



Episode 6-7: Spiritual Goal-Setting

Resources:

Books/Resource

[How Does Sanctification Work - David Powilson](#)

[6 Month Growth Plan](#)

Lectures

[A Growth Plan That Maximizes Change - Randy Patten](#) (formerly Homework That Maximizes Change)

Websites

[Masters of Arts in Biblical Counseling](#)

Transcript:

Jocelyn: I don't just need to feel better. I need the truth. And ultimately that will make me better.

Janet: I just want to make it as totally simple as possible for ladies to see that the Bible is really applicable to their everyday life.

Jocelyn: When they understand theology, the application flows out of it quickly with joy.

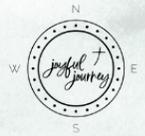
Janet: It is a journey, but even the journey itself is joyful when I'm doing it, holding the hand of my savior and trusting him all along the way. This is the joyful journey podcast, a podcast to inspire and equip women to passionately pursue beautiful biblical truth on their journey as women of God. When you choose truth, you're choosing joy.

Janet: Welcome back, listeners. I am here once again with my friend, Leah and the topic we're gonna be talking about today is the importance of setting spiritual goals as a believer. And for those of you who are not goal setters, keep listening because I know you're thinking, oh great, but I promise you, it's helpful and important.

Leah: And I'm so excited to share on this topic because it's been instrumental in the growth of my own faith. So we'll first talk about some biblical motivations for why we should set spiritual goals.

Janet: Especially for those of you who that's not what you're excited about.

Leah: And then we'll discuss what setting spiritual goals can look like. And I hope our listeners come away from this with just a greater desire to be intentional in their personal walk with the Lord and as they seek to maybe counsel or disciple others too.



Janet: Yeah, I think it's important. I'm thankful you're doing it this way, that we're gonna look at the why. Because for some people it doesn't come naturally and if we think through the why, it means the what doesn't have to look the same.

Leah: You're exactly right.

Janet: If I'm not someone who's ultra structured, it may just be one or two things, but I understand why.

Leah: And before we even start looking at those different methods of setting spiritual goals, we'll talk about some of the common gospel oriented motivations.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: That should be our why.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Towards doing so to setting goals.

Janet: Excellent.

Leah: To begin with. So as Christians, our life after salvation is a journey of sanctification.

Janet: Ooh. Big word.

Leah: Uh-huh, where we seek to know God and His word more in order to be made more into the image of Jesus Christ.

Janet: So listener sanctification means growing and changing. I used to say to my husband, why don't they just say that? But that's what it means.

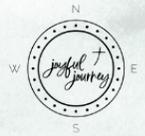
Leah: And that's a very simplified way to put it, right?

Janet: Yes.

Leah: Of what it looks like to live life as a Christian.

Janet: And it's gonna look different for each one of us. We come from different backgrounds. We have different personalities. We came to know the Lord at different times in our life. We came under different circumstances and we're all battling different sin and heart struggles.

Leah: That's right and as I was preparing for this and sharing my thoughts with others, I realized that even different truths from scripture can motivate each of us in different ways.



Janet: Yep.

Leah: When it comes to sanctification, and of course, I knew that to be true, but too often I think what helps me will surely help someone else in the exact same way. And Janet, you pointed me to a book called, *How Does Sanctification Work* by David Powlison.

Janet: Oh, I love that little book.

Leah: Very short but very deep.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: And it was really helpful in understanding that we're not all going to grow spiritually in the same way or because of the exact same conviction or truth.

Janet: Yeah. Yeah. I was helped by remembering that we are all growing toward the same goal. It's not growth for me means that I'll be a better whatever. It's, the goal is the same, but the path and the rate that God chooses are very individual and I think that's really helpful to me because it keeps me from the mentality of this helped me so if you just knew this one truth, it would do for you, what it did for me, and instead it forces me to actually get to know the other person and consider what might be most helpful to them.

Leah: Yes, exactly. If we know that truth, we're all being sanctified into the image of Jesus.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: But in different ways that at different times it can help us be more loving and helpful to other people.

