

chapter 4

Discovering the Goal Journal Companion

First, let us look at creating goals, if you start to list them randomly, your goals can be an overwhelmingly daunting task. For example, if you had all the money and resources you needed to have a luxurious high-rise office building built from the ground up, overseeing the idea from your brain to actually beholding the physical structure is an enormous task. You would not try to build this high-rise in thirty or even ninety days. This feat would be unrealistic—especially since there are several groundwork issues that would have to be addressed prior to ever having a groundbreaking ceremony. The land would have to be checked for zoning; the architect would have to come up with a design; the design would have to be

approved by the city, and finally the building contractor would have to be capable of carrying out the task. Undoubtedly, all of this takes time. There would be hundreds of projects to manage and coordinate simultaneously. As the top floor cannot be built before the foundation is complete; or as the electricians and plumbers cannot be scheduled before the building shell is up; or as the first shovel of dirt cannot be lifted before a master project plan is in place, one must know the end before he begins. This way you can determine if you are on track or if the project is off track and will not meet the targeted completion time. Because this project is broken up in mini projects or smaller pieces, it makes the day-to-day management of this major project feasible. Then at any point, you can still look at where you are today as a gauge to see where you compare to the broader picture of the finished building design.

*...a clear picture of who
we are aiming to become*

Building a high-rise and defining and customizing our goals are similar in approach. First of all, we need to create a picture in our mind of what we are destined to become, a picture free of habits, a picture free of strongholds, a picture of one who is achieving life's goals, similar to the process for completing the high-rise I described earlier. We need to have a clear picture of who we are aiming to become. This is very important because many people are aiming at the wrong picture for their lives. Is your picture that of what your parents think you should become? Is your picture that of what people close to you think that you should become? Worse yet, is your picture a negative picture of your very own future because of past hurts. This is why you need a realistic and clear vision of where you are aiming in your mind.

...journaling for change

When someone first told me about keeping a journal and writing down my thoughts and experiences, I thought, *that is for girls. What am I, sixteen years old?* However, it had not occurred to me how important this simple task was until a few years later, when I ventured out on my first overseas travel to Europe for vacation. I noticed that some of my fellow travelers journaled each day. In fact, some men were even journaling. One day I asked one of the men what he was writing down in his journal. He explained to me he was reflecting on the past day's events and writing them down. It was not until after I returned to America, and a few weeks had passed that I was going through pictures of my experience when it occurred to me that it would have been great to have had a written daily account of my trip. It prompted me to begin investigating journals. I found there are many authors, ministries, and key business leaders who journal (yes even men). Off I went to purchase my first journal. It was not anything special, just a small size empty notebook. I started journaling every time I had a thought or a specific goal in mind. Since one of my biggest hobbies is traveling overseas to experience new cultures, foods, and landscapes, I took my journal and pen in tow faithfully—from Egypt to New Zealand. When I started a second journal, I got a God idea. As I began this journey with God, I did the following: I became real with God, changed my attitude, made my confessions, and journaling became the next step to being free. Let me explain.

*Why stumble around with people
for answers about who we are...?*

If we want to achieve personal goals in our lives we must put them down in writing. We do this by creating a priority list

of all goals and placing time periods next to each item. This enables you to set a time frame for completing each goal. You can manage the list by creating one year, five year, or ten-year goals. To manage daily or weekly tasks you can post sticky notes and place them in obvious spots around your house, car, or work place to keep those goals in front of you. In some cases you may find a special partner that you can share your goal with so you are accountable to that person. This action is geared toward having someone make sure you stick to your goal. Once you accomplish a goal, give yourself a personal reward: a pat on the back for a job well done. This will keep you motivated to stay on track. I do understand I have oversimplified this process and there are many credible authors that have done an excellent job at exhausting this subject, but for our purposes in general, historically people were taught to create their short-term and long-term goals this way.

For a period of time in my life I used a similar concept of goal setting as described above; however, one day I realized that I had one book for journaling my secret thoughts, prayers, and daily reflections, another notebook tablet filled with goals and their priorities, not to mention sticky notes that were posted on my bathroom mirror, on my computer, and sometimes in my car for reminders. Unfortunately, my mind soon began to ignore the sticky notes as if they were a part of the décor. This is when my God idea came. I saw that I could merge these two separate tasks, goal setting and journaling, into one notebook. I could have all my thoughts, ideas, goals, and dreams in one portable notebook and one accessible location. I thought, Ed, you might be on to something. And to be truthful I really did not know what a great change I was embarking upon.

