



2024 | Week 38

Setting New Year Goals Together

Blog Contributors:

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We're now in the last week of the year 2024! How quickly time has passed us by. We may find ourselves in some uncomfortable situations, but there is still a great sense of hope as we approach a new year.

Let us not allow this sense of hope to be diminished by just the New Year's celebration traditions; instead, let's hold on to it and use it as a driving force for encouragement in making changes for the coming year. There's no better way to set goals than with your spouse. So, this week, we'll equip ourselves with how setting goals is encouraged from a Biblical perspective and how significant it is to do this together with your spouse.

DAY 1

The famous phrase is "New Year's Resolutions," and many people commonly engage in this activity individually. Whether making a detailed list or just keeping those points in mind, the excitement for the new year also brings a desire for change. However, while goal setting for married couples is generating buzz (thanks to social media!), the noise surrounding the results is not as loud as expected. This may be because it has become a norm for married couples to discuss critical matters, but the intentionality of improving those matters remains far less

unless a particular issue has become a source of further challenges.

We (Rey & Annie) are not really used to making "New Year" goals. There have been certain times of the year when we share what we look forward to or things we can work on, but it hasn't been consistent or measured over time. Over the years, as we've been learning to live more intentionally, anchored in Christ, we can say that what we had before were merely "wishes" or "dreams." Those good intentions will not translate into goals until they are converted into intentional actions.

So for this week's discussion, we're sharing what we've learned about goal setting that is anchored in Christ Jesus. We will share the biblical truths we've discovered regarding this subject, as well as the challenges we face in being intentional with our goal setting. It's not natural for us humans to express a willingness for accountability, much less to receive criticism, even though these two can lead to valuable, life-changing impacts. Indeed, the willingness to make decisions and take action toward a transformed life is a "heart matter." Creating a list and translating it into tasks with regular accountability checks, reflects where our heart is anchored.

Here are a few recommendations as you join us in this week's topic of "Setting New Year Goals Together":

1. Reflect on the lessons and challenges you encountered this past year.
2. Encourage your spouse to sit down and discuss those learnings and challenges. Be sure to have an open heart to listen and understand, particularly if this year has been challenging for your relationship and family.
3. Read and reflect on Habakkuk 2:2-3.

If having this kind of conversation with your spouse is not a regular occurrence or has never existed in your marriage, remember that a good habit will not form until there is a firm decision to start and continue it.

Again, our prayer is that we will have another impactful topic and discussion this week as we continue to commit our marriage to Jesus Christ.

Keep Journeying with Christ!

Your Fellow Couple,

Rey & Annie

DAY 2

Setting goals commonly originates in a “work” or “corporate” environment. If you’re part of a larger company with funds, you might even schedule certain days for team building and discussions about goals. Regardless of how they are presented, the main point is to achieve a clear understanding and set expectations. However, this approach to goal setting doesn’t necessarily translate to our personal lives. Despite hearing stories from those who are intentional about this and have demonstrated changes in their lives, many still struggle to do it correctly. Furthermore, many married couples find it difficult to engage in this process with their spouses.

The condition of our hearts plays a significant role in this important task. Since goal setting is widely used at work, we often overlook the importance of extending this practice into our households. We weren’t intentional about this before. If it came up and required our attention, it was typically because our former military lifestyle drove us to create “short-term” goals simply to survive.

When we finally left the military system and transitioned to civilian life, we felt as if our anchor had been taken away, leaving us to sail on our own. We didn’t realize how much time we had wasted and how unprepared we were regarding our stewardship (from time management to other resources) when we accepted Christ and got to know Him. Our ignorance and disregard for His words truly caught us by surprise when we discovered that God encourages us to make plans and set goals.

“Then the Lord answered me and said, ‘Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run. For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come; it will not delay.’” (Habakkuk 2:2-3)

Below are our learnings from these verses in the book of Habakkuk. We encourage you to reflect on these verses, as they may lead to deeper insights related to your current season of life.

“The Lord said” - We recognize that the author has a relationship with God and acknowledges His voice and instructions. The same holds true in our lives today. We often fail to hear His voice because we are disconnected from God. Even after restoring our relationship with Him through Jesus Christ, it requires further learning and experience to consistently hear His voice and fully accept His instructions.

“Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets” - We are instructed to write down our vision, which should occur with every divine communication. If writing is not a norm for you, this may indeed be a struggle. However, many experts who cultivate their relationship with God do not just write down goals and God’s instructions; they also go further into journaling. As David Mathis noted in his book, “Habits of Grace,” “Journaling is a way of slowing life down for just a few moments and trying to process at least a sliver of it for the glory of God, our own growth and development, and our enjoyment of the details. Journaling has the appeal of mingling the motions of our lives with the mind of God.” [1]

“That the one who reads it may run.” - The written vision should be in legible characters, easily read and understood. Practically speaking, it should be clear and encourage action, helping to overcome any difficulties or challenges associated with it.

“For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail” - This acknowledges the truth that the fulfillment of this vision or goal occurs in God’s appointed time. When that time comes, its accomplishment will not disappoint. Such outcomes may not always manifest as we expect, but our relationship with God provides a profound understanding of His will and purpose within all circumstances. The sense of “disappointment” will not arise because there will be contentment in our hearts that God has provided.

“Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come; it will not delay.” - Although it may be deferred and require significant time before its accomplishment, we

should remain confident in our specific expectations. Such expectations are not grounded in circumstances but rather in the attributes and promises of our gracious, merciful, and loving God—the true provider.

This is a powerful way to wrap up God’s instructions on encouragement. The encouragement we receive is not centered on our capabilities or skills in achieving such visions or goals but is firmly anchored in God. Let’s not forget that it begins with hearing God’s voice and His instructions.

You may find your reflections on this verse or your encounter with God through these words from Habakkuk leading you to deeper thoughts about your life and current situation in marriage. Don’t hesitate to jot down those insights. Sometimes, the journey to understanding begins with reassessing ourselves and our spouses. By taking this route, we’ll realize how much we need a Savior, which helps cultivate a humble heart that recognizes God’s authority and instructions.

Keep Journeying with Christ!

Your Fellow Couple,

Rey & Annie

DAY 3 | For Husbands

Just like many others, I’ve gotten used to the tradition of thinking about “New Year’s resolutions” during this season. It’s not something I give much attention to, and I often do it simply because it’s a “cultural thing.”

However, how we view goal-setting changed when Annie and I intentionally anchored our lives and marriage to Christ. As we journey to know God and learn about our true identity in Him, I’ve discovered the great importance of stewardship. Stewardship is not just about money matters, but about every resource God has gifted us—such as time, health, opportunities, and other responsibilities He will entrust to us. In learning this, I’ve

come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of goal-setting.

I’m the type of person who isn’t really fond of writing, let alone making a well-thought-out list of goals. This is one area I still need to improve, and it’s only by God’s grace that I’m able to do it today. I agree with what David Mathis mentioned about journaling: it’s a way of slowing life down for a few moments and processing at least a sliver of it for the glory of God. When we were in the process of writing our first book, *Couple’s Journey: Restore, Relearn, Rejoice*, I had a wonderful time recounting those early years of renewing our faith and experiencing His presence in our lives. The recorded experiences are not really about us but are testimonies of God’s work. Similarly, when we write down our goals, it’s not because we’re capable of doing so on our own or because our primary focus is improving the comfort of our lives. While there’s nothing wrong with those things, if we focus solely on them, we risk removing God from the equation, which eventually leads to self-centeredness. We set goals because of our submission to God’s authority and our accountability for the roles He has entrusted to us.

One more thing that changed our outlook on setting goals as we approach the new year is reflecting on the lessons we’ve learned in the previous year. Discussing this is not always easy. Recounting the challenges we face and areas we need to improve can trigger natural pride and selfishness. It took us many attempts to embrace this habit—not just for New Year’s planning, but also for regular accountability checks. It truly requires a humility that honors God’s authority and gives Him glory.

