

## Setting Goals to Become Fully Alive

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Rich Nathan  
February 25 & 26, 2017  
Fully Alive  
Ephesians 4

Next week, we're starting a six week campaign here at Vineyard Columbus called Fully Alive.

Today's message is designed to be a foundation for our campaign and to set us up for successful change. The theme verse of this campaign is taken from Habakkuk 2:4

Slide Habakkuk 2:4 The Message

"Look at that man, bloated by self-importance—

full of himself but soul-empty.

But the person in right standing before God

through loyal and steady believing

is fully alive, *really* alive.

Back in the second century, a famous early church father named Irenaeus said,

"The glory of God is a person fully alive!"

Over the next 50 days, we will be focusing the entire church's attention, from children to empty nesters, on five key areas of our lives and the changes we need to make to become more Fully Alive. Next week, I'll be speaking about becoming

Spiritually Alive

Physically Alive

Relationally Alive

Emotionally Alive

Financially Alive

We're going to find out that these five areas of life are not like sections of a grapefruit that we can separate out one – let's say, becoming more physically alive – without also taking account of becoming more relationally alive or more spiritually alive. These five areas are more like chocolate in chocolate milk. They are all stirred up together. We're going to start seeing some of the connections.

For example, one of the greatest challenges to the relational health in marriages and families are financial problems. So, if we want to become relationally alive, we need to get our financial houses in order, we have to become financially alive. And, we've seen over and over again in our financial counseling ministry that when someone becomes financially healthy, they often see a great improvement in their relationships and in their emotions. They experience more peace, less worry, more joy in their lives.

Likewise, if you want to become more physically alive, one of the best things you could do is pay attention to your spiritual health. Doctors have found that in terms of your physical health, it is a medical toss up whether you:

- a. Choose to stop smoking
- b. Join a church

We know that smoking is horrible for you and that ending smoking is one of the best things that you can do for your health. But the health improvement of getting deeply connected to a church is found to be about the same health improvement as stopping smoking.

We're going to find that all these areas of life are related to each other. Becoming Fully Alive in one area is going to impact all four other areas. Today, I want to talk about setting personal goals that will motivate us to become more fully alive over the next 50 days. I've called today's message, "Setting goals to Become Fully Alive".

Let's pray.

Why should we set goals?

Setting your goals

For those of us who have a high view of the Bible, it's important to remind ourselves that

Goalsetting is biblical

We often think: Oh, this whole idea of setting goals is taken from a business book or management consultants. Goal setting has nothing to do with our spiritual lives. It's just a modern business concept. But I would suggest to you that goalsetting is biblical.

The Bible tells us that Jesus set goals. He was very intentional about how he spent his time. He was very purposeful. He was on a mission. In fact, I believe there is no one who was ever more intentional about the way that he spent his time than Jesus.

For example, in Mark 1, Jesus gets up while it's still dark. It's very early in the morning. He goes off by himself to a secluded place to pray. Peter and the other disciples are frustrated with him and they say, "Everyone is looking for you. Don't you understand, Jesus, that you have the opportunity right now to be a huge success?" And Jesus responds and says,

Mark 1:38

Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."

Jesus knew exactly what he was called to do. He knew who he was. His beliefs were not constantly changed by the latest book he read or the latest conversation he had. He knew he was here for a specific purpose. He had a goal in mind.

Doing life without goals is like riding a rocking horse.

We may have lots of activity, but we don't make any progress. So many of us and so many of our politicians are engaged in flurry of activity, but there's no real progress.

The Apostle Paul was goal-oriented. He was incredibly intentional about his goals for his life and ministry. Here's what we read:

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

<sup>24</sup> Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. <sup>25</sup> Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. <sup>27</sup> No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

To have no goal is to be like a man who is involved in shadow boxing. We're not really defeating any enemy in our life. We're not really winning any victories. Or to change the analogy, to have no goal is to be like men who play fantasy basketball. No ball, no hoop, no score-keeping – it's all fantasy. "We're here at the Quicken Loans Arena for the 7<sup>th</sup> game of the NBA Finals. It's all come down to this. The Cavs are down by 2 points with 3 seconds to go. LeBron gets the ball. He passes it to the top of the key, to the Cavs' most reliable shooter – Rich Nathan! The clock is ticking down – 3...2...1. Nathan takes a shot over the flailing, falling Steph Curry. It's all net! The Cavs win the finals! The Cavs win! LeBron embraces Nathan and carries him off the court while the crowd goes wild." Doing life without goals, Paul says, is like fantasy sports. Nothing is really happening except in your mind.