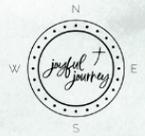
Janet: Yep.

Leah: And one really helpful part of the book for me was when he was describing what sanctification is. Like you mentioned, it's a big, holy sounding word, and we might not really understand the meaning of it.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Or some of our listeners might struggle with that. So Janet, could you read the quote from David Powlison's book about this?

Janet: Yeah, he says it this way, whenever a person makes a turn for the better, sanctification is happening. God is working throughout your life on a scale of days, years, and decades to remake you into the likeness of Jesus. You are being progressively sanctified. You are being saved.



Leah: And in another section later in the book, he adds onto that saying the Christian life is organically alive. We turn, we trust, we obey, we grow. Interacting with what's happening around us as the God of truth breaks in, He has gathered us to Himself in a lifelong holy experiment in redemption. And it's so helpful for me to view spiritual growth or progressive sanctification as that process of being remade into the likeness of Jesus.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And I just love that phrase. It's a lifelong, holy experiment of redemption. In this book, he goes on to describe five factors in the sanctification process. God, scripture, other people, life circumstances, and the human heart.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And all these things change each one of us just in different ways. And he says, the way life unfolds is non-formulaic. Yet variance on these five factors intertwine within every story of our discipleship.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: This interplay appears everywhere in scripture. The story of your life in Christ is composed of these elements.

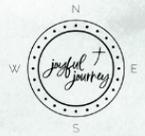
Janet: Yeah, I've actually, I found that really helpful too. 'Cause I thought, okay, he has just finished saying there is no formula. And I'm like, I bet the second half of the book's gonna be his formula. But that's not what he did. But he also didn't just say, so there's nothing to talk about. He gave the factors that's gonna be in each of our lives that God's going to use to grow us toward christlikeness. And as a counselor, that's really good for me to remember. I don't know exactly what God may use to help a person, but I can look at these five areas and I can work with God in whatever He is doing. We know they need to get to know God better. We know they need to know His word better so we're gonna address that. Then we can look at the circumstances and people that God has put in their lives and seek to gain insight from those things. And their heart is exposed in the way that they interact with all of them. So it's not a formula, but it gives me direction as a counselor, but also as just someone who's growing.

Leah: Yes. I appreciated the way he framed that again, as a factor, not a formula.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Because it's so helpful to be aware of what does influence our faith.

Janet: Yep.



Leah: And how those factors can work together in sanctification. One of his major focuses in the book is how different truths from scripture, one of those five factors, can spur on spiritual growth differently in each of our lives. It's important to reflect on what biblical truths have shaped and impacted your faith, and then to recognize those aspects of the gospel as the motivation in setting spiritual goals. So maybe what motivates you to seek to become more like Christ is reflecting on your identity in Him.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Versus like 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 2:20 may be anchors that help you remember that you are a new creation and that Christ now lives in you, defining your identity.

Janet: Yeah. Or maybe it's gonna be God's amazing hesed love. That might be what motivates you. You might clinging to verses like John 3:16, God so loved, or Romans 8:38 and 39, nothing will separate me from the love of God. And those things might remind my heart and mind daily that God loved me so much that He died from my sins and nothing in all the world's ever gonna separate me from that love.

Leah: And there's still so many other motivating truths. It could be just looking at the desires and idols of the heart to passages like James 1 and 4, or maybe just reflecting on the beautiful, intricate character of our God. Maybe that's what stirs your heart to want to change and grow and to be more like Him.

Janet: Yeah. For me, one of the truths that motivates me is pairing God's love for me with an increasing understanding of my heart. I think I spent years trying to impress God with my obedience, wanting Him to be glad He picked me for His team. So seeing the depth of sin in my own heart, learning that even my obedience is frequently sinfully motivated, at least in part. That was actually shocking to me. And then to see His hesed love for me in light of that. God knows all about my sinful heart, even the parts I don't know and His arms are open, and His heart is for me, and that motivates me.