In the world we live in, many factors must be considered in order for one to effectively create a set of goals and execute

an action plan for his or her life. Every person in this world is created differently; no two persons have the exact identical fingerprints. Furthermore, no two people have the exact same hurts, fears, habits, aspirations, joys, or sorrows. There may be similarities, but not one of us have the exact same paths in life, the same upbringing, the same relational experiences, the same high school or military experiences, or the same body type or mental capacity. What I would like to get across to you here is that there is not one template or generic goal program that works for everyone. Each approach and each goal must be customized to the individual person. The honest work and effort you put forth in this process will lay the direction for you becoming a success in living free. In the beginning as I started to write down my goals and journal, I did not use any specific format or formula. In my research I read several good authors who wrote about achieving objectives and goals, and I even experimented with different approaches. As a result, I soon found a recipe by trial and error that was best suited for me and that far exceeded my expectations.

Before we dig deeper into goals it is important that you discover your God-given identity and purpose. You may be asking, *where do I get that information?* You may be a new Christian after reading the first chapter of this book or you may be a seasoned Christian. It still does not matter. The only real way to understanding your identity and who you are in God is from reading your Bible, praying, and having devotion with Him, along with committing to your local church.

If you were to take a widget (a fictitious product), and if somehow it became broken, first you would try a home remedy to fix the broken product, and if that failed you would seek out a friend. If by chance that friend knew all about widgets and quickly they discovered the task to fix it was impossible,

then you would take it to a widget specialist. If after seeking the advice of a specialist, they discovered they could not fix your widget, they would suggest you take it to the manufacturer, the one that created the widget in the first place.

This is a good example of how we seek to fix the dysfunctions in our lives and seek affirmations of what our goals should be. As believers, we have direct access to the manufacturer of the entire world. God created us in his very image. In Genesis 1:27 it reads, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

God wants to reveal his nature to us. He also wants to reveal to us our destiny and purpose. It does not matter where you were born, your nationality, if you have kids or not, or what your social status is. If you are a born again Christian, God loves you and wants nothing more than his best for your life. Whatever God has planned for you, let me assure you, the talents and abilities you need to fulfill His purpose are already in you. It is just a matter of discovering all of the hidden, God-given gifts within you and bringing them to the surface of your life. God does this intentionally so we will have fellowship with him and seek his direction.

Let me give you a few examples from the Bible:

David

1 Samuel 16:1–13 introduces us to the young David who was anointed by Samuel to become the next King of Israel. Not only did David become a King but the Bible tells us besides Jesus, he was the greatest King that ever lived.

Abraham

In Genesis 12:1–3, God tells Abraham to leave his country and

relatives and to follow him. God also tells him that he is going to be the father of many nations. Because Abraham believed God, God credited him as righteous.

As you can see, David and Abraham received a spoken word from God. These men of God understood their identity and purpose; therefore, they patterned their life after those prophetic words from God. It is very important that you discover the identity of who you are and know that you belong to God. It is nearly impossible to accomplish your purpose if you suffer from an identity crisis. This is why some people end up in the wrong relationships and the wrong career searching for their identity from the wrong avenues. They end up seeking things that God did not speak into their life and never feeling complete or satisfied. From his youth, David understood that he was destined to be King of Israel. Abraham as well understood that he would be the father of many nations. In order for you to come into the understanding of your identity and purpose, you first have to come into relationship with God.

Do not limit how God may speak to you about your identity and purpose. It may be in your prayer time; it may be during your Bible reading, or it may be at a church service. Psalm 37: 4–5 solidifies this thought: “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this.” When God reveals these things to you, you will start to approach life in a new light. You will see your future with more confidence and resolve. Your conversation will carry more defiance because you now know who you are and where you are going. This key, this new light, will help you avoid toxic relationships and help you avoid self-guided careers or situations that are a detriment to your success and God-given identity and purpose.

*...visualizing your goals
and verbalizing them*

With this understanding we can begin what I call a visualization and verbalization exercise. I want you to understand that as you seek God your goals start to become more defined and will change to a degree over time. From single status to married status, from no kids to kids leaving the nest, or from midlife to senior citizen, whatever your state your underlying identity and purpose will not change. Focus on where you are today, and let your life be likened to a lump of clay that God will shape and mold as you move closer to his will for your life. God will craft you into an exquisite piece of pottery.