Why should you set goals? Because

Goalsetting is a statement of faith

Again, a lot of people think that goalsetting and Christian faith have nothing to do with each other. That goalsetting is something that a business consultant will advise you to do. It's all modern management techniques. But goalsetting is a spiritual habit that we all need to grow in because goals are statements of faith. During this Fully Alive campaign, we're going to ask each of you that participate *to pray* and to ask God, "Is there some area that you're putting your finger on in my life that you want me to grow

in? One thing, at most two things, that you want to underline in my life that would make me more Fully Alive if I accomplished this thing.”

In other words, what you’re saying when you set a goal – and we’re going to ask each of you to set a goal for the next 50 days – we’re saying, “I believe (that’s what faith is) that God wants me to accomplish such and such at this time.” I’d like you to pull out the cards that I hope you renewed on your way in to the service today. If you didn’t, you can get the card on your way out.

When you’re saying: my goal is to become more \_\_\_\_\_ alive – spiritually, physically or relationally or emotionally or financially – that’s a faith statement. You’re saying that you believe that God wants you to accomplish such and such by this particular time.

Why should we set goals? Because goalsetting is biblical, because goalsetting is a statement of faith and because

Goalsetting keeps us going

In Ephesians 4:1 we read:

Ephesians 4:1

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

You know, the New Testament wasn't originally written in English. It was originally written in Greek. This NIV translation of Paul's original statement misses something very important in Paul's writing that I've pointed out on many occasions. Verse 1 literally reads

Ephesians 4:1 NASB

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

Likewise, in verse 17, Paul writes this:

Ephesians 4:17 NIV

<sup>17</sup> So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

Again, literally, in the original Greek the verb that Paul used was not the verb live, rather the verb walk. You know, there are two places in the Bible where life is most often understood as a walk. The first is the book of Proverbs and the second are the letters of the Apostle Paul. On 32 different occasions, Paul describes life as a walk. Walking,



according to Paul, involves a step-by-step movement toward a particular goal. Goals Paul has in mind in Ephesians 4 are the unity of the church and the maturity of the believer. But in Ephesians 4, when Paul speaks of walking, he's not describing an aimless Sunday stroll where we just wander around, maybe go into an open house or wander through a park. Paul is describing a purposeful walk – left foot, right foot, left foot – in pursuit of a goal so that we reach the finish line. Left foot, right foot, left foot so that we keep going. Without goals, we're going to quit along the way.

I love this metaphor of walking so much when it comes to becoming Fully Alive because walking always begins with a first step. We're not instantly transported to the goal. We step-by-step move toward the goal. I heard Mark Fields, the Missions Director for the Vineyard, refer to a book that's intriguingly titled, *The Three Mile an Hour God*. God works in our lives at the speed of our walking. We typically want God to work at jet speed or the speed of light, but frequently God works at the speed of walking. These little, incremental changes - left foot, right foot, left foot – spiritually, physically, relationally, emotionally, financially. It all starts with a first step.

As you're thinking about your goals, what way do I want to become more Fully Alive? Let's say as you pray you feel like God wants you to become more spiritually alive. You're a person who says, "I rarely pray except to bless my food when I remember to pray over my food. I never read my Bible." Your goal should not be in 50 days I want to

pray two hours a day and I'm going to read through the entire Old Testament. Walking begins with a first step toward the goal. How about:

I'm going to begin praying five minutes each day and add a minute a day each week. In 50 days, I'll be praying 12 minutes every day.

That's a good start. Or your goal might be:

I plan to become more spiritually alive by doing the personal devotions contained in the Fully Alive book (which I can only receive if I join a small group).

Paul talks about the Christian life as a walk. Walks begin with a first step. We're not instantly zapped into success. God is a three mile an hour God. Change in our lives generally happens slowly. Let's say that your goal is to become more physically alive in 50 days. You say: I never exercise. I just sit on the couch eating Cheetos and pork rinds while I binge watch "Keeping up with the Kardashians" on Hulu. Your goal shouldn't be – I plan to complete a triathlon in 50 days.

How about:

I plan to become more physically alive by walking 10 minutes a day. I will add two minutes a day each week. In 50 days, I will be walking 25 minutes per day.