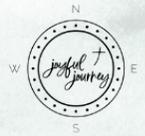
Leah: And I love that because similarly, a truth that works in my heart is to view my sin the way God does. The more I see His heart towards all of sin throughout scripture.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: The more I desire to put off mine and to seek His way instead, which motivates me to wanna grow spiritually.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: Example, Roman 6:23 tells me how terrible my sin is and how following God in His ways are so much better.



Janet: Yeah.

Leah: For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Janet: We say that passage and the thing about what you just read, the wages, what you earn because of your sin is not just a doc in pay. It's death. That's how serious my sin is and God offers life.

Leah: Yeah.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And even though that truth is incredibly meaningful and motivating to me, I have to remember, it doesn't mean it will be the one key truth that leads.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: All other believers to grow spiritually too.

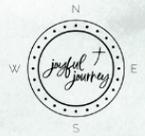
Janet: Yes.

Leah: It's just one of the amazing grace filled truth of scripture that God uses in the life of His children.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: I just love that and I love how Powlison talks in his book. He has this really powerful quote that helps me understand the way God uses those different scriptural motivations for each of us. Janet, could you read that quote for us?

Janet: Absolutely. There are good reasons why not every Christian is impressed with the one truth that may have revolutionized your life. That one partial truth may have really helped you, but when one truth morphs into the truth, the whole truth, it becomes an axe to grind. It promises a panacea, a cure all. As this happens, it slides in the direction of a magic formula. It's a secret to be discovered, not the plain, simple wisdom of God. A word that really helps some kinds of people can prove unhelpful, even misleading and destructive to people who need one of the other kinds of help that God gives. Preachers and counselors beware. Wow. That is so good. It's such a temptation for all of us. When something has resonated with me deeply, of course I wanna share it and that's good. It's not don't share that. We should rejoice in the truths that God is using in each other's lives, but I can be shocked if you aren't as amazed as I am. And I can quickly turn that into spiritual immaturity on your part. When it may actually reveal a lack of maturity on my part.



Leah: Yeah, I mean I definitely have fallen into that before too, and when I do, I need to remind myself I need God to help remind me that the multitude of beautiful truths He's using in my life may be different than what He's using in others.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: And that's beautiful.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: So I really hope that, starting this discussion of spiritual goal setting by first looking at sanctification in those Gospel motivations helps our listeners understand my heart and why I wanted to share about this topic. And I know that was a big introduction, but I do believe it's more important to think on the why we should set goals as believers rather than just trying to show ways how to do it.

Janet: Yeah. Now that we've at least looked at some of the whys from scripture, we want to look more like Jesus, let's discuss then what does that practically look like?

Leah: Yes, and please keep in mind all of our listeners that this is going to look differently for every believer. Please don't hear me trying to spell out a self-help plan for growing spiritually.

Janet: If only if we're that easy.

Leah: If only. But my hope is that you would come away encouraged in how to grow and being purposeful in your walk with the Lord.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Not comparing your walk to mine or to Janet's or to anyone else's.

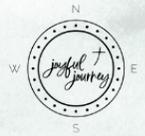
Janet: Yep.

Leah: Now maybe some of our listeners, like you mentioned at the beginning, love goals or good at goal setting, but maybe specifically in different areas of life.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: But maybe others have never set a single goal before. How does spiritual goal setting fit in?

Janet: Yeah.



Leah: It's a hard thing to talk about or even know where to start. I think many of us would admit that it can be easier to try to set a goal for something else, like a financial goal or a health goal.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: Most people, especially in the counseling room that I've talked to, find the idea of setting spiritual goals vague and overwhelming. Why do you think that is?

Janet: I think it can be for a lot of things, but the fruit of the goal is not always as tangible. Like when you tell me, I want you to grow in the fruit of the spirit. So that's different than I want a down payment on a house. One seems clearer to me, one is vague. Also, what's gonna be the result of making my goal? If my goal is to fit into different clothes. I like the end result of that goal. If the goal is I wanna be more comfortable in retirement, okay? I want my cholesterol lower. Oh my word. Don't get me started. Mine is through the roof, but that's okay. Just found that out. And you know what? We're changing my diet. Because I now have different goals, and then knowing the goal, those give me a desire to want to set a plan to get there. Spiritually, it's I'm never gonna be just like Jesus. So I don't even know how to do that.

