

GOALS AND DREAMS

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A number of years ago my wife Susan watched the movie South Pacific again. What fun to listen to those songs that were first introduced in the 50's that we with great joy could still sing.

This movie first came out in 1958, the year both Susan and I graduated high school. One song in particular caught my attention: "Happy Talk." In this song are the following words: "You got to have a dream...if you don't have a dream...how you gonna have a dream come true?"

Are goals and dreams (desires about things you would like to see happen in the future) the same? I think not.

A leader I recently talked with said that he had given up on goal setting as most of the goals he set never happened. Hence, the conclusion that setting goals is an act of futility and a waste of time and mental effort.

Allow me to address the difference between goals and dreams...they are not the same. You set goals in terms of your own behavior. You dream of things you would like to see happen, but those dreams often entail circumstances and people's responses that are beyond your behavior and control.

Let's take marriage as an example. You can set goals for what you intend to do in your marriage, with the help of Jesus. For example, to listen well, date your wife, take her seriously, validate her emotions. I cannot have it as a goal to have a certain kind of marriage as that involves how my wife responds and acts and I have no control over that. I have a dream, a desire of what I would like our marriage to look like, but that is not a goal as I don't control the outcome. So, as it relates to marriage (and lots of other areas) I have goals and dreams.

In the same way I can set goals with my kids, in the ministry and at my job in the marketplace, but they need to be in terms of what I will do and not in terms of what others may or may not do.

A couple of days ago I took some time to do some thinking and praying about the next three years. I wrote some things down I would like to see the Lord do (dreams). Then I wrote a list of things I intend (by His grace) to do that I believe would facilitate those dreams happening (goals). I will do what I can do and trust God for the results. I am not the Lord of the Harvest (end results) but He is.

Making this distinction has freed me from the frustration of setting "goals" that never happen. So, I set goals based on my behavior and leave the end results (dreams) to Him.