

the best *you can be*

Lesson

4

A FOCUSED *woman*

"...But one thing I do: Forgetting what is
behind and straining toward what is ahead."

Philippians 3:13

SOMETIMES IT SEEMS THAT we are all in a race to reach the finish line—of what? Our lives are often cluttered, hectic—with so much to do and so many tasks to accomplish. Many women go through life without any plan or goal. Researchers tell us that only 3% of us have definite, specific goals that are written on paper, goals that can be seen and measured. Only 3% of us know where we are going and will likely to succeed in getting there.

Our God is ordered and focused. We can see this in Creation. Each day was divinely appointed and planned. At the end of seven days there was a perfect world with two perfect people. All of Creation testifies to a God of marvelous order. If we look at a flower or leaf under a microscope, we can see wonderful intricacies.

The Bible says, “God is not the author of confusion but of peace...” (1 Corinthians 14:33, *NKJV*). In Psalm 19:133 I find a prayer that God will direct my steps.

Who wants to run a race without a finish line? We must know where we’re going, or how will we ever get there? We can be like caterpillars on the rim of a round flowerpot, following each other around and around until they starve to death. Like the caterpillars, we can confuse activity with accomplishment. We are all busy. The question is, what are we accomplishing? Without definite written goals, we can easily get involved in circular activity that achieves nothing of lasting value. Activity does not lead to accomplishment until it is focused on a specific goal.



LINE OF SEPARATION

What is it that separates women of excellence from women of mediocrity? Think of women in your nation who have become women of excellence. What made the difference?

It is not time. Dr. Ida Scudder, founder of Vellore Christian Medical School in India, lived with the same time constraints as we all do.

It is not family responsibilities. Ellen White, who had more than 50 books to her credit, faced the problem of juggling career and family needs in days that were no longer than ours.

It is not our race. Marian Anderson struggled against racial prejudice yet became a woman of excellence.

It is not beauty. Eleanor Roosevelt admitted to feeling like an ugly duckling, but she accomplished much.

It is not handicap. Joni Eareckson Tada writes books and paints pictures despite the fact that she is a quadriplegic.

What makes the difference? It is having a cause, a destination, a goal, a purpose. When we know where we are going and are determined to get there, it is possible to find a way to succeed regardless of the obstacles in our path.

Many women in their 60s and 70s have gone back to school, graduating with high marks and gone on to live many more years—working, earning, learning, and travelling. It is never too late to have a purpose, to set goals. It is never too late to become a woman of excellence, to realize the dream of a lifetime.

POWER OF WRITTEN GOALS

There is power in writing down our goals. Something mysterious happens when we write them down. Power is released, and things start to happen.

Women with goals:

- Helen Keller was blind and deaf, yet she graduated from college and became known around the world.
- Florence Nightingale was able to do much for the cause of nursing because she had a vision.
- Joan of Arc's name is remembered more than 500 years later because she had a goal.
- Mother Teresa would not have received the Nobel Peace Prize had she not had a mission.
- Golda Meier, Margaret Thatcher, and Indira Ghandi all became leaders of their nations because of goals.

John Maxwell suggests these as the six stages in accomplishing a goal:

I thought it. I caught it. I bought it.
I sought it. I got it. I taught it.

"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers/sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12-14).

RATE YOURSELF

What are some of the hindrances you have faced in reaching the goals of your life? What has kept you from being all you could be? Please check those that apply to your situation.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Insufficient education
<input type="checkbox"/>	Physically unattractive
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lack of money
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sex discrimination
<input type="checkbox"/>	Uncooperative spouse
<input type="checkbox"/>	Racial discrimination
<input type="checkbox"/>	Negative family upbringing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Got in with wrong crowd
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chose wrong profession
<input type="checkbox"/>	Family responsibilities
<input type="checkbox"/>	Substance abuse
<input type="checkbox"/>	Unsympathetic boss
<input type="checkbox"/>	Limited family support
<input type="checkbox"/>	Physical handicaps
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shyness
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lack of connections
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bad luck
<input type="checkbox"/>	Illness

Now go back and put a big, bold X through the whole list. Difficulties are no reason to give up on your dreams. It isn't the circumstances of life that make us winners or losers, it is how we react to the circumstances. It is not what we have that determines our success; it is what we do with what we have.

MY GOALS FOR THIS YEAR

List at least one for each area of your life.

AREA	GOAL	STRATEGY
Physical		
Mental		
Social		
Spiritual		
Family		
Professional		
Church/ Community		

PERSONAL GROWTH EXERCISES

1. Use a calendar to set your goals for the next month. When will you do each? How will you achieve it?
2. Use a weekly calendar or a journal to set your activities for the week. Make sure that weekly goals help you reach monthly and yearly goals. Review the list daily.
3. Make a list of your daily priorities. What will you do today that will move you

toward your goals? Put those things at the head of your to-do list.

4. Assemble support material for each of your goals. Have a file for each goal. Into each put clippings, articles, books, CDs, estimates, brochures, samples, and other items that will help you reach the goal.
5. Reward yourself for accomplishing your goals. Celebrate each achievement.
6. Pray about your goals. Psalm 37:4 says, "He shall give you the desires of your heart."

SUCCESS PRINCIPLE

Activity does not lead to accomplishment until it is focused on a specific goal.

MY PRAYER FOR TODAY

Lord God, Thank You that I can trust You because You are a God of order. I can breathe and live because You planned and provided for me before I was even born. Help me to emulate Your goodness. Help me to focus and prepare in advance to the best of my ability, by Your grace. Help me to accomplish all that You desire for me.



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