

Navigating the New Year

Principles for Priorities

Guided Growth with Pastor Keith @ CBC Sunday, Dec. 30

A man bought a new hunting dog. Eager to see how he would perform, he took him out to track a bear. No sooner had they gotten into the woods than the dog picked up the trail. Suddenly he stopped, sniffed the ground, and headed in a new direction. He had caught the scent of a deer that had crossed the bear's path. A few moments later he halted again, this time smelling a rabbit that had crossed the path of the deer. And so, on and on it went until finally the breathless hunter caught up with his dog, only to find him barking triumphantly down the hole of a field mouse.

Sometimes we as Christians are like that. We start out with high resolve, keeping Christ first in our lives. Soon we are distracted by things that constantly cross our paths.

One pursuit leads to another until we've strayed far from our original purpose.

How do we safely navigate through the deadly distractions of our day (Society's siren songs)

And the dangerous currents of our culture?

Daniel was a young man who safely navigated the dangerous currents of a godless culture in spite of all the devil could throw at him. He was born into Jewish nobility, but forced into slavery at a young age. He was among those chosen to train as counselors to the King. (1:5) His very name was changed to reflect and honor this new pagan culture and their gods. From Daniel {*God is my judge*} to Belteshazzar {*Bel will protect*} Dan. 1:6,7) While most of the Jewish youth were relieved and even thrilled with the accommodations, Daniel was different!

Dan. 1:8 *'Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the king's meat'*

Pr. 29:18 *'Where there is no vision, (Ḥāzôn; : mental goal; to gaze or contemplate) the people perish'* Perish: pāra' : to turn back, dismiss

- Most of the other Jews "dismissed" God's law in order to get along and even ahead.
- Daniel stayed focused on his purpose to honor and please God!

The Power and Priority of a Prudent Purpose!

1. MOST HAVE NO CLEAR, COMPELLING PURPOSE!

A. They are in a survival or reactive mode.

- 1) Personal protection, peace, provision are their highest priorities.
- 2) This may produce temporary pleasure (Heb 11:25) but ultimately bring lasting pressure.

B. Without a clear destination, it's difficult to determine direction or drift!

- 1) Are you closer to your goal now than you were last January?
- 2) Many confuse activity with productivity!

Most are busy producing "*wood, hay, and stubble*" thinking it's "*gold, silver, precious stones*" (Mt. 7:26,27; 1 Cor. 3:12-15; Phil 3:17-20)

Without a clear, compelling goal we're like a ship without a rudder.

We will drift (with the currents of culture) Or be blown about (with the winds of circumstances) but not be able to drive toward a safe and fulfilling destination.

2. SOME HAVE SHORT-SIGHTED AND VAIN PURPOSES.

A. The phrase "Under the sun" is found 29x in Eccl. Eccl 1:14 *"I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity (hebel: empty, unsatisfying) and vexation (re'ût) of spirit."* (Feeding on or reaching after emptiness!)

**B. Solomon climbed The Ladder Of Success,
to find it Leaning Against The Wrong Building!**

1) Pleasure. Ecc. 2:1 *"I enjoyed pleasure"*

2) Possessions Verse 3-6 *"gathered silver and gold"*

3) Pride Verse 7-8 *"I was great..."*

2:11 *"Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had beheld, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."*

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:
Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."*

3. VERY FEW HAVE A PRUDENT (ETERNAL) PURPOSE.

Daniel 1:8 *"Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the King's meat"*

(Sûm: to put down, appoint, determine, commit!)

The issue wasn't his diet, But his determination to honor God!

He filtered every decision through this! Pr. 3:5,6

Conclusion:

Pr. 29:18 *"Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."*

➤ Keepeth (Shāmar) guards, protects, values

➤ Happy ('esher) blessed: from āshar' To make or keep straight, prosper by pushing forward!

Phil 3:14 *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."*

➤ What "mark" has God called you to pursue? Are You?

We never hear anything about the Jews who "went along to get along".

vs 17-21 "But As for these four, (Daniel and his friends) God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, he found them ten times better than all ... that were in all his realm."

Application: Which best describes you:

1) No Clear compelling purpose?

2) A temporary, ultimately vain purpose?

3) A Prudent, eternal purpose?

"Only one life will soon be passed, Only what's done for Christ will last."

Mt 16:24-26 *"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

Another year is dawning; dear Father, let it be, In working or in waiting, another year with thee.
Another year of progress, another year of praise, Another year of proving thy presence all the days.
Another year of service, of witness for thy love; Another year of training for holier work above.
Another year is dawning; dear Father, let it be, on earth, or else in heaven, another year for thee.

Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-1879)

Purpose:

The European cuckoo bird is a "freeloader" in its very unusual nesting habits. When spring comes, it does not construct a home for its yearly brood. Instead, the female searches out an unsuspecting "foster home" and lays an egg in the nest of another such as the hedge sparrow. The cuckoo's offspring is left to be hatched and cared for by its "foster parent." While still featherless and blind, the intruder soon dominates the nest by pushing the rightful occupants over the edge to death. Then it monopolizes all the attention of its new "parents."

Planning:

Goals and plans are the magic keys to happiness and success! Only 3 percent of all people have goals and plans and write them down. Ten percent more have goals and plans, but keep them in their heads. The rest -- 87 percent -- drift through life without definite goals or plans. They do not know where they are going and others dictate to them.

Let's examine these statistics further. The 3 percent who have goals and plans that are written down accomplish from fifty to one hundred times more during their life than the 10 percent who have goals and plans and merely keep them in their heads. These statistics alone should motivate you to set definite personal goals, establish a plan of action for their fulfillment, and then commit both your goals and plans to writing. Please note, the Creator committed his goals and plans to writing in the Holy Bible!

Brooke Bronkowski was a beautiful fourteen-year-old girl who was in love with Jesus. When she was in junior high, she started a Bible study on her campus. She spent her babysitting money on Bibles so she could give them out to her unsaved friends. Brooke wrote the following essay when she was about twelve; it will give you an idea of the kind of girl she was. "SINCE I HAVE MY LIFE BEFORE ME" By Brooke Bronkowski

"I'll live my life to the fullest. I'll be happy. I'll brighten up. I will be more joyful than I have ever been. I will be kind to others. I will loosen up. I will tell others about Christ. I will go on adventures and change the world. I will be bold and not change who I really am. I will have no troubles but instead help others with their troubles. You see, I'll be one of those people who live to be history makers at a young age. Oh, I'll have moments, good and bad, but I will wipe away the bad and only remember the good. In fact that's all I remember, just good moments, nothing in between, just living my life to the fullest. I'll be one of those people who go somewhere with a mission, an awesome plan, a world-changing plan, and nothing will hold me back. I'll set an example for others, I will pray for direction. I have my life before me. I will give others the joy I have and God will give me more joy. I will do everything God tells me to do. I will follow the footsteps of God. I will do my best!!!"

During her freshman year in high school, Brooke was in a car accident while driving to the movies. Her life on earth ended when she was just fourteen, but her impact didn't. Nearly fifteen hundred people attended Brooke's memorial service. People from her public high school read poems she had written about her love for God. Everyone spoke of her example and her joy. I shared the gospel and invited those who wanted to know Jesus to come up and give their lives to Him. There must have been at least two hundred students on their knees at the front of the church praying for salvation. Ushers gave a Bible to each of them. They were Bibles that Brooke had kept in her garage, hoping to give out to all of her unsaved friends. In one day, Brooke led more people to the Lord than most ever will.

Chan, Francis. Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God (pp. 50-51). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.