

## VERSE FOR THE YEAR

As 2006 is a World Cup year, it is appropriate that our verse-for-the-year contains the word 'goal'! But an even more significant reason for choosing 2 Corinthians 5.9 is that it fits in with the **40 Days of Purpose** programme that we will be running as a Church between March and Easter – more of which later.

*We make it our goal to please him.*  
[2 Corinthians 5.9]

## IT'S GOOD TO HAVE GOALS

The old adage is true, 'Aim at nothing and you're bound to hit it!' Without goals, people drift through life aimlessly. They end up underachieving, failing to fulfil their rich, God-given potential.

Without a clear sense of purpose (which a set of goals provides), our life will feel empty, or appear superficial, devoid of any real meaning. "What's the point?" we hear people cry wearily. Life becomes burdensome in the absence of clear goals. Frustration, restlessness and dissatisfaction creep in. The goal-less life is exposed by the writer of Ecclesiastes, in a devastating manner.

*"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless." What does man gain from all his labour at which he toils under the sun? ... Everything is wearisome, more than one can say. What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. ... I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.*  
[Ecclesiastes 1.2-3,8-9,14]

But we don't have to share such a pessimistic view of life – not when we are clear about the purposes for which God made us. Jesus has promised us *life in all its fullness* (John 10.10) - the perfect antidote to any feelings of emptiness! He promised us rich satisfaction, when we live our lives both with him and for him. "I myself am your food for life. The person who comes to me will never go hungry, and the person who believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6.35).

A clear sense of purpose, supported by a clear set of goals, will help us achieve our God-given potential, thereby bringing glory to his name and a sense of satisfaction to our lives.

• **Goals are like lenses** – they help focus our energies on what is really important.

• **Goals are also great stimulants** – they help keep us motivated until we have attained our targets.

*"We tend to overestimate what can be achieved in one year; but underestimate what can be achieved in five years."*

Paul was determined 'not to be like a man running aimlessly, nor fight like a man beating the air' (1 Cor 9.26). He had received a vision from the Lord Jesus Christ and was determined to fulfil it (Acts 26.16-20).

• *It was always his ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known* (Rom 15.20; 2 Cor 10.16);

• *He sought to win as many as possible to Jesus Christ, by every legitimate means possible* (1 Cor 9.19,22). But in pursuing these goals, for Paul, the glory of Jesus was always of paramount importance (Rom 1.5).

## OUR GOALS MUST BE RIGHT

Paul was a very focussed individual, as many people are today. But by his own admission, at one time in his life, his energies were badly misdirected because his goals were wrong. "I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. ... as for zeal, [I was] persecuting the church," he humbly confesses (Gal 1.14; Phil 3.6). And so he issues a warning to everyone who is similarly highly focussed or goal-orientated. "It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good," (Gal 4.18).

So what should our over-riding goal in life be? This is where our chosen verse for 2006 provides us with such a clear answer! **Our over-riding goal in life should be to please Jesus.**

Most people in our contemporary society will set a very different kind of goal for their life. It might be to get to the top of their career ladder, or accumulate enough money to retire from work. We live in a hedonistic world in which personal pleasure is put at the top of most people's list of ambitions. "I just want to have a good time," people will say. "I'm looking for fun, enjoyment, a bit of a laugh." Life isn't taken very seriously.

So the goal that our verse-for-the-year sets before us is counter-cultural. In fact, it is revolutionary! It will produce profound changes in the way we live. Instead of saying to ourselves, "What shall I do? What suits me best? What will I enjoy doing most?" we will humbly ask ourselves, "What will please Jesus most?"

On Sunday evenings during January, we will look at various ways in which both our personal lives and our church life should be shaped by this all-important goal.

It's a goal we derive from Jesus' own example. He was able to declare, "*I always do what pleases my Father. I seek not to please myself but him who sent me,*" (John 8.29; 5.30). As a result, his Father was able to testify, "*This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased,*" (Mat 17.5).

## 40 DAYS OF PURPOSE

The *40 Days of Purpose* programme will help us fulfil our verse-for-the-year.

### (a) Five Key Purposes

Rick Warren, author of *The Purpose Driven Life* and *The Purpose Driven Church*, has identified five key purposes for which God has made us.

- **Worship:** *we are planned for God's pleasure*
- **Fellowship:** *we are formed for God's family*
- **Discipleship:** *we are created to be Christlike*
- **Ministry:** *we are shaped for service*
- **Evangelism:** *we are made for mission*

### (b) Five Methods of Exploration

We will be exploring these themes in five different ways ('multiple reinforcement!'); through

- **preaching and teaching** at our Sunday services, morning and evening (see the sermon series guide);
- **personal study** of *The Purpose Driven Life* (copies are available at the highly discounted rate of only £3.99 each);
- **scripture memorisation;**
- **small group studies;**
- **e-mail encouragements.**

### (c) Four Core Principles

The *40 Days of Purpose* programme is based around four core principles.

- **Concentrated Focus.** All our various Church organisations will be encouraged to take part in the programme in a way that suits them best.
- **Multiple reinforcement** – see above.
- **Behavioural teaching** – the programme is designed to transform our lives, not simply inform our minds.
- **Exponential thinking** – we will be encouraged to think bigger and have great expectations!

Come along to our midweek meeting at 7.30pm on **Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> January** to hear Rick Warren expounding these principles on video. You will not be disappointed!

### (d) A Special Launch Night

We will be exploring the programme further at various Wednesday evenings during January and February, leading up to our special **SIMULCAST Launch Night, 7.30-9.00pm, on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> March.** There

is plenty to be done by way of preparation for the programme to ensure its maximum fruitfulness. If you would like to help in any way, please let me know.

## INDIA BECKONS – AGAIN!

Once again, I would greatly value your prayers as I prepare to go back to India at the end of this month, at the invitation of the India Rural Evangelical Fellowship. We will be flying out of the UK on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> January and returning on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> February, a slightly shorter trip than in the past.

Revd Ian Macaulay (formerly the Senior Pastor at Heaton Baptist Church, Newcastle, and now the minister of St John's Church, Linlithgow, Scotland), will be sharing the Bible teaching and evangelistic work with me. I will be giving four talks on the life of Jonah and Ian will be delivering four messages from the book of Philippians at the Bible Conference during our first week. These meetings are normally attended by about 5,000 people. We will also be preaching at the large evening rallies, which may be attended by up to 15,000 people. Three American pastors will also be contributing to the Bible teaching and evangelistic work.

During our second week, we hope to visit some of the outlying orphanages, take part in a church dedication service, visit a couple of villages for evening evangelistic meetings, and spend some time with the Bible College students. We have been asked to share some teaching on the theme of 'servanthood' with them. We would greatly value your prayers for all the preparation that needs to be done in advance; that our teaching and preaching would be culturally sensitive and relevant; and spirit-inspired in its delivery.

Elizabeth Callendar, Aileen and Stuart Bell, Stewart Shaw, Suzanne Perry, Marilyn Robertson, Janet McArthur, and Shieleen Bremner make up the medical team, together with Jason and Lynne Leitch (currently living in the USA) and various other personnel from the USA. Please pray for all the preparations that need to be made over the coming weeks, especially the gathering of medical supplies.

Finally, let me take this opportunity of wishing you all a new year in which you increasingly discover the joy of making '*pleasing Jesus*' your over-riding goal.

**David Hunt**