The materials that you'll get in your small group discussion will help you to set up smart goals that will make you more Fully Alive in seven weeks. But even if you set a good goal, it's hard to accomplish your goals.

### Accomplishing your goals

We all know that it's infinitely easier to set a goal than to follow through and actually accomplish a goal. How many New Year's Resolutions are broken by January 2? How many gym memberships go entirely unused? How much exercise equipment is collecting dust in a basement or is lying unused in a closet or out in the garage? How many Bible study guides are stuck in the back of your Bible somewhere? It's easy to set a goal. It's so much harder to follow through and sustain the effort to accomplish the goal. How do we not only engage in this activity of setting a goal to become more Fully Alive, but actually accomplish the goal?

In Ephesians 4, Paul describes at least five things we need if we're going to sustain our effort to accomplish the goals that God puts on our hearts. There are actually more in this text, but I just want to mention five.

The first thing I see is this:

Accomplishing a goal requires coaches

Ephesians 4:11-12

<sup>11</sup>So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

The word equip suggests training or discipling, not just information. The ministers that Paul lists are equippers, they're trainers, coaches of believers. The job of these ministers is to coach the church toward maturity. Most people assume that a pastor's job is to do the work of the church while the church sits back and cheers the pastor on. "Go, Pastor, Go! Throw the ball! Catch the ball! Stupid pastor, you dropped the ball. Let's get a new pastor."

The Apostle Paul says that the church is on the field. You are the players. Pastors' jobs and leaders' jobs are to coach you to get you ready for the game of life, to prepare you, to train you so that you succeed and become more fully alive. So that you can accomplish the purpose for which you were created.

We always grow faster with a coach. In 2 Timothy, Paul is talking to Timothy, a young guy that he's coaching, and he says this:

## 2 Timothy 2:2

<sup>2</sup> And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

Paul says, “I coach you, now I want you to coach someone else and then they can coach somebody else.”

I’ve benefitted from multiple coaches over the course of my life. Some directly, like John Wimber, the founder of the Vineyard movement. Some indirectly, through reading – folks like John Stott and C.S. Lewis. Many of the things I teach you are the things that they taught me. And if they hadn’t taught me some of this stuff, Vineyard Columbus would not be benefitting. Now, who are you going to pass it on to? Everybody needs a Paul and everybody needs a Timothy. Everybody needs someone that they are learning from and everyone needs someone they’re passing it on to.

That’s why during this campaign we want to start over 400 new HOST groups.

Remember, to host a group all you need is:

Slide

H – Heart for people

O – Open up your home or space

S – Serve a snack

## T – Turn on a DVD

If you want to host, you can sign up in the lobby at all of our campuses. I produced six videos to help coach you. And you can coach someone else. You don't need to be perfect to be a coach. All you need to do is be a step ahead. We can help you be a step ahead with the leader's guide that we'll give you to guide the discussion in your group.

Accomplishing a goal requires coaches. The Apostle Paul says that:

Accomplishing a goal requires truth

Ephesians 4:14-15

<sup>14</sup>Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup>Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

You know, we live in a time when a large percentage of people have lost our grip on the truth. We've lost an appreciation for truth. We become used to words not having their obvious meaning. Facts are being twisted beyond recognition. The first question that people are asking now is not "is this true?" It's "who said it?" If it comes from politician

A, I believe it. If it comes from politician B, I don't. If it comes from news source A, I believe it. If it comes from news source B, I don't.

For followers of Jesus, truth matters. In Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, before he died for us on a cross, we find Jesus praying to God the Father and saying this:

John 17:17

<sup>17</sup> Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

Make them holy, Lord. Make them complete. You might say that Jesus prayed: Father, make your people fully alive! How are we going to become fully alive? Jesus says the way is through the truth. Jesus said in John:

John 8:32

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

What's he saying? If you want to become fully alive in any area, you need to know the truth in that area. If you want to become financially alive then you've got to know what God's word says about your finances and apply that truth to your life. If you want to become more fully alive in your marriage, you've got to know what God's word teaches about marriage and apply the truth of that to your life. If you want to become more

physically alive, you need to know what God's word teaches about your body and then apply that truth to your life.

The same thing is true about your emotions, your sex life, and your time. It's true about everything else. You're not going to be fully alive without knowing the truth from God's word and applying it to your life. It's easy to set goals. It's hard to accomplish them.

How do we accomplish goals? Accomplishing a goal requires coaches. Accomplishing a goal requires truth.

