

We are born with a mind and heart to think, plan, and analyze all directed at dreams and goals for our future. Dreams and goals cause us to reach higher than being stagnant and letting life and the world's ways eventually land on our doorstep. If we accept the world's way, we likely will result in having little ambition and motivation to then just sink into a survival mode or be inclined to accept our fate and live it out.

“Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” Rom 12:2. God has a plan, a purpose, a calling, a promise, a destiny to fulfill His purpose for you. But you have to want a better life and more importantly you need a mentor to show you a path toward success. And most important your mentor needs to be God in your life to guide and direct you – but that really means you must have Jesus the Christ guiding every step in your life and dependence on Him through prayer.

But will you have clear sailing on your journey? No not likely. You will face chaos, trials, and tribulation. But these roadblocks through FAITH are meant to strengthen your resolve if your dreams and goals are important enough to put in the WORK. And remember that FAITH without WORKS is dead. Jam 2:14-17 says “What use is it, my brothers, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is DEAD being by itself.”

This is a time when many are walking through life thinking things were going to be different and are now struggling to maintain hope and combat the sadness associated with such a time as this. In these last of the last days, we need to remember that the Lord is walking through all this with us. We are not alone. He said He would never leave us nor forsake us. Yet, many today say “I thought the Lord was going to redeem us by now.” Remember that things are not falling apart; things are falling into place!

Each of us are attacked daily by chaos, trials, tribulations, troubles, doubts, uncertainties, and the list goes on. We prevail by our FAITH and prayer. Often our prayers are answered by the Lord as yes, no, or maybe/later. The yes and no usually are obvious but the maybe/later can leave us in doubt and uncertainty about the future. And thus, our plans as well as our dreams and goals seem to be in jeopardy. This is the time to be praying diligently as Mat 7:7-8 says “Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened.” Notice that “shall” is used several times which has a strong assertion or intention versus “will” expresses a future tense. Well, what are the results? People with FAITH pull themselves up by their bootstraps and with resolve realize the timing may be off, so much prayer in asking of the Lord for more specifics as to what is expected of you and the possibly the plan you are to follow.

Some people who live in a bubble expect results right now and forget the WORK as well as the time and perseverance required to obtain something that for most of us is hard to obtain. In my case stress was a result as well as periods of depression. Many of us fail to commit to the Lord whatever we do, so He can establish our plans for us: Prov 16:3. Proper planning prevents poor performance and often failure. You are to be strong and never give up for your WORK will be rewarded: 2 Chron 15:7. Unfortunately a lot of people will not prevail and face anxiety, depression, stress, or other kinds of the Spirits of Fear.

In the United States depression is said to affect 16 million people who struggle with this illness from major to minor symptoms. Overall, 20% to 25% of adults suffer a major episode at some point during their lifetime. Depression in older adults, teens, and children frequently go undiagnosed and untreated. Depression is a serious medical condition that is associated with symptoms such as a feeling of pensive sadness, loss of pleasure, loss of energy, difficulty in concentrating, and suicidal thoughts. Signs of depression are changes in sleeping patterns, hopelessness or a negative outlook, loss of interest, feeling more tired and fatigued, irritability, appetite changes and weight fluctuation, and frequent thoughts of death or suicide. Suicide rates in the United States are now at a rate of approximately 15 in 100,000 population and men at a rate of 3.7 times higher than female. More on this subject will be discussed in future publications.

Realize that divorce which is rampant in today's society is a major reason for anxiety and depression. As years ago, when divorce was not usually considered it is today's answer to "my problems". The five top reasons for today's divorce rate is: 1) managing finances, 2) inability to resolve conflict, 3) lack of intimacy, 4) losing identity in marriage, and 5) not sharing the vision for success. The emotional trauma on both the parents and more so the children are devastating. I know so as I went through a divorce after 19 years of raising four children. The scars represented by stress, anxiety, and often major depression are enormous. The divorce rate in the United States is now around 45% for first marriages, 60% for second marriages, and 73% for third marriages. In addition, cohabitation as an answer to marriage is now acceptable but the rate of divorce among these arrangements are even greater after marriage. Who suffers the most but the children in a divorce who often drop into depression or rebellion? Following are facts related to divorce:

- There are nearly 2,400 divorces every single day in the United States meaning an average of 124,800 divorces each week as well as upwards of 876,000 divorces per annum.
- Eight years is the average length of a first marriage that ends with a divorce.
- During a first marriage, there is a twenty percent chance within the first five years the marriage may end in divorce or separation and in a ten-year time frame that percentage goes up to thirty-three.
- Thirty years old is the average age when couples commence the divorce process.
- Two years is the average duration of time a person considers divorce before commencing the process.
- Around seventy-five percent of people who obtain a divorce will at some point get remarried.
- If they choose to remarry, the average wait time is three years.
- Love can happen again, six percent of couple's report remarrying having got divorced!
- Detailed divorce and marriage statistics ceased to be assembled by the US Government back in the mid-1990s, so the data comes from independent researchers as well as the US Census.

In the meantime, diligence in what we do and what we expect is necessary to perform our functions throughout our awakened and active days. Diligence is the constant and earnest effort to accomplish what is undertaken, persistent exertion of our mind and body. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not evil, to give you an expected end or result". It is one thing to know what **we should do**, but results come when **we do** the things, **we know** we should do. Some suggestions to follow a Spirit of Truth unto diligence are:

- Exercise diligence through your journey as when you see God faithfully rewarding your diligence it will inspire and encourage your next steps.
- Create your plan wisely and pray over it. Always remember a good plan leads to a better outcome.

- Use tools and set reminders to build accountability for things you know may be tough to overcome and track your progress.
- PRAY, PRAY, and PRAY! God rewards the faithful so latch onto Him into your planning process and ask Him to guide you to diligently accomplish the things you set out to accomplish.

Goals and dreams are much a part of life as breathing oxygen and a righteous Christian will necessarily follow a pattern of life quite often different than an unrighteous person. Proverbs 20:4 says, **may he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed.** Proverbs 19:21 further says, **many plans are in a man's heart, but the purpose of the LORD will prevail.** This is a go-to verse when setting new goals, it encourages dreaming big and trusting God that He is faithful to give you the desire of your heart. God will never give up on you, no matter how discouraged, depressed, or despondent you become, know that He loves you. The enemy will continue his attacks to kill, steal, and destroy throughout your life, but he will not prevail with God as your defense weapon. Never give up, stay focused for the future, keep a positive attitude, and keep God as the sustaining guide for healing and future life. Being obedient to what God is saying in your specific situation, knowing that obedience to God's voice is the only definitive path to being greater than you are. May God's Blessing be poured out over you.