Leah: And setting those other kind of goals is not bad.

Janet: No.

Leah: And I think it is so good for us to set goals in all areas of our life so that we can continue growing and being good stewards of the lives and resources God has given us.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: I think about Colossians 3:17 that says, in whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And it's interesting how we actually often use that verse to encourage someone to live for the glory of God in situations like school, home, workplace, other goals rather than on how it applies to our spiritual life.

Janet: Oh, that's interesting.

Leah: For many of us, again, when it comes to setting a spiritual goal, I just think we don't know where to begin.

Janet: Yeah. It's like I can't even envision what's a milestone.

Leah: Right.



Janet: Because it won't be perfect reflection of Christ. So what is it? Maybe I'm just content where I am anyway, or it can feel hopeless. What I think should be the goal is so far outta reach. It's not even worth trying.

Leah: And again, it goes back to are you comparing yourself to someone else, who you view as uber spiritual? And it feels hard and weird to set a spiritual goal.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: No matter where you start. And I've heard some people argue that setting spiritual goals might encourage legalism or works-based righteousness.

Janet: Huh.

Leah: But equipping ourselves with the tools we need for Christian life should involve setting those kind of intentional faith goals to think of it as steps in which we want to grow as a follower of Christ.

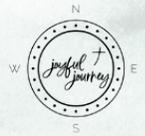
Janet: Yeah. Why would we do less in this area than we do in others? And when I think about even the goal of biblical counseling, the goal of biblical counseling is not what is the problem you came in with and now I've given you steps and you've worked through that problem. The bigger goal is equipping and discipling to address one spiritual need in the counseling room so that I understand and I'm more prepared spiritually for how to deal with other things for the rest of my life. I've grown a process for how do I work on those things. So one of the goals of counseling is to help the person know how to address future issues. 'Cause we're all gonna have them. I can't make that happen, but because that is one of my goals, it impacts how I counsel. I want to help them learn the principles. I want to help them see the process. I want them to be better equipped, not just, I now know when this happens, I did this and I'm in a better place. I want them to know how that process worked so they know how to do that.

Leah: Exactly. And now I wanna look at a passage from God's word to see what he has to say about planning and goal setting. So Janet, could you read Proverbs 16 verses one through three and verse nine?

Janet: Sure. To humans belong the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the proper answer of the tongue. All a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the Lord. Commit to the Lord, whatever you do, and he will establish your plans. In their hearts, humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.

Leah: Thank you, and I just really like those verses because it helps address two key aspects of planning and setting goals. First, God's ultimately in control.

Janet: Yes.



Leah: Over all things.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: And second, our plans and the motive behind them matter. Again, going back to what we were talking about, those gospel motivations.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: To wanna set a goal and then I think this aligns with what we read in James 4:13-15, where he talks about holding onto our plans lightly and seeking to do something if the Lord wills it. It says, now listen, you who say, today or tomorrow, we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money. Why you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, if it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.

Janet: I think it's interesting that he doesn't say so just don't plan. He doesn't say, how arrogant of you to say today or tomorrow, I'm gonna do this. Just know you're gonna do whatever God wants. He says, I am to say if it's the Lord will, I will. And that prompts me to realize that I am to plan, but I cannot hold on to my goals and desires as the ultimate hope. That's only God's perfect plan, which I don't have all the details for. One way I honor God is to plan and then the outcome of my plans, even whether or not God allows me to keep my plans, is up to God. So I hold them loosely, I still make them, and I say, the results are yours.

Leah: Right. We're not supposed to just let go and let God.

Janet: Yes.