Setting goals and planning for the future is not unbiblical, nor should it be done apart from God. The Word says that we should learn to number our days (Psalm 90:12). We are also encouraged to make plans, yet with the constant reminder that God is the One who will establish our steps (Proverbs 16:9). Furthermore, the instructions for our vision come from hearing God’s voice (Habakkuk 2:2). This simply tells us that planning, such as goal-setting, begins by seeking God’s will and continues as a journey of accountability, anchored in His grace, mercy, and love.

Every year (or at any given opportunity) is a journey of growing into the life that God intended for us. We may face challenges along the way. We may fail to meet certain goals, but we need to remember that it's more than just crossing items off a list. God is not as concerned with what we achieve as He is with the transformation of our hearts that is anchored in Him.

So, if you're feeling demotivated or discouraged about setting goals, especially with your spouse, remember that this life is a gift from God. We may have lived apart from Him, but there is always hope for restoration through Jesus Christ. Perhaps this new year could be a new chapter for you and your spouse to intentionally get to know God, learn about Christ and Christlikeness, and gather testimonies of experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit. You'll be surprised when all the goals on your list lead you to a new life and identity, one that relies on God every step of the way.

Keep journeying with Christ Jesus.

Your Fellow Husband,
Rey

DAY 4 | For Wives

Just like what Rey mentioned yesterday, we weren't previously intentional about setting goals as a couple. We may have attempted to create "New Year's Resolutions," but from a personal perspective. In times when we had opportunities to discuss what was going on in our family, it felt more like sharing our desires, dreams, and hopes. Yet, accountability—or at least tracking our progress—was not really clear. So when we discovered how the Bible encouraged or commanded us to be good stewards, it was another a-ha moment for both of us. It truly made me realize that living in Christ is not just confined to the walls of the church; it should be more defined in our lives.

Annual goal-setting as a couple didn't come to us easily or smoothly. Our personality differences and various approaches to this matter have created struggles in achieving clear and united goals. Rey was trained and experienced in following certain standards and thorough

analysis from the military for 20 years. On the other hand, I have a different detail-oriented approach, typical for someone accustomed to being an entrepreneur. On top of that, we're in the process of embracing the true Biblical definitions of our roles as husband and wife, without disregarding the overwhelming responsibilities that have been sitting between us. Our commitment to push through and establish this habit was primarily anchored in our fear of God—not submitting to His authority would lead us to negative consequences.

Our love for God and the humbling act of Jesus Christ in saving us on the cross are deeply rooted in our hearts. Even when we're challenged—considering that this kind of communication and a habit of goal-setting was not a normal routine for either of us—we persevere (and continuously do) by holding onto God's promises and attributes. Through such endurance and perseverance, we're learning along the way. It's only by the grace of God that we're engaging in constant discussions, not just when setting goals but also for ongoing updates and progress throughout the year.

We know that Apostle Paul shared the roles of husband and wife in Ephesians 5, outlining the true design of marriage. In the Old Testament, Solomon shared valuable wisdom in Proverbs about "women of faith" and the roles of wives, concluding with the roles of wives and mothers in Proverbs 31. Two verses that strongly spoke to me, of which I need to constantly remind myself, are Proverbs 14:1 and Proverbs 27:12.

"The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands." — Proverbs 14:1

Our home management plays a very important role and is impactful to our husbands and even children. I was intentional about home management during Rey's time in the military. However, during those years, my approach was not anchored in Biblical truth or my relationship with Christ. I was doing it then because I had to, as our lives depended on Rey's career. So when he got out of the Navy, I looked forward to breaking out of that "shell" and finally returning to the corporate world. Little did I know that such a desire would drive various choices that were no longer aligned with God's design for my role as a wife and mother.

