

Your Goal as a Christian

By Bill Scheidler

Introduction

We have talked about this year being the year of fruitfulness. As we go into the New Year it is a good time to do some self examination. What will make this New Year any different from the last year? Have you looked back to learn from the experience of last year? Have you looked forward and set any goals for yourself in the coming year?

I have some thoughts relative to some goals that we should all have in common. What do all of us here at City Life Church have in common? We are all Christians. So what are your goals as a Christian for this year? [Put up title]

Have you ever given conscious thought to these questions?

- A. What are my personal goals in my relationship to the Lord?
- B. What is my personal vision when it comes to my own spirituality and walk with the Lord?
- C. What kind of a Christian do I want to be?
- D. What do I want to be when I grow up?

Most people have been challenged at some point in their life with the question of career goals. From the time children are very young, parents enjoy asking them the question, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” The answers may change from year to year, but usually the expected answers include such things as a fireman, a nurse, a school teacher, a cowboy, a policeman, an astronaut, a fashion model or a movie star.

These are the normal answers to this question, but they are not totally accurate. These answers reveal possible **career goals**, but they do not necessarily deal with **personal goals**. These answers deal with the question of what someone may want to “**do**” with their life, but not with what they want to “**be**” when they grow up.

The Bible speaks of different kinds of Christians.

A. There are non-Christians—the natural man.

A non-Christian is referred to in the Bible as the natural man (I Cor. 2:14).

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

There are several characteristics of the natural man.

1. The natural man lives life as if there was nothing beyond his physical life (I Pet. 4:1-6).

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. 3 For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles--when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. 4 In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. 5 They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

2. This person is primarily concerned about physical and material things.
3. This person does not live with a sense of accountability to a higher being.
4. This person's values are temporal and earthly.
5. This person does not believe that there are moral absolutes or standards.
6. This person lives as if he is the center of the universe. Therefore, all of the decisions of the natural man are based on how things affect him personally.

The natural man is blind to the truth and things pertaining to God (I Cor. 2:14; II Cor. 4:4; Eph. 4:17-19).

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. Eph. 4:17-19

- a. Unfortunately it is hard to convince the natural man to be spiritual.
- b. It is difficult to persuade someone who values self gratification to live a life of self denial.
- c. It is difficult to get someone who wants to live by his sexual lusts to live a chaste life.
- d. It is difficult to persuade someone who lives to amass personal wealth to be generous.

B. There are baby Christians—new believers (I Cor. 3:1).

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.

Babes in Christ are those who have newly accepted Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. These are those who have not fully separated themselves unto God and are in a process. Their actual state is similar to the carnal Christian listed next.

C. There are carnal Christians—unbelieving believers (I Cor. 3:1-4; Eph. 4:17; Heb. 5:12).

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; 3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? 4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?

I Corinthians 3:1-4

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

Hebrews 5:12

Carnal Christians are those who have accepted Christ and who consider themselves to be Christians but who continue to live life like the natural man. The churches to which Paul wrote were filled with these kinds of Christians. He made references to many types of sinful or immature behavior among those who claimed to be Christian. Some of these include the following:

1. Disobedience (Rom. 6:1-2)
2. Hypocrisy (Rom. 12:9-21)
3. Strife (I Cor. 1:11; 3:3; II Cor. 12:20)
4. Envy (I Cor. 3:3; II Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:26)
5. Division or Partisan Spirit (I Cor. 1:10; 3:3-4; Tit.3:11)
6. Sexual Immorality (I Cor. 5:1; 6:9; II Cor. 12:21; Eph. 5:3)
7. Drunkenness (I Cor. 5:11; 6:10; Eph. 5:18)
8. Swindling (I Cor. 5:11, NLT; 6:10)
9. Covetous (I Cor. 5:11)
10. Reviling (I Cor. 5:11; 6:10)
11. Evil Associations (I Cor. 15:33; II Cor. 6:11-18; Eph. 5:11)
12. Outbursts of Anger (II Cor. 12:20)
13. Selfish Ambition (II Cor. 12:20)
14. Backstabbing, Whispering and Gossip (II Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:29)
15. Disorderly Behavior (II Cor. 12:20; II Th. 3:6)
16. Lying (Eph. 4:25)
17. Idleness (Eph. 4:28; II Th. 3:10-11)
18. Filthiness (Jam. 1:21)
19. Wickedness (Jam. 1:21)
20. Works of the Flesh (Gal. 5:16-21)

These are Christian people who “behave like mere men” (I Cor. 3:4). They may even excuse their behavior by saying, “I am only human!” They claim to be Christians but they walk as

enemies of the cross (Phil. 3:18-19).

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame--who set their mind on earthly things.