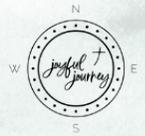
Leah: Colossians 3:23-24 says, whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for human masters. Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. While we can trust God's ultimate sovereign control over all things, we can also clearly see His commands for us to live our lives intentionally.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And those verses that we've been talking about are helpful in seeing that interplay of those five factors of sanctification in the life of a believer.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: That David Powlison described, and I'll just go through it one more time. God, scripture, other people, life circumstances, and the human heart.



Janet: Yes. God is in control, but He's given us His holy scripture to help us navigate our own life circumstances and the relationships. We have with other people and with our own heart and our motives. We're responsible for acting to utilize the spiritual resources God's given us.

Leah: So how do we live out that responsibility?

Janet: I don't know, Leah, how do we do that?

Leah: How do we go about setting spiritual goals? As I stated, I wanted us to first acknowledge that it's gonna look differently for each of us. But I do wanna share some of the ways I've learned how to set spiritual goals. And for me, I really grew in this area of my life as I went through two pretty impactful experiences. So first, when I moved to Indiana 10 years ago, my husband and I joined a small group bible study. And this was a group of young married couples. The group was led like this. We would have a group Bible study time at the beginning, and then we would end breaking off into accountability groups, is what we call them.

Janet: Okay.

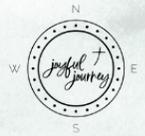
Leah: Basically dividing between men and women, and in those groups of course we shared prayer requests and praises, but most of the time was spent talking through different areas of growth that we each individually wanted to work on for that week.

Janet: I love that.

Leah: Maybe one lady would share about a specific sin struggle or a relationship issue. And this was not a venting session. This would be what she's struggling with and how she wanted to repent or handle that issue or she would ask for help in how do I handle that issue. So then we would encourage each other, we would help each other look at practical ways to try to work on that during the week, and then how can we glorify God together in those struggles so that weekly coming together. Community for me, with my sisters in Christ, really helped me get into the practice of setting spiritual goals, even just one week at a time.

Janet: And I love that because it didn't start with a class on spiritual goals. But you were watching it in the lives of women who were being vulnerable enough to say, I need to work on this specifically if I'm gonna look more like Jesus and that helped you to see.

Leah: Yeah. And prior to that, I had been in small groups, Bible studies, even had a mentor at one point in college, and I didn't learn about how to set these practical goals from any of those things before. But it was seeing these ladies, how they lived it out, love it, and just being open about it. And it wasn't a legalistic ritual for us, of did you do this week? If not. But it was a way we could encourage and challenge each other to be growing.



Janet: That is so encouraging to hear. And I would imagine that we have listeners longing for that kind of a community. And so let me just say again, we can trust the providence of God. You didn't always have that either. The Lord knows as they work on listeners, as you are working on your own intentional growth and praying for increased community like that, you might actually find it was already there but that you weren't participating in it. You might be a part of growing a group like that, if you get together with your friends and just say, hey, could you guys pray for me? Here's what's going on. And if the Lord doesn't provide that, because we know He loves you, you might be learning how to lean on your Savior even more.

Leah: Yes, exactly. Community will not look the same for each of us, but hopefully these examples just encourage you to have a deeper desire of how to honor God in how I involve community in my personal walk with the Lord. And like you said, maybe you're the one who starts it.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: It's awkward and weird to ask someone to keep you accountable because most of the time none of us are doing that. But if we encourage and say, hey, I wanna help you. You can set the example and involve that person in your life.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Now the second way that I grew in setting my own spiritual goals was during the process of becoming a biblical counselor. And one of the most impactful parts of biblical counseling training for me was just learning about the homework process.

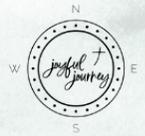
Janet: Oh, yes.

Leah: Biblical counseling involves assigning meaningful weekly homework for the counselee to work on outside of the counseling room.

Janet: Yes, that's true. And in the homework process, counselors essentially helping a counselee with steps. How do you grow spiritually? So it's really, in other words, helping her set and work through spiritual goals for herself. And honestly, that was my weakest area when I started. I wanted to teach, I wanted to talk, I wanted to encourage, but helping them with how to work on it themselves, that was a new skill for me.