“House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord.” — Proverbs 19:14

John Gill’s commentary on this verse serves as a great reminder of a wife’s role:

“A prudent wife is from the Lord; one that behaves well to her husband, manages the affairs of her house with wisdom, and raises her children in an orderly manner. Such a wife no man has from the care and provision of his parents; nor so much from his own good choice and industry, as from the kind providence of God, to which he should ascribe it; his parents may give him houses and lands, but it is God who gives him a wise and discreet woman to be a helpmeet for him.” [2]

These two verses have become pillars in my role as Rey’s wife and our children’s mother. They stand as my encouragement to persevere and overcome the challenges that hinder me from obeying God. The constant remembrance of God’s design for my role has become a foundation for setting goals with my husband. As I further examine Solomon’s shared wisdom, I’ve realized how far I have strayed and the significant difference between what I used to believe was the design of being a wife and mother. Reflecting on my life and old habits, I knew I needed great help. In those moments when I’m digging deeper into the book of Proverbs, I feel greater and more profound gratitude to Jesus Christ, including His sacrifice on the cross. Without Him and the gift of the Holy Spirit, we would surely lack a heart that embraces God’s design for a true “woman of faith.” As I continue to face challenges brought by brokenness and the enemy’s temptations, I am firmly holding onto the message of the Gospel. Indeed, without Jesus Christ, I am nothing (John 15:5).

Keep journeying with Christ!

Your Fellow Wife,

Annie

DAY 5

As we noted on Day 2 of this week’s series, the important points we can learn and remember from Habakkuk 2:2-3 concerning goal-setting are:

1. It is anchored in God’s message and instructions.
2. It needs to be written with the intent of understanding and encouragement for continuous progression.
3. Although setting goals requires decent timetable planning, ultimately, we need to rest in the fact that it’s God who establishes our steps, and everything is under His timetable.
4. We can have great confidence and encouragement that goals anchored in His instructions will be achieved because of His promises—He never fails.

Following these pointers from Habakkuk will be challenging if the message of the Gospel is not clear to both husband and wife. Recognizing that God is the ultimate provider of opportunities and blessings starts with humbling ourselves to His authority, which was given to Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18). Accepting Christ as our Savior is the greatest help in obeying God, particularly in living a life with goals that are anchored in His instructions.

We know that this acceptance of the Gospel is not just a one-time declaration but a continuous choosing of Jesus Christ in every situation. We will not truly experience what it means to be saved and live a life anchored in Him if we don’t make a solid decision and commitment to choosing Him.

On the other hand, we are blessed today with valuable shared information from experts that we can utilize to help establish good habits anchored in Christ. A publication released by the University of Georgia entitled *“Elevate Your Relationship: Goal Setting in Marriage”* [3] notes some important pointers that will be helpful for couples in setting goals. They emphasize the importance of couples establishing immediate goals (one month to one year), short-term goals (one to three years), and long-term goals (three to five years). Redefining our goals in reference to these three types can sometimes create confusion. The most practical way to approach this is to have a clear list of long-term goals, then formulate

short-term goals that are directly related to these long-term goals, and finally create immediate goals that are directly related to the short-term goals. In this manner, the formulated tasks will be united toward the long-term goals.

The publication presents three points that could help couples set a unified goal. These points are **Realize, Evaluate, and State**.

Realize

Partners must realize that they individually have desires and expectations for themselves and the marriage. Oftentimes, partners are not aware of each other's goals, which can result in resentment and frustration over time, eventually giving way to anger and bitterness. There is no better way to overcome the struggles toward "realization" than for the couple to be committed to sitting down together and discussing these matters. We mentioned in the first chapter of our book, "Couple's Journey: Restore, Relearn, Rejoice," how we ended up not just in "realization" but in "genuine realization," because genuine realization impacts our hearts and minds, leading to a desire for a transformed life. The humble admission of our own shortcomings plays a very important role in this genuine realization. This can only be achieved when we submit to God's authority, for only He can give us a new heart (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Experiencing God's grace through Jesus Christ, we can share such grace with our spouses and view their shortcomings through the lens of grace. This enables us to have a profound understanding. Just as Solomon said in Proverbs 24:3, "**By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established.**" We may have a good list of realizations based on shortcomings and what is needed to achieve, but it's an understanding heart and mind that drives many towards actions leading to transformation and truly establishes our homes.

Evaluate

Evaluate certain areas from a personal perspective, and assess their impact and significance to the marriage. The publication lists three helpful questions for couples' discussions: (1) Why is this important to me/us? (2) What will happen to me/us if this goal is met? (3) How will this improve the marriage?