First of all, find a place where you can relax with no distractions and then begin this exercise by seeing what you are aiming for in your mind, and secondly begin to say it aloud. Here is an example: begin to see yourself in a future tense and when you say these things, you must say them in a future tense as well. It will go along the lines of “I am free of doubt;” “I forgave family members;” “I no longer blame the company for financial problems;” “I am now financially secure;” “I lost 15 lbs,” and “I look great;” “I am happily married;” “I tithe faithfully” and “I am committed to volunteering at church.” Verbalize it in your own words according to your situation (we will cover writing them down shortly), but you have to be specific as if you have already arrived at that place. Get that picture in your mind, what type of clothes you are wearing, how people now respond to the new you, how those old strongholds do not have any foothold on you anymore and how great you feel; this is the visualization you need to get in your mind. After you have performed this initial exercise, a great way to maintain this thought process is to perform it throughout the day, for example, when you are taking a

shower in the morning, or in the car on your way to work or any private time you have between work, school, or running errands.

There is an excellent illustration of visualizing your goals, verbalizing them, and never giving up until they come to pass, and it is right in your Bible. It is the story of Joseph—one of my favorite Bible heroes—you may have heard of it. The story starts with Joseph in Genesis Chapter 37. God gave Joseph dreams, not just ordinary dreams, but dreams that he would become a prince. It started with Joseph sharing his dreams with his brothers that they would bow down before him. Joseph did not hide it from them; he told his eleven brothers the exact details of each dream of how they were going to submit to him. Couple that with Joseph’s father who favored him more than any of his other sons, so much so that he made Joseph a special coat of many colors. Picture Joseph walking around with a princely like garment (visualization), telling everyone about the dreams of his future (verbalization). It is a fact that if you know who you are, where you are going, and present a confidence and sureness about yourself in a Godly manner, the first people that will get jealous of you are your family members or those who are close to you, right? This certainly became the case for young Joseph.

Joseph had a dream his entire family would bow down before him. (It meant his whole clan, and during that time families were rather large). Joseph’s brothers were already upset with him and his dreams, but after this last dream, his father became irritated with Joseph because of the wild dreams he was having. At this point, his brothers became so angry at him that they conspired to get rid of him.

Joseph had some attacks and battles along the way, but he had a clear picture of who he was and where he was headed. I

like Joseph because he did not care what anybody said about his dreams. No matter who conspired against him, Joseph kept his integrity and he remained faithful to God. In addition, as you read in Genesis Chapter 42, Joseph's dream became a reality. Not only did his family bow down to him, he was second in command to that of the pharaoh, which meant the whole country of Egypt bowed down before him during that time. As I stated earlier, when I combined my goals, priorities, thoughts, etc. into one notebook, my God idea resulted in a new concept entitled Goal Journal Companion which I will refer to as the GJC throughout the remaining chapters.

...your GJC will be your special companion

There is not a right or wrong way to handle the task of journaling in your GJC. It really comes down to your personality style. Here is what I mean. I see it as two personality styles for journaling: the first is what I call daily journaling, and the second style is reflective journaling. How do you know which style fits you? If you find a greater degree of ease writing and recording your thoughts daily, then your style is daily journaling. On the other hand, if you are not very good at writing or recording your thoughts daily, I call this style reflective journaling. You might be saying, "Ed is one style more preferred over the other?" The answer is NO. Because whichever style you lean more towards is going to work best for you and you will naturally stick with it.

Whether your style is more daily journaling or more reflective journaling, the only requirement is that you be consistent in your journaling. If you are a person who can daily reflect and journal, this is good. If you feel you lean more towards the reflective style, then do not feel forced to try to record your thoughts everyday. You will only end up frustrated and will

give up journaling in a relatively short time, and that is not the goal. For reflective journaling, do not let more than a week go by without recording your thoughts. If you go longer than a week, it will be like a bloodhound dog that loses the scent of what it is tracking; you will quickly forget some key moments. Also with the reflective style, you have to be ready to record major ideas or experiences at any point in the day or week. You should strive, however, to be consistent regardless of the journaling style you choose. It is important to note that either style will be a healing and growing process for you.

As we approach the exciting part of this book, and in part, the foundation of this book, we must never forget that God is our source. Now that we have an historical perspective about goals and visualization and verbalization exercises we can create our goals in our GJC. Once again, God is our source for helping us discover our identity, destiny, and purpose in life.

In the next chapter, we are going to begin an exercise bringing together these separate tasks into one powerful tool that will launch your change in full motion. It is in your GJC where you will address the secret areas in your life: those strongholds and bad habits that you desire to be free from. I am excited about what I am about to unveil to you through the GJC. You are going find that once you start this process, it is going be easy, and in fact, you are going to wonder why you did not think of it yourself. It is that easy! What I love the most about this approach is each GJC is customized and unique to each individual. As you build your goals and begin your journaling, you will soon discover that your GJC will be your special companion taking you to a new life of living single and free. So continue to read on my friend. Your life's journey is going to be revealed in a completely new light.