Leah: And I think that's a new skill for most of us, just in our personal life, let alone in how we try to help or encourage or counsel others.

Janet: Yeah.



Leah: So for me, being exposed to the homework process and learning how to give good homework.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Helped me with many ways to set goals for myself.

Janet: Give yourself some homework.

Leah: Exactly. Yeah. Doing the same homework that I assigned my counselees was great for me. It still is.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: And it gave me a lot to work on, not all at one time, but it gave me principles and methods that help keep myself accountable in growing in my faith to just keep on keeping on, and one specifically impactful teaching on this came from Randy Patton, who has taught and trained a biblical counseling principles for many years, and he has a wonderful talk called "Homework that Maximizes Change". We'll share the link in the show notes and you can either read or listen to him teach on this topic.

Janet: Yeah, I love that one because whether you're a counselor or a counselee or have never been involved in biblical counseling before, this is such helpful teaching on how to think through practical ways of how to set spiritual goals.

Leah: Yep. And so if you just read through it and think about it as spiritual goal rather than biblical counseling homework, it's gonna apply.

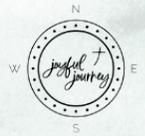
Janet: That's right.

Leah: In one section specifically, he talks about six key spiritual disciplines that are encouraged when effective biblical counseling homework is given. And I believe this can be extremely useful in applying to our personal goal setting.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: So those six disciplines are systematic scripture reading, meaningful scripture memory, pertinent theological reading, loving, doing, and serving others, church attendance and note taking, and fervent focused prayer. And these six disciplines could be where you start for your own spiritual goal setting.

Janet: Yeah.



Leah: And I don't mean start out by setting six different goals right away, but picking one or two, like reading scripture systematically or picking a list of verses to memorize is an easy place to start in setting a spiritual goal.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And now I know I called it easy, but most ladies I've counseled have shared with me that one of the hardest things about ending weekly counseling is that they'll no longer be given homework to work on.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: Janet, have you experienced this?

Janet: Not only in my counseling, but in my life. If I'm in a small group and this is what we're all supposed to do. Okay. But what about when I don't have that external accountability? Because external accountability really does help me and it helps our counselee helps all of us. So while we all need to grow in discipline. I, even with my counsees, encourage relationships and groups that can help even when counseling's over. Not trying to go from, I have external accountability to I have zero. I currently have a group of ladies that we read through the Bible in a year together and we post about it. We don't do it perfectly but it keeps us all going and learning. Or join a small group like you had, Leah, where you know, people are gonna be asking you. Even just ask a friend to do something with you. So instead of just saying, I should be better than this. Acknowledge your weakness. Even when you're not in counseling, you can pursue ways to get some of that external support.

Leah: Yes, and that's super helpful for our listeners to hear because you don't have to be in a small group just like I was. You don't have to be in a Bible study reading plan group like you are.

Janet: That's right.

Leah: You could just involve one friend to come alongside you. And like I said earlier, maybe it's you pursuing someone.

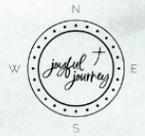
Janet: Yes.

Leah: And asking how you can encourage and come alongside them.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: And that's how you start setting goals. And another way I seek to help equip the ladies' I counsel is by helping them learn how to write their own homework.

Janet: Yeah.



Leah: Which in essence is just teaching them how to come up with their own spiritual goals.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: So throughout counseling, I assign them homework that has to deal with Bible study, their prayer life, biblical community and relationships, Bible memory, and serving. And as we progress through counseling, I ask the counselee to give more of her input on the homework.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: For example, guiding her to research and choose her own Bible studies or verses to memorize as we work through different topics or issues together. But I also use a specific template that I call a six month growth plan and I usually do this at the end of counseling to help ladies plan out ways that they wanna keep growing.

Janet: Oh, I love that.