D. There are mature Christians—true disciples (I Cor. 2:6; 14:20; Phil. 3:15; Heb. 5:14).

Solid food is for those who are mature, who have trained themselves to recognize the difference between right and wrong and then do what is right. Hebrews 5:14

This person is referred to in the Bible as the **spiritual man** (I Cor. 2:15). Mature or spiritual persons also have certain qualities about them.

1. They walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16).
2. They walk as children of the light (Eph. 5:8).
3. They manifest the fruit of the Spirit in their lives (Gal. 5:22-24).

Every human being is going to grow up (in the biological sense), but this does not mean that every human being is going to attain maturity. Maturity, by God's definition, implies more than just being full of years or of full physical stature.

Maturity by God's definition implies that a person has come to a place where the fruit of the Spirit in his or her life has become so complete that it can be pleurably enjoyed by others.

It is tragically possible for people to grow up biologically but never mature or come to the fullness of what God intended for them when He made them. We are constantly reading about people who started strong but ended in disaster because of moral weakness. How does this happen? What went wrong?

For many of these people, their life went sour because they had a misplaced emphasis. Their emphasis was constantly on, "What am I going to do? What career am I going to pursue? Am I reaching my career goals? What can I do to get timely promotions? How can I build financial security for myself and my family?" None of these questions are wrong in themselves, but they are not to be the foundation on which our lives are built. They are not to be the things for which we work the hardest.

There is a more important question, "What am I going to **be** when I grow up?" That is, what kind of person am I going to be? What character qualities am I going to possess? What kind of Christian will I be? This is foundational to whatever else I will do with my life.

The Bible makes it clear that as believers there are two paths on which we can walk.

Each path has a definite result relative to fruitfulness.

See: Psalm 1 and Jeremiah 17:5-8

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish. Psalm 1:1-6

Thus says the LORD: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land which is not inhabited. Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit. Jeremiah 17:5-8

It is good to have goals as a Christian.

What kind of a Christian do I want to be?

What do I want to be when I grow up?

Many people have career goals but very few people have personal character goals or goals as a Christian, and yet, these personal areas are the things that will shape and mold everything we will do. These are the things that will cause each of us to make a lasting impact on our generation. Do you have any goals as a Christian? Do you have a target that you are aiming at in your Christian life? What kind of Christian do you want to be?

For myself, I have some goals as a Christian. They can be summarized in the following six areas.

A. I want to be the kind of Christian that God can use for His purposes.

God does indeed have a plan for all of our lives, but if we fail to be the good and faithful servants that He wants us to be, we can be left on the shelf because we have not made ourselves ready or fit for the Master's use. God intended us to be a vessel of honor, but because of choices that we make we can become a vessel of dishonor (II Tim. 2:20-21).

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

B. I want to be mature enough to weather the storms of life.

Being a mature Christian does not exempt anyone from the storms of life. It rains on the just and the unjust. But I want to be the kind of Christian that is not blown over or canceled out by the trials of life that come everyone's way. I want my faith to stand in the good times and the bad times (Job 4:18-20).

If He puts no trust in His servants, if He charges His angels with error, how much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before a moth? They are broken in pieces from morning till evening; they perish forever, with no one regarding.

C. I want to be the type of Christian that others can follow.

Paul encouraged his friends to follow him as he followed the Lord. I want my life to be an example that my children, grandchildren and associates can feel good about. We are all an example of one kind or another. I want to provide a positive pattern for others to follow—a pattern that will lead other to life (I Cor. 11:1).

Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

D. I want to be a true reflection of Christ to the world (II Cor. 3:2-3).

The word "Christian" means a follower of Christ. I realize that the only Christ that people will see is the Christ that comes through the human vessels that He has touched and filled with His Spirit. What kind of image of Christ am I portraying to the world? Will people truly see the true Jesus in me at work, at home, in the marketplace as well as in the church?

You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.

E. I want to be a Christian who is not consumed with satisfying my own needs but who is a true servant to the needs of others (Mark 10:44-45).

I want to be like Jesus who did not come to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many.

And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

F. I want to be a Christian who genuinely senses God's anointing on my life (II Th. 1:11-12).

I want to believe that each day I am an ambassador for Christ and that what I do not only has

His blessing on it, but I want to feel His anointing on it. Like the runner in the movie “Chariots of Fire” I want to feel His pleasure when I run for Him.

Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

What kind of Christian do you want to be? It is never too late to ask that question. Go ahead and set some personal, character goals. Write them on a piece of paper. Put them in a prominent place on your life. Ask God daily to help you achieve success in these areas. I am convinced that with the help of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God in our lives we can move toward those God-pleasing goals.

“Blessed are those who aim at nothing, for they shall not be disappointed.”