In our situation, we found these five categories helpful in setting clear goals that properly cover the scope of our lives and marriage: (1) Spiritual, (2) Health, (3) Family Relationships, (4) Finances, and (5) Work/Business. We evaluate each category, reflect on the previous year's situations and learnings, and then formulate goals for the next year.

State

As the publication noted and in line with what is specified in Habakkuk, partners should formally state their goals, write them down, and post them where they can be seen and evaluated continuously. Goals should be articulated in clear, measurable sentences. The well-known S.M.A.R.T. principle can be helpful. According to the publication, the S.M.A.R.T. technique is summarized as follows:

- **S - Specific:** Goals must be specific in detail. If someone else were to read it, would they understand it?
- **M - Measurable:** Goals must be measurable in quantity, time, or cost. How would you know if you achieved it?
- **A - Achievable:** Goals must be achievable within a realistic time frame. Can you both do what is needed to meet the goal?
- **R - Relevant:** Goals must be relevant. Does the goal matter to both of you?
- **T - Timescale:** Goals must have a timeline for completion. When will you know that you are done?

As we evaluate our goals, we can create a sound list of tasks that we can lay down in our one-year plan or incorporate into our habits and routines.

Considering Biblical truths and practical applications, goal-setting with a spouse can indeed be overwhelming. As mentioned in our previous posts, we encountered struggles when we first started to incorporate goal-setting into our lives, and we continue to face challenges as we try to implement it. If we focus solely on ourselves or the shortcomings of our spouse, we may become discouraged. Our focus could shift more toward how far we are from our goals. Little do we realize that God is transforming us along the journey. To avoid falling into Satan's temptation that creates confusion and doubts, we submit ourselves daily at the feet of Jesus

Christ. We constantly remind ourselves that we need His help and guidance. By being sensitive to the power of the Holy Spirit, we allow our discernment to lead us to take action, not primarily focused on the results but on God's direction concerning the planned goals.

Your Fellow Couple,

Rey & Annie

NOTES

[1] Mathis, D. (2016). *Habits of grace: Enjoying Jesus Through the Spiritual Disciplines*.

[2] Gill, J. Commentary on Proverbs 19:14. John Gill's Exposition of the Bible.

<https://johngill.thekingsbible.com/>

[3] Futris, T., Richardson, E., & The Ohio State University Extension. University of Georgia (2022). *Elevate your relationship: Circular 1052-17*.



Let's embark on a comprehensive learning experience with this week's topic by following the **D.R.A.S.H. - 5 Steps of Learning Method!**

Step 1 | Discover the Truth

- Read carefully Habakkuk 2:2-3. In your own words and understanding, what did you learn about creating goals/vision?

- From other Bible verses and comments mentioned in this week's topic, "Setting New Year Goals Together" how have they impacted your new learnings about Jesus Christ and God's design for marriage?

Step 2 | Reflect and Meditate on the Truth

- Based on this week's topic of 'Setting New Year Goals Together,' how does it relate to your current season of marriage?

Step 3 | Apply the Truth

- Based on this week's topic and the truths that resonated with you, what actions do you plan to take in the coming days? Set a meaningful goal that supports your spouse and strengthens your marital relationship.
- Has this week's topic helped you learn more about Jesus Christ? How and in what way?
- What old habits or practices do you need to change as a result of your new discoveries and understanding of Jesus' invitation? How do you plan to implement these changes?

Step 4 | Share

- How and when do you plan to share your insights about this week's topic, "Setting New Year Goals Together," with your spouse or your CJ² Fellows? Sharing can deepen understanding and foster accountability.

Step 5 | Help in Navigating the Truth

- Identify specific learning points from this week's topic, that encourage you to transform conviction into action. In what ways do you need assistance in navigating the journey to apply these learnings?

We pray that you encounter God through this week's topic. May His grace turn your learning experience into a transformative journey, leading to testimonies of breakthroughs that further strengthen your walk with Christ Jesus!

Let us know how this guide has helped you!

May this study tool be effective and helpful for every fellow seeker and believer who is intentionally journeying with Jesus Christ. We would be grateful to hear how this tool has significantly impacted your journey and your relationships with your spouse and others. Please share your feedback or experiences through this [link](#) (or scan QR Code)



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