

Goal Setting

Goal setting is often associated with the New Year, but it is also one part of the counseling process. Goals can be short term, like something you want to see in the near future; long term, meaning they may take years to work toward; or life goals, which reflect an overall vision for your purpose in life.

While it is recommended that goals be concrete and practical, they are most likely to be achieved if they are meaningful and connected to a greater purpose. Here are 8 questions to ask yourself to help create goals you will actually accomplish.

What Do I Want More of in My Life?

When was the last time you slowed down long enough to take inventory of your life and observe what things add value to it? Spend a moment reflecting on when you feel safest, moments that feel peaceful, little things that bring joy, relationships that bring deep connection, and experiences that cause you to pause and soak in the goodness of God.

Are you living a meaningful life, one filled with priorities you truly value? If not, what core values or practices have been pushed aside for too long? How might you take one simple step toward resurrecting them? If this question feels like a tall order, break it down by thinking about the next question ...

What Does a Meaningful Life Look Like?

Set the reality of your daily life aside for a moment and zoom out. In an ideal world, what would a meaningful life look like? How does the Bible describe a meaningful life? Spend some time praying and meditating over this question.

What Are Things I Am Tired of and Want Less of in My Life?

Now consider the question in reverse. In order to make time for the things we truly value, we have to eliminate lesser things. What are you tired of? What practices

or activities are you doing just because you've always done them, or because you feel the pressure to keep up with others? Are there things in your life that are costing you more than you expected? Prayerfully consider what you need to eliminate.

What Does My Current Life Say About What I Value Most?

There is a quote by Annie Dillard that says, *"How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives. What we do with this hour and with that one is what we are doing."* What do your hours say about what you are doing? What does your bank statement say about what you value most? How we spend our time and money says a lot about what is most important to us. Evaluate your current priorities. Are they moving you in the direction you want to be moving in, or do you need to course correct?

What Have I Done in the Past that Has Worked Well?

Chances are you have had success in some area of your life at some point. It doesn't have to be big or extravagant, but think about something you are proud of and then ask yourself, "How did I do that?!" Spend time reflecting on the circumstances surrounding your success, and consider how you might apply those same principles to other areas of your life.

What Are Things I Want to Try but Haven't?

Give yourself permission to dream about who you want to be and what you want to do. Are there skills you have always wanted to learn, places you've wanted to go, foods you've wanted to try? Are there qualities and characteristics about people in your life that you admire and want to emulate? What have you put outside the realm of possibility in your life, placing it just out of reach? Make a list of these things and pick something that inspires you.

What Is Stopping Me From Establishing Healthy Habits?

Who we say we are and what we tell ourselves have a huge impact on the things we choose to do (or not do). Negative thought patterns and false narratives can keep us from doing things we want to do. Fear of the unknown can also inhibit us from taking steps forward. When you think about the healthy habits you desire to establish, what is stopping you from taking that next step?

How Do I Want Others to Feel When They Are Around Me?

As you take time to evaluate each of these questions, it can be helpful to jot down answers, and then formulate follow-up questions based on your answers. For example, if I want others to feel seen and cared for when they are around me, does my lifestyle provide enough margin for me to slow down and listen when a friend is struggling? Or are my days packed so tightly, both physically and emotionally, that I don't have the capacity to bear another's burdens?

A next step in response to wanting others to feel seen and cared for would be asking, "How does my schedule need to change so that I have enough margin to care for others?" An example of a goal for that question would be, "Leave 2-3 evenings a week free on my calendar without any scheduled activities."