Leah: So this template is just super simple. I made it myself just so that I wouldn't have to keep saying it again and again to people, but I could print it off and hand it out. And it lists different common areas of growth that we cover in biblical counseling. So Bible study, Bible memory, prayer, serving community, repentance, et cetera. And then next to each of those areas are two sections. One called goal and one called steps. So I help the lady think through how she has seen herself grow in these different areas during counseling or maybe just throughout her life in general.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And then I have her think through and pray about ways that she'd like to grow and where she'd want to see herself in that area six months from now. So that's what the goal section is for. So maybe for a Bible study, her goal is to read through all four Gospels over the next six months. So then I help her think through practical, realistic steps on how to achieve that goal. So that's the steps section. And maybe steps for that goal would be find Bible studies for each Gospel, or map out how many chapters a day to read to reach that goal. So steps could also include things like finding sermons or other resources to study about those Gospels or commentaries to help her understand what she plans on reading.

Janet: I love that. And maybe, I don't know, you might be willing to share that growth plan in the show notes.

Leah: I definitely can.

Janet: Because that's not just for counselees. I'm sitting here thinking, wow, that'd be a great thing for a small group. Or even if you're thinking I wanna get together with a friend, but I don't



really know how to have the conversation. Maybe you just talk about that together, that sheet, helping them and I like that you're helping them think about what's reasonable for them to get started. Sometimes it's helpful, if you're counseling, I'll stretch out meetings and have them work on things on their own longer. Helping them learn how to be reasonable. I'm not gonna go from, I've never memorized a verse, and so my goal is Psalm 119 next month. Okay, you're just gonna quit.

Leah: Uh-huh.

Janet: So how do I help them be reasonable because that gives hope. Helping them to look for growth, not perfection. Helping them to be able to say what's feasible in your current life so I love that you fill that out with them.

Leah: Yeah. And I mentioned there's a lot of things on that template. I always tell ladies, let's pick three or four to work on together.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And I'm gonna leave this with you as a tool that you could build on those other areas as you see fit. And it's, I a hundred percent agree with what you said, setting very reasonable, feasible goals in their current life because I want the ladies I counsel to have hope.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: And the ladies who are listening to this. Hope that God can and will keep growing you as you pursue Him.

Janet: Yes.

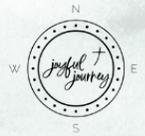
Leah: And as we land the plane on this topic, I think it'd be helpful to give some gentle warnings about setting spiritual goals as well. Because too often many of us can fall into one of two camps when setting goals, the all in or the all out ditches is like what I like to call them. And what I mean is that we either set too many goals and make so many plans that when we don't accomplish those goals, which wouldn't be realistic to achieve anyway, we then feel like failures.

Janet: Yes. And then we quit.

Leah: And the person who falls in that ditch maybe has a heart longing for control.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: Just, I just wanna get to the goal. I just want the goal.



Janet: The goal is not faithfulness. The goal is not stewardship. The goal is perfection, where it's not hard anymore. Yeah.

Leah: And then there's those of us who may fall into the other all out ditch who just let go and let God. And they don't challenge themselves to set goals at all.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: And this could be reflecting a heart that loves ease and comfort, or has no desire to be stretched or to grow, or has no desire for accountability. They don't wanna bring.

Janet: And I say it can also be a heart of fear.

Leah: Yes.

Janet: Because I'm not gonna try because I don't wanna fail, which is still about me.

Leah: Yes.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And I don't think that either of those ditches are the healthy God honoring ways that we should approach goal setting. Jesus in Luke 14 gives us a better way to view plans in setting goals. So Janet, could you read verses 28 to 32 for us?

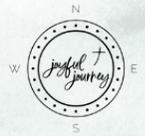
Janet: Absolutely. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower, won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? It for if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you saying this person began to build and wasn't able to finish or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with 10,000 men to oppose the one coming against him with 20,000? If he's not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.

Leah: And in this context, Jesus was specifically addressing the crowds around Him and explaining the cost of being His disciple.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: He wanted the people to know that choosing to follow Him wasn't some simple decision to make quickly.

Janet: Yes.



