESIRES AND EFFORTS*. We learned this week that a dream may lead to specific goals, but you must have specific objectives, purposes or aims. A goal involves an organized, planned stretching of your life. What did Paul say in Verse 14 about moving toward his goal? He was continually PRESSING TOWARD the goal of the prize of the "upward call of God in Jesus Christ." What does he mean by "press on?" [TO DILIGENTLY FOLLOW AFTER]

Let me ask you, do you lead more of a goal-driven or survival-mode life? Why? How can we set and strive toward goals when we're just trying to make it through each day? Turn to **Romans 8:29-30 (NKJV)** and let's remind ourselves what God's **priority** goal is for a Christian's life: *²⁹For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*

Dr. Stanley reminds each of us that every other goal must be placed under this priority goal—to know Christ and to be conformed to His likeness. Do you personally have a priority goal? If you have set for yourself a goal that is not in line with this priority goal, God will not help you accomplish it because He didn't encourage you to set it.

So what about locating the so-called **MAINSRING** in our individual lives? Several years ago a close friend gave me a book I've read and re-read because of its underlying Christian principals—Bob Buford's *HALF TIME*. It's really about setting godly goals.

In one chapter, the author introduces the reader to Mike Kami, a strategic planning consultant. He is brilliant. He is demanding. He is intuitive. He slices through all the pretense and posturing and hones in on the core. He was the former director of strategic planning for IBM, serving IBM during their years of rapid growth. He was then hired away by Xerox for a seven-figure bonus to do the same thing for them. He also is an atheist. He does not believe in God, but there was no doubt in Bob Buford's mind that God worked unmistakably through Mike Kami to help him establish godly goals for his life. And it was done by asking a simple and penetrating question: **WHAT'S IN THE BOX?**

You may recall the story I've told before about this question. Mike Kami explains it like this: *He was contacted by a group of Coca Cola executive and their plans to introduce "New Coke." The executives told Mike that the mainspring and driving force of their*

business was “great taste.” They conducted numerous taste tests, found a new formula that tasted better than the original Coca Cola, introduced “New Coke: shortly thereafter—and promptly stepped into one of the biggest marketing debacles of all time.

They called Mike Kami back in for another planning session. “You must have put the wrong thing in the box,” Mike told them. “Let’s try again.” After several hours, they found something else to put in the box: “American tradition.”

Isn't each one of us looking for the right word to put in the box? You cannot put together an honest plan for your life, according to Kami, until you too identify the MAINSPRING. What's in your box? Is it money, job, family, security, or is it Jesus Christ? Mike Kami told Bob Buford if he would tell him what's in the box, he could then tell him the strategic planning implications of that choice.

What's your priority goal? Is it to know Christ as intimately and fully as possible? Remember what Paul said in **Philippians 1:21** about his primary purpose? *“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” What if, for one day, Jesus were to become you?*

What if, for twenty-four hours, Jesus wakes up in your bed, walks in your shoes, lives in your house, assumes your schedule? Your boss becomes his boss, your mother becomes his mother, your pains become his pains? With one exception, nothing about your life changes. Your health doesn't change. Your circumstances don't change. Your schedule isn't altered. Your problems are solved. Only one thing occurs.

What if, for one day and one night, Jesus lives your life with HIS HEART? Your heart gets the day off, and your life is led by the heart of Christ. His priorities govern your actions. His passions drive your decisions. His love directs your behavior. What would you be like? Would people notice a change? Your family—would they see something new? Your coworkers—would they see a difference? What about the less fortunate? Would you treat them the same? And your friends? Would they detect more joy? How

about your enemies? Would they receive more mercy from Christ's heart than from yours?

And you? How would you feel? What alterations would this transplant have on your stress level? Your mood swings? Your temper? Would you sleep better? How about your reaction to traffic delays or motorcycles? Would you STILL DO what you had planned to do for the next 24-hours? Pause and think about your schedule. Obligations. Engagements. Outings. Appointments. With Jesus taking over your heart, would anything change?

Try to get a clear picture and imagine Jesus leading your life. What you see is exactly what God wants. Look at **Philippians 2:5 (NLT)**: *"You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had."* He wants you to think and act like Christ. God's plan for each of us is nothing short of a new heart. Listen to these words from **Ephesians 4:23-24 (NASB)**: ²³*"and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,* ²⁴*and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."*

Dr. Stanley, in DAY THREE, set out four key questions you should ask as you set goals for yourself. First, ask God, *"Why is this important to you, Lord?"* Second, ask about every goal you set, *"Does this fit into Your plan for my life?"* Thirdly, ask yourself, *"Is this goal totally in line with God's Word?"* Fourthly, ask about each goal, *"How might the accomplishment of this goal bring blessing to others?"*

The way we do this—set goals—is we have to write them down. God places great value on our writing down the things that He speaks to our hearts or that He challenges us to do. It's not enough to daydream in your thought life about the things you'd like to have as goals. A goal must ultimately be a *statement of intension*. We also have to set our goals in the context of time and for every category of life. **(HANDOUT GRAPH)**

This is the graph that I included in the weekly newsletter and that was printed in your quarterly on DAY FOUR. Dr. Stanley personally sets goals in each of these six areas. When you set goals, remember not to set fuzzy goals:

- I'll be more Christ Like.
- I'll read my Bible more.
- I'll ask more people to Church.

You should set clear goals, like these:

- I'll be more Christ-like by helping the widow down the street cut her grass.
- I'll read 3 chapters in my Bible 3 times a week on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
- I'll ask Mrs. Jones to church this week and call her on the phone to see if she needs a way here.

Did anyone use the grid to identify goals for their life this week and you'd maybe like to share some immediate or short-range goals?

We need to remember the key for a Christian in goal setting is to ask God to guide you as you set goals. Ask God what He desires for you to do—specifically, immediately, in the near future, and in the long run. Begin any goal setting session in prayer. Don't do all the talking. Listen carefully to what God may speak to your heart. Listen to what He brings to your mind and heart.

Do you remember the first time you stood at the edge of a swimming pool? One of your parents or perhaps a swimming instructor stood in the water and said, *"Jump! Just jump into my arms and I'll catch you. Come on, jump!"* You were scared. Would that person really catch you? Finally you said to yourself, even though you may not have realized what you were doing. *"I'm going to take the risk. I'm going to jump and see what happens."*

If you had never taken that risk, you might still be limited to the shallow wading pool. In like manner, many people are too afraid to trust God to help set goals for their lives. As Dr. Stanley said this week, take the plunge and write down some goals. If you haven't

done that yet, do it later today when you get home. Trust God. He will be there to help you. **Philippians 4:13** says, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*

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