

Worthy Goals For The Church

Introduction. I pray that God will always bless His church. I pray that everyone will see that it reveals the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:8-12). I pray that the church will always do everything it can to water and plant so God can cause the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6).

If one were to start a business, they would need to set goals so that their business will succeed. Goal-oriented people accomplish more than people without goals. As a church of the Lord, we will succeed to the extent that we are able to set worthy goals and follow them.

We need to make a distinction between “worthy” and “worldly” goals. Some only desire large attendance, big contribution, large number of works or programs, a well-known preacher, a large number of elders or deacons, or a new, nice building. These kinds of goals, by themselves, are carnal. There are more worthy spiritual goals to which we can attain.

I. ***A Worthy Goal Is To Be A Loving Church***

- A. We need a genuine, wholehearted, sincere love for God (Mark 12:30).
 1. We need to love the Lord Jesus. The Jews made a mistake and did not find Him.
 - a) They looked for a lion, but Jesus came as a lamb.
 - b) They looked for a warrior, but Jesus came as a peacemaker.
 - c) They looked for a military king, but Jesus came as a servant.
 - d) They looked for liberation from Rome, but Jesus submitted to Roman rule.
 - e) They looked for their temporal needs, but Jesus came to meet their spiritual needs.
 2. For what are we looking, a lion, warrior, military king, liberator, or physical provider?
 - a) He came as a lamb to be sacrificed for our sins, will we miss Him?
 - b) He came to make peace between God and man, will we miss Him?
 - c) He came that we might have true liberty, will we miss Him?
 - d) He came to serve others, we will miss Him?
 - e) He came to give eternal life, will we miss Him?
- B. We need love for the truth (Proverbs 23:23; Ephesians 4:14-15).
 1. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15), and we have to defend, uphold, and proclaim the truth (Jude 3).
 2. But in order to love the truth, we have to know the truth. It makes me cringe to hear people say that we have preached on issues enough. They feel there is no need to rehash doctrinal problems, but we need reminders (2 Peter 1:12-13, 15; 3:1).

- C. We need love for one another (1 Peter 1:22).
 - 1. It would be terrible to have no one who cares for our soul (Psalm 142:4).
 - 2. Love is a means of identifying true disciples of Jesus (John 13:34-35).
 - 3. If we love one another, God dwells in us (1 John 4:12).
 - 4. The one who does not love his brother abides in death (1 John 3:14-16).

II. ***A Worthy Goal Is To Be A Loyal Church***

- A. We need to be loyal in attitude.
 - 1. We must avoid the attitude of indifference (Revelation 3:15-16).
 - 2. We must avoid the attitude of self-righteousness (Luke 18:9-14).
 - 3. We must avoid the attitude of hypercritical judging (Matthew 7:1-5; Mark 7:2). An old proverb says, "He who is looking for faults in his brethren shall surely find them."
- B. We need to be loyal in attendance.
 - 1. Disciples of Christ assemble together (Acts 2:42; 11:26; 20:7).
 - 2. Forsaking the assemblies involves serious consequences (Hebrews 10:25-27).
- C. We need to be loyal in stewardship.
 - 1. Every member has a function (1 Corinthians 4:1-2, 12:20-22; Ephesians 4:16).
 - 2. The obligation of the whole is met by the parts, so we need to do our part so that the body can function properly.
 - a) An old Aesop's fable says that one day it occurred to some of the members of the body that they were doing all the work while the belly was receiving all the food. So they held a meeting and after a long discussion decided to go on strike until the belly consented to do its proper share of work. For a day or two the hands refused to take the food, the mouth refused to receive it, and the teeth had no work to do.
 - b) But after a day or two, the members began to find that they were deteriorating. The hands could hardly move, the mouth was parched and dry, and the legs were unable to support any of them. Thus, they found that even the belly, in its dull, quiet way, was doing necessary work for the body, and that all must work together or the body would fail.

III. ***A Worthy Goal Is To Be A Laboring Church***

- A. By works, our faith is made perfect (James 2:14-26).
- B. We need to labor to save souls.

1. The Lord Jesus came to save souls, and we need to diligently follow Him in His work (1 Corinthians 15:58).
 - a) This is an area where we definitely need improvement, and an area where we need to put emphasis. We need to look for new and better opportunities to serve the Lord (Matthew 9:37-38; John 4:34-36; 9:4).
 - b) A high school in Virginia offered a course called "Home Economics for Boys." Needless to say, it got very little attention. The following year it was renamed "Bachelor Living." The effect was overwhelming -- 120 boys promptly signed up. The curriculum had not changed. It still offered traditional instruction in cooking, sewing, laundry, and money management; but it needed the right image before the students would give the class a second look.
 2. As we present Christ to the world, do not forget that the message must never change; but our methods of delivery may vary (Matthew 10:16).
- C. The people's responsibility in Nehemiah's day was to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
1. They had enemies who opposed them (Nehemiah 4:1-3).
 2. They worked under great stress (Nehemiah 4:7-9, 17).
 3. The wall was finished because they had a mind to work (Nehemiah 4:6; 6:15-16).
 - a) There is an interesting way to illustrate the need for all of our work.
 - (1) 450 total membership
 - (2) -30 "too old to work"
 - (3) 420 left to do the work ... BUT,
 - (4) -45 too young to assume responsibility
 - (5) 375 left to do the work ... BUT,
 - (6) -30 work out of town or are away at school
 - (7) 345 left to do the work ... BUT,
 - (8) -60 work long hours, six or seven days a week
 - (9) 285 left to do the work ... BUT,
 - (10)-30 tied down with small children
 - (11)255 left to do the work ... BUT,
 - (12)-51 handicapped by aches and pains
 - (13)204 left to do the work ... BUT,
 - (14)-48 hindered by unbelieving companions
 - (15)156 left to do the work ... BUT,
 - (16)-88 are indifferent -- do not attend
 - (17)68 left to do the work ... BUT,
 - (18)-48 attend but refuse to work

(19)20 left to do the work ... BUT,
(20)-18 are tired and ask to be relieved
(21)2 left to do the work -- YOU and I ... BUT,
(22)I am too busy, so YOU DO THE WORK!

b) The question is, "Who is the 'you'?"

D. We have to be loyal and faithful to the Lord even when we do not fully understand His purpose and intent.

1. An ancient story told of a king who needed a faithful servant and had to choose between two candidates. He took both at fixed wages and told them to carry buckets of water from a nearby cistern and dump them into a large basket which he had placed a short distance away. He said that he would come in the evening to inspect their work. After dumping a few buckets of water into the basket, one of the men said, "What is the good of doing this useless work? As soon as we pour the water in, it runs out the sides." The other answered, "But we have our wages, don't we? The reason for the work is the master's business, not ours." The complainer replied, "I'm not going to do such fool's work," and throwing down his bucket, he went away. The other man continued until he drained the cistern. Looking down into it, he saw something shining at the bottom. It proved to be a very valuable gold ring that had been lost in the cistern. The servant thought, "Now I see the reason for pouring water into the basket! If the bucket had brought up the ring before the cistern was dry, it would have been found in the basket. Our work was not useless."
2. Let us never give up, give in, or give out in the Lord's work even when we do not fully understand God's purpose, and even when we cannot see any visible results.

Conclusion. So a few worthy goals are to be a loving church, a loyal church, and a laboring church. They focus on the very purpose for the church to exist. Do not lose sight of them, but press toward them.