Leah: He wanted people to count the cost of following Him appropriately before making their decision. However, I believe we can still use this principle of planning wisely in how we view the other decisions, plans, and goals that we make in life. In this passage, Jesus taught that people like builders or kings plan wisely before making a decision or setting a goal, like in building a large tower or in going to war. This also corroborates what other parts of scripture have to say about planning wisely. Proverbs 15:22 says, plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisors, they succeed. Proverbs 20:18 plans are established by seeking advice so if you wage war, obtain guidance.

Janet: Taking time to set goals for biblical purposes prevents us from only setting unrealistic ones that leave us discouraged when we don't reach 'em.

Leah: And some of our listeners might be familiar with the concept of setting smart goals.

Janet: Oh, yes.

Leah: Maybe from school or work, but if not, here's what each letter stands for in smart, specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound. Basically, setting a smart goal means you're being smart about it. You're not setting too high of a goal that cannot really be achieved, at least not right away, and you're not making it overly complicated or intense. I think we as Christians could really benefit from setting smart goals for ourselves in every area of life.

Janet: Yeah, and even if you do set a perfect smart goal, we have to go back to the gospel truths motivating us to set those in the first place. In all of this, whether we succeed or fail, we need to remember that God has lavished His endless grace on us who believe in Christ Jesus. Not completing one or two or even 50 goals will ever negate that. And it's such a reminder of the passage that you had us read earlier, if the Lord wills. So it's good for me to set a goal, whether or not I reach it has to do with my faithfulness, but even more has to do with the sovereignty of God.

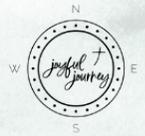
Leah: And without the gospel, we would never be able to change or grow.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: And with that, I wanna encourage our listeners with these verses from Romans 8 that talk about the power we have to not keep living according to our old ways of sin in the flesh anymore. It's all because of His spirit in us that we can grow spiritually or that we have the ability to even set goals to work towards.

Janet: Or that we want to.

Leah: Exactly.



Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Romans 8:5-9 says, those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires, but those who live in accordance with the spirit have their minds set on what the spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh, but are in the realm of the Spirit if indeed the spirit of God lives in you.

Janet: So for our listeners, there may be a couple of different types of listener. One is, do you have the spirit of God living in you? Before I would try to set spiritual goals to do what I used to try to do and impress God. First, recognizing I can't and I need the Lord. So the first thing I would want to do is humbly acknowledge. My amazing goal setting is not the goal. It's what Jesus did and my humble coming to him. But for those of us who know the Lord and have the opportunity to live out of the spirit of God, prayerfully, consider one area where you can take a step of growth. Not, I should be better in all areas. For some of us, we spend so much time making the plan, we're not even gonna do it. It may be color coded. And we know that green is for this and blue is for this, and that might be beautiful. But more important than that, what's one step? Here's some ideas. Join a small group. Start a Bible reading plan, bring others with you. Write out a verse or a passage to begin reviewing to memorize. I find that's really helpful. I used to say the older I got that I can't memorize, it's just not true. I am memorizing. I actually have to work at it harder and that's okay. But when I pick a Psalm that's about an aspect of God or think something I need to remember in my season, that's just been such a blessing. Who cares how long it takes you? The goal is not to compare.

Leah: Right.

Janet: The goal is to be working on it, or maybe it's just making a prayer list. I get so overwhelmed with so many people I wanna pray for, I have started again using the Prayer Mate app. I found it so helpful because I can tell it how many things I want it to bring up, and it may say five things. You're like, yes and I can pray about those things and then I can say, I have more time, gimme five more. And as somebody tells me, when I sit in groups with seminary wives or pastor's wives, I pull out my phone when they share their prayer requests, I add it under their name. So that it just helps me to be praying. So maybe I just do something like that. Maybe I ask a friend a coffee so we can discuss a way to encourage each other's growth. Or maybe it's something different. But we do hope that this has encouraged you to take a step and we pray God draws each of us closer to Christ likeness this year.

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