**FOUR STEPS TO A BETTER LIFE**

William Arthur Ward once wrote a book about living with passion and purpose to achieve anything in life. He was a prolific writer who lived from 1921 to 1994. He was a man of great accomplishment. Look up some of his works if you can. In one of his books he came up with four steps that defined achievement. I’ll borrow from his poetic memory title to encourage you to reach your spiritual goals.

**PLAN PURPOSEFULLY**

“In the beginning God created…” God had a plan from the beginning of time to create the world, make man, and then redeem him when he fell to sin. I love the book of Ephesians as a great summary of this eternal scheme of redemption from God.

Like God, we must have a plan for our life. I believe we need to know what God’s purpose and plan is for our life, then zealously live it with an all-consuming passion. I don’t want to come to the end of my life and feel like I had not “redeemed the time” by filling up my days for God’s glory (Matthew 5:13-16). I want to be “salt” and “light” to this world. I want to live each day with a planned purpose of living by God’s grace, through my faith, as His “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph. 2:8-10).

My planned purpose is succinctly outlined in Paul’s words to Titus in 2:11-14,

*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.*

**PREPARE PRAYERFULLY**

As a gospel preacher I absolutely love how the apostles explained their goal for life when they said, “*But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word*” (Acts 6:4). In the context it was a good thing to “*serve tables*” by helping the widows in need, but God had given others for that purpose, instructing the apostles to focus on the great commission to the world (Matt. 28:18-20). Paul’s life beautifully revealed a life of praying without ceasing (I Thess. 5:17) as we see his incredible non-stop prayer life in every letter he wrote:
"For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." ([Romans 1:9](https://www.icr.org/bible/Romans/1/9))
"I thank my God always on your behalf"([1 Corinthians 1:4](https://www.icr.org/bible/1Corinthians/1/4)).
"|I| cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers" ([Ephesians 1:16](https://www.icr.org/bible/Ephesians/1/16)).
"Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy" ([Philippians 1:4](https://www.icr.org/bible/Philippians/1/4)).
"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you" ([Colossians 1:9](https://www.icr.org/bible/Colossians/1/9)).
"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers" ([1 Thessalonians 1:2](https://www.icr.org/bible/1Thessalonians/1/2)).

As you make your purposeful plans for life, first bring God into the plan. Only then will it lead to great success (Prov. 3:5-6).

 **PROCEED POSITIVELY**

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13). Those three words – “I CAN DO” – are powerful to motivate us forward into action. They get you out of bed each morning, creating a positive feeling about life. God is a “CAN DO” Father who believes in us and wants us to believe in Him and ourselves. Jesus tells us that faith moves mountains when we believe that God is in the mountain moving business (Matt. 17:20; 21:21). By my great faith in this omnipotent God I can believe positively that God can, and will, “*do exceedingly abundantly, above all I ask or think, according to the power that works in us*” (Eph. 3:20). It is easy for me to be positive about my future when I quote, and believe, “*God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work*” (2 Cor. 9:8). It is not in my feeble abilities that I can proceed positively through life, but in God’s all-sufficiency. It is God who works in me and for me. If God is able, then God can do. If I have first determined that my plan fits God’s will, then pray about it, then put your hand to the plow and don’t look back! Proceed positively…with God.

**PURSUE PERSISTENTLY**

“*Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*” (I Cor. 15:58). Nothing worthy of the word “excellent” was ever achieved without persistence. Whether it was Edison’s 10,000 failures to create the light bulb or my conquering a weakness in the flesh, we must all go through “many trials” of faith to accomplish the hard tasks of life (Jam. 1:2-4). Winston Churchill’s memorable speech in the dark days of World War 2 when Britain stood alone against German’s aggression, said to the boy at Harrow School near London,
“Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never--in nothing, great or small, large or petty--never give in, except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.” Those are worthy words to remember in the dark days we live in now. That persistence defeated Hitler, and that same persistence will defeat Satan too.

Until tomorrow…
Plan Purposefully.
Prepare Prayerfully.
Proceed Positively.
Pursue Persistently.

I love you. Rick