

## **Proverbs 4:18-27**

18

***The path of the righteous is like the morning sun,  
shining ever brighter till the full light of day.***

19

***But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness;  
they do not know what makes them stumble.***

20

***My son, pay attention to what I say;  
turn your ear to my words.***

21

***Do not let them out of your sight,  
keep them within your heart;***

22

***for they are life to those who find them  
and health to one's whole body.***

23

***Above all else, guard your heart,  
for everything you do flows from it.***

24

***Keep your mouth free of perversity;  
keep corrupt talk far from your lips.***

25

***Let your eyes look straight ahead;  
fix your gaze directly before you.***

26

***Give careful thought to the<sup>[c]</sup> paths for your feet  
and be steadfast in all your ways.***

27

***Do not turn to the right or the left;  
keep your foot from evil.***

The new year is often a time of resolutions, and of taking stock of what has taken place in the past year.

It's good to live lives of purpose, of establishing goals for ourselves and making every effort to attain them.

Living a life of purpose is a good thing.

## **Comment on Rick Warren's book, The Purpose Driven Life.**

The alternative is **living a life of improvisation**, where we simply get up every day and live life by the seat of our pants. We make up things as we go, but **don't have a real sense of direction.**

I want to encourage us as we begin the new year to live lives of purpose and with concrete goals that we can establish in the wisdom of God.

In the spirit, each one of us is a prophet. What we declare in the name of the Lord and in his wisdom, shall be accomplished.

We become what we envision. We become what we declare in prayer and in the spirit.

Our declaring and our prophesying has to be **done with clarity, specificity and after much reflection** and meditation.

It cannot be just **mere wishful thinking or dreaming**. It has to be in the spirit.

So that is my first point. We have to **incubate our visions for the future in the spirit**.

We need to have **a sense of where we are going**, and how we are going to get there.

This is **the kind of life that God respects**, which God takes seriously, and to which he commits the resources of his kingdom, to help us fulfill these godly visions.

The theme verse of this morning speaks of “the path of the righteous.”

It’s about **the journey** of a person who takes God seriously.

Life is a journey. And as with any journey you have to have a sense of direction. You have to know where you want to go and how to get there.

**Lewis Carroll** said if you don’t know where you are going any road will get you there.

**Yogi Berra** said, “if you don’t know where you're going you’ll end up someplace else.”

We have to aim for something, and then we have to chart a course in the spirit. And God will honor our sense of purpose.

We may not get to where we determined fully and perfectly, but we will certainly get there closer than if we hadn't set a goal for ourselves in God.

It's truly astounding how much God respects us when we establish clear purposes and begin to live our lives accordingly.

**The prayer of Jabez. 1 chronicles 4:9,10**

*Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, "I gave birth to him in pain." Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that you would bless me indeed and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from the evil one." And God granted his request.*

Jabez declared his vision specifically, and God granted his request.

When we establish our purpose is God roles up his sleeves and says, "OK, let's get going and make it happen."

*James 1:6,7*

*6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.*

Here are some of the qualities of a legitimate purpose:

1A)**Incubate it over a period of time.** Develop it slowly and deliberately.

1)**Visualize it in the Spirit.**

2)**Write it down.**

3)**Declare it to God and to others.**

4)**Choose well those others** to whom you declare it.

5)**Be realistic** and at the same time make sure it stretches you. **Be ambitious.** Let it scare you a bit.

6)**Be specific** about it. See the details of its component parts.

7)**Set it in prayer** and pray about it continually until you see it realized.

8)**Enlist others in support** of your vision. Mentors, good books, people with resources to help you achieve your vision (financial, etc.). Do this in community.

9)**Set a time** for it to be accomplished. **The Bible In One Year.**

10)**Align** your life with your vision.

11)Be willing to **pay the price** for your vision. There is always a cost. You will have to sacrifice things that you cherish and that give you pleasure.

12)**Commit to it for the long haul.** Don't give up on it even if it takes longer than you expected. Long term vision is necessary.

13)**Don't condemn yourself** if you don't achieve it all. Be patient with yourself. Through the journey itself you will learn a lot and become a better person.

**Psalms 37:5,6**

5

**Commit your way to the Lord;  
trust in him and he will do this:**

6

**He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn,  
your vindication like the noonday sun.**

