

**SET GOALS, FORMULATE PLANS – AND PRAY**

**By Robert J. Tamasy**

Since we are early in the year, some of us might still be in the process of setting goals for 2023. These can take many forms, both long-term and short-term, but I have always found it helpful to establish clear, measurable, attainable goals to begin the year. They give me something to strive toward. As someone has said, “If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time.” So, goals serve as a useful target.

Goals help us answer the question, “Where am I going?” But the next question is, “How am I going to get there?” For some, it requires taking overarching goals and formulating objectives and plans for attaining them. Recently, I was facing a major project that seemed daunting. To relieve some of my stress and anxiety about completing it, I broke it down into smaller objectives and laid out plans for meeting them.

Perhaps your approach is somewhat different from mine, but I have found that one important element is often ignored, overlooked, or forgotten in the goal setting and planning process. That element is prayer.

What does prayer have to do with it? Don’t we reserve prayer as a last resort, kind of a “when all else fails” option? I have learned that rather than waiting for a crisis to occur, praying in advance – as part of my preparation process – is much more effective. If we pray, what should we pray for? There are many things, but here are some suggestions from the Scriptures:

**Pray for wisdom.** Often in setting goals, I have reasoned, “I know what I need to do and how to get there.” However, sometimes unexpected challenges arise. Or I might not know the best way to accomplish what I am setting out to do. And at times I discover that God has better ideas than I do. So, praying for wisdom in advance can actually be a shortcut. *“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him”* (James 1:5).

**Pray for direction and guidance.** In setting goals and making plans, it can be wise not only to ask what we intend to do but also why we want to do it. Are our motives right? Are our goals and plans designed for our personal gratification – or to honor God? Therefore, our prayers can help to ensure we are going the right ways and for the right reasons. *“Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun”* (Psalm 37:4-5). *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight”* (Proverbs 3:5-6).

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**Pray for God's blessing.** To enter a building, it is easier to turn the knob and open the door than to try breaking it down. In a similar manner, prayer enables us to commit what we desire to accomplish to God and ask Him to bless our endeavors if they align with His will. *“Therefore, I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted to you”* (Mark 11:24).

**Pray for others.** Our prayers often focus on ourselves, but prayer can make us more aware to the needs of others around us. How better to represent Christ than to demonstrate sincere concern for others? *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”* (Philippians 2:3-4).

© 2023. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Marketplace Ambassadors: CBMC's Continuing Legacy of Evangelism and Discipleship*; *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace*; *Pursuing Life With a Shepherd's Heart*, coauthored with Ken Johnson; and *The Heart of Mentoring*, coauthored with David A.

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### Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Have you completed your goal setting for this new year? Describe the process you use for establishing goals and objectives.
2. What do you think of the idea of making prayer an integral part of your goal setting and planning? Is this a new concept for you, or is it a practice you have followed already, at least to some extent? Explain your answer.
3. How do you think that through prayer God can provide us direction and guidance that we need for setting goals and making plans? Have you ever experienced this personally?
4. It is not unusual to pray for God to bless us and our endeavors, but what do you think of the admonition to pray for others – even if it means putting their interests ahead of your own?

#### NOTE:

*If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:*  
Proverbs 16:3,9,33, 19:21, 20:24, 21:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18; James 4:3

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