Accomplishing a goal requires community

Here's what we read in Ephesians 4:

Ephesians 4:16

<sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

If you want to start going to the gym to become more fully alive, find a gym buddy who will commit to go with you and meet them every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 7:30am or 5:30pm or whenever the two of you can agree to meet several times a week. It's the support of others that Weight Watchers, 50 years ago, discovered was the secret



to helping people lose weight. Once a week, folks gathered for a meeting where they could cheer one another on in this long, slow step-by-step process of losing weight.

It was the support of others that Alcoholics Anonymous tapped into 75 years ago in assisting people to break the habit of alcohol abuse. Almost no one stops any addiction on their own. We need community. We need fellowship. We need other people. It's the support of others in community that Jesus said was the secret to the Christian life 2,000 years ago. Jesus said this:

Matthew 18:20

For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.

Just two or three others is all you need to start a new group during this campaign. You know, when people run a marathon it really makes a difference that thousands of people line the road cheering them on, giving them a cup of water, clapping, and holding signs. Something happens that sustains us to reach the finish line as we're cheered on. There's a definite home field advantage that radically changes the performance and success of home teams – it's empirically measurable, except in the case of the Cleveland Browns. Having fans cheer you on helps us to reach down and give that extra effort. The reason we're not giving out the Fully Alive materials unless you join a small group is that we want to give you home field advantage so that you succeed in accomplishing your goals. We want every single person in this church and

many that you will invite from outside the church to be encouraged – to be cheered on – with whatever goal you feel God directed you to set.

We want folks to pray for you and encourage you as you take steps for becoming more spiritually alive or physically alive or relationally alive or emotionally alive or financially alive.

Here's the fourth thing that Paul mentioned:

Accomplishing a goal requires cleaning house

Ephesians 4:20-22

<sup>20</sup>That, however, is not the way of life you learned <sup>21</sup>when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. <sup>22</sup>You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;

Depending on what you want to change, depending on what area of life you want to become more fully alive in, you're going to have to put off or discard certain things. You're going to have to get rid of, scrap, discard, throw out, dump some things. Let's say, for example, you feel like God is telling you that in the next 50 days he wants you to

become more physically alive, to have more energy, to be a better steward of your body.

Well, if you want to have a healthy body, you're going to have to go home and get rid of some of the junk food that's in your house. You know what it is, you know where it is, and you know where your secret stashes are. If you want to have more strength, be more alert, you've got to clean house. As Irenaeus said,

The glory of God is a person fully alive.

How about other areas? If you want to be healthy spiritually, you may have to have someone block some things on your computer or on your home. In our home, we have a block where we can't access materials that's more than PG rated. You may want to get rid of or put aside certain TV channels or unsubscribe to certain magazines. That would be cleaning your house spiritually or emotionally.

Maybe you need to clean house on your schedule. You're doing too much. To reach a goal, sometimes we have to lay aside certain things. The writer of the book of Hebrews says this:

Slide Hebrews 12:1

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,

- Accomplishing a goal requires coaches
- Accomplishing a goal requires truth
- Accomplishing a goal requires community
- Accomplishing a goal requires cleaning house
- Accomplishing a goal requires the Holy Spirit

Ephesians 4:30

<sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

The Holy Spirit is a person, not a force. We need the Spirit to change us. We need God energizing us. Change is hard. Our flesh constantly battles to maintain the status quo. We have an enemy of our souls that wants to keep us stuck, to lie to us that we can never change in this particular area.

Zechariah 4:6

So he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.

Galatians 5:16

<sup>16</sup> So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Galatians 5:25

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Brothers and Sisters, these next 50 days could transform you. These next 50 days could transform this church. These next 50 days can transform people who are not part of this church but are here in the central Ohio community. At the end of 50 days, my prayer is that each of us would become more Fully Alive.

## Setting Goals to Become Fully Alive

Rich Nathan

February 25 & 26, 2017

Fully Alive

Ephesians 4

- I. Setting your goals
  - A. Goalsetting is biblical
  - B. Goalsetting is a statement of faith
  - C. Goalsetting keeps us going
  
- II. Accomplishing your goals
  - A. Accomplishing a goal requires coaches
  - B. Accomplishing a goal requires truth
  - C. Accomplishing a goal requires community
  - D. Accomplishing a goal requires cleaning house
  - E. Accomplishing a goal requires the Holy Spirit