

MY ASPIRATIONS CHART

Choosing and Charting Who You Want to Become

Here is an exercise to help you articulate your deep desires in a safe (but not soft), encouraging and challenging environment. Men will spend their time and energies on lots of goals; let's focus on worthy goals—those which are truly satisfying, eternal and pleasing to the Lord.

General, fuzzy goals are impotent; they don't really help us; in fact, they may eventually wear us down and discourage us. They don't have the staying power to motivate us and to give us a clearly defined target at which to aim.

Google "goal setting" or "goal writing" and you will find some helpful guidelines to writing goals/aspirations. The SMART method seems quite popular and has merit. However, in our case I've added something else:

Our goals should be:

God-Honouring: Don't make goals only about yourself. Make them about bringing glory to God through your life.

Faith-Requiring: Don't be too tame or timid. Make goals that require you to depend on God's power to fulfill them.

Community-Supported: Here's the clincher—*make* goals with the help of others and *fulfill* them with the help of others.

Help each other write these kinds of goals:

realistic (achievable with God's help and others)

measurable (how will you know when you are achieving them?)

time-related (start, duration, frequency, completion; life-long goals are good but need to be incremental)

The Chart:

Most of this is obvious. But let me add a few comments:

- pick no more than one goal in two **categories** of the seven to start with
- the seven categories have a few general descriptors and mental triggers
- the chart allows for two **goals** per area (you can add more, in time, to any category)
- there is not much room, so you can write out your goal somewhere else and summarize it here
- write out *how* you intend to fulfill your goal, what **means** or methods you will use
- add **time** parameters (e.g, "I'll start this in the next 4 days" or "I intend to finish this by this date", etc)

CHOOSE
your life goals

CHART
your plan and progress

CHALLENGE
yourself and one another

CHEER
one another on

CHANGE
to the glory of God!

[over]

- **help** me: this is where living in supportive community (accountability) is crucial to starting and completing goals! You could put something like "Ask me next week how I'm doing here" or "Call/text me a reminder every day this week" or "This is new, or hard, for me; please give me some helpful suggestions in achieving this goal" Lyle Johnson nextlevelministries.ca
- it takes a few weeks to form a new habit; check off each successful **week** in the box provided
- a written goal is good; a **scheduled** goal is superior; in a week full of appointments, add your goal to assure its completion

Discuss: Go through this exercise with one another, and discuss the value of setting goals of this nature. Turn to these Scriptures to begin and support this exercise. For instance, Paul in Philippians 3:10-16, or Peter in 2 Peter 1:3-9, both speak to pressing on and adding

How the chart works: Bring your written goal(s) next week. Time will be provided for each man in your group to share his goal(s). These goals will be lovingly critiqued (not criticized) by the group. If a goal is too general, or not measurable, for instance, then an alternative might be suggested. Each man should be aware that this will happen, and know that he will be asked to be willing to hear what the others think. You are certainly welcome to defend your described goal. After this, take time *during the meeting* to refine the goal(s) on the chart.

Print your name and the date on the chart (unless there is something written on it of a private nature). In order for the group to encourage each other in the fulfillment of their aspirations, assign one man to record (on *one* chart) each man's goals. Each man will be asked for a personal progress report every group meeting in the following weeks. Take your own sheet home with you and put it in a prominent place to remind you about your goal(s). Set an alarm or reminder on your phone. (Feel free to consider other ways that you as a group could oversee the follow-up to this exercise.)

Finally... have fun with this! Don't make it heavy or burdensome or scary. Consider what a privilege and joy it is to cheer one another on in our spiritual formation into Christlikeness!

Lyle Johnson