

Image: Socrates said “the unexamined life is not worth living.” I tend to agree with him. My own practice of reflecting at year’s end and dreaming about the next year. Goals.

Need: Two kinds of people in the world, those who love to reflect and dream and those who don’t. Many are scared of seeing failure (either in past reflection or future goals). Convinced we learn more from failure than success. If you don’t have a destination, you’re guaranteed not to arrive.

Context: My own experiences with this verse and others and with reflecting and dreaming each year. Coming up with thematic, descriptive words that describe my dreams in general for the next year (I’ll share mine next week with you). Last year, passion and simplicity.

Preview: I want to challenge us to take some time in the near future to stop and prayerfully consider the last year...what God did and what we did. To reflect and then consider what might happen next year as we seek to walk in Him

- I. A life that doesn’t grow loses its spirit and luster (if you ain’t growing, you’re dying)
 - A. As God’s image bearers we are designed to plan and grow
 1. God planned and plans. God is not haphazard in running the universe.
 - a. The way He has planned things (in general). **Acts 2:22-24; Gal. 4:4; Revelation**
 - b. Plans for us (specific). **Jer. 29:11; Rom. 8:29**
 2. God, in His humanity grew and developed (**Lk. 2:52**)
 - a. 4 areas (physical, emotional, mental, spiritual) – intellect, physical, spiritual, em.
 - b. We should be growing in these areas as well. Did you?
 3. God reflects on what He does. Not to improve upon it, but to *exult* in it.
 - a. Creation – After each thing created He said it was good. 7th day.
 - b. Examining our lives – **Ps. 11:4; 17:3; 26:2; Jer. 17:10. Bema seat**
 - B. When we cease to plan and grow, we stall out and become dull
 1. It is debilitating to us to sense no progress in our lives. We lose our luster (*why old people who lose their mates die shortly after*) and become dull. “**Hope deferred**” = progress delayed and drawn out (*Eyre Square*).
 2. We need to see progress, that’s *how we’re wired* (in His image to be like Him – He plans and examines). So let’s examine our lives & see how we’ve grown & what God has done.
- II. Desires and dreams realized (goals accomplished) are sweet to the soul. They cause our souls to soar (*like an updraft on which an eagle soars*)
 - A. We all dream dreams (even if only in the backs of our minds), many of us just don’t take the time to write them down and plan and set goals to see them accomplished.
 1. It’s ok to have dreams, plans, and goals (many think it’s not – that it removes a sense of God’s sovereignty) – but it doesn’t provided you hold them with the right attitude.
 - a. God has plans (He is a God of order not chaos). **1 Cor. 14:33 – plans for us & world**
 - b. We are designed to be like Him (orderly and reflective)
 2. We should hold those dreams and plans and goals loosely in the light of His sovereignty, but we should still have them.
 - a. Many verses tell us to remember God’s sovereignty in the light of our dreaming and planning (**Proverbs 16:1, 3, 9, Jas. 5:**).
 - b. But those very same verses actually *assume* that we will have plans, dreams, and goals to submit to Him.
 - B. When we can stop and reflect we can see visible reminders of God’s movement in our lives in fulfilling those dreams and goals and that encourages and energizes our spirits
 1. “**dreams fulfilled are a tree of life**” – it’s encouraging to look back and see growth, progress, and movement...God overcoming obstacles. It energizes us and enables us to look to the future in hope.
 - a. Hope that God will continue to move in our lives
 - b. Hope that He can continue to change us and make us more like Him. *The Christian life is no “Let Go and Let God” where we go comatose while He transforms us. it is an “active surrender”...we’re awake during the surgery.*

2. We are encouraged and energized to keep dreaming big dreams in the future that only God can accomplish. *Office white board Gen. 18:14 "is anything too dif. for the Lord"*
 - a. There's nothing wrong with big dreams in the right context (realizing it is God that must work through us to see them come to pass).
 - b. In fact, I think that God probably finds our dreams and prayers, not too big, but too small. Big things happen when we lean ourselves into God. When we place ourselves so far out in the water that it is only Him that can save us (**deep water Luke 5:1-11**).

III. Case study of Israel in the Promised Land (**Joshua**)

- A. Joshua tells the story of Israel doing two things: 1. entering the land, and 2. taking it over.
- B. We learn, first about God, that He had plans.
 1. We see it in **chapter 1** as He tells Joshua that He is going to use Him to accomplish something...not something random, but something specific. A plan to use Joshua to accomplish His plan in getting the people into the land. And promise of His presence.
 2. We see this same thing in subsequent chapters as God reveals either specific battle plans to Joshua or just a promise of victory to dispossess the current inhabitants in battle.
- C. We learn, also, that Joshua, following careful prayer, made careful plans himself.
 1. In **chapter 2** he plans and organizes the people to move into the land.
 2. In subsequent chapters, following counsel from the Lord, he makes plans to dispossess the people of the land, as well as getting the tribes divided into specific parts to settle.
- D. We learn that God overcame the obstacles that the people encountered in executing the plans.
 1. In **chapter 3** there was a great obstacle to entering the land in the flooding, raging Jordan River. God overcame this miraculously.
 2. In subsequent chapters we see that God overcame the obstacles that the inhabitants of the land represented. We see stunning upset victories.
- E. We learn that the people (under Joshua's leadership and God's instruction) stopped and reflected...even setting up memorials...on what God had done. And that this gave them courage for the next step.
 1. In **chapter 4** they gathered stones from the Jordan as they crossed and then built an altar to God as a memorial so no one would forget God moved them into the land of promise.
 2. In subsequent chapters we see the people reflecting on how God moved. They reflected at failure when **Achan (ch. 7)** sinned and they suffered defeat at Ai. Then, at the end of the book in **chapter 24**, they stopped and reflected as Joshua recounted a history of God's faithfulness to them. At the end of that reflection, they renewed themselves to the covenant, desiring to be faithful to the God who moves on behalf of His people.

IV. *So, at the end of this year, let me encourage you to gather your stones and dream big dreams.*

- A. Gather your own memorial stones. Stop and reflect on what God has done. Stop and reflect on where 2006 has taken you, how you've grown, where you've failed, ways you've been challenged. Did you grow spiritually, physically? Did you allow God to use you in evangelism or making new friends? Then think of some tangible ways to remember those moments...maybe in a journal, maybe in some object that, every time you see it, will draw your attention back to the God who moves. Whatever you do, stop and think back to what God did this year. It will hopefully encourage your soul as you see progress.
- B. Then take it a step further and dream some big dreams for 2007. Set some goals. In your reflection, did you discover that you didn't grow as much intellectually as you would have liked? Then set some goals of books you want to read in 07. Do the same physically and spiritually. Think of some people you know that don't know Christ and commit to praying for them in 07 in the hope that they would be converted and that God would use you in the process. God can handle big dreams. *BHAGs and IBC.*

Conc. Story about the date of Christmas. What if we had a four year do-over? Perhaps we can live 07 so we wouldn't need a do-over in 2010.