

5, 4, 3, 2, 1 -- The Ultimate Goal

Fresh Start Podcast Transcription

Let's talk about things more on a horizontal level. Diet and exercise, spending, relationships, discipline in other areas of life. Have you given those any thought? If you know me, I love to plan, I love goals. Years ago, I made the mistake, during a romantic weekend, of having a little goal-setting time with Mindy. That didn't necessarily go too well and I'm glad that was a long time ago. We haven't done that again, right, Honey? (laughter) There's a time to talk about those things. –Not during a romantic weekend. We're always learning. I'm always learning.

Diet and exercise. That's probably one of the favorite ones that people love to have New Year's resolutions and goals for the New Year. Can I make some recommendations as we go through some of these horizontal goals? Back in August, while on vacation, my brother- and sister-in-law—Brad and Susan Thomas in Marietta, Georgia—got me connected with an iPhone app called Map My Run. Then, shortly thereafter, Mindy got me a FitBit wristband to measure my steps. Would you believe that since August I've been averaging 40 miles a week in steps? It's amazing how many steps we take, unintentionally, but even intentionally (I work out and that helps) but, 40 miles a week! –Lifestyle perspective.

Diet and exercise. You know, regarding diet, I don't believe in diets. No shame, no blame for those who do. I like a lifestyle perspective: One helping, if you please. Few exceptions; maybe fruit, maybe salad if I live it up a little. I do love cookies, though they don't have much power over me and desserts of other kinds definitely don't have any power over me. Free to or free not to, or you're not free. Think about that. So, lifestyle perspective. Desserts are not necessarily automatic; one helping per meal. Just think about what difference that could make in your life when it comes to diet and exercise. Get a FitBit wristband; \$99 more or less at Target. Craig Fisher told me he got his for less, but I think it's because of his chaplaincy benefit. If you've got a benefit, great. Maybe somebody will give you one for a belated Christmas gift. Fitbit. Just put in on your wrist, it's amazing. 10,000 steps, 5 miles, you'll be there before you know it.

How about spending. We've had the Financial Peace series here recently. Maybe in 2014, you'll sign up for that.

Maybe you're having some relational struggles. And maybe you're thinking, "You know, when FreshStart starts again in January, I'm going to start going to Fresh Start because I know there's somebody I've really been struggling with, somebody I need to forgive, somebody that's done or said things in the past and the present and probably in the future, and I just need to have God's perspective on this and I need to have God's heart for them so I'm going to start going to the Fresh Start.

So, maybe it's Financial Peace. Maybe it's Fresh Start. Maybe it's taking the challenge that Link just gave recently about an hour of prayer. Maybe it's getting enrolled in Pastor Murdoch's Bible study when it starts up again in January. Maybe it's something else having to do with more time in the Word, more time in prayer. You know how it is this time of year, we have great ideas. We have great desires. There's no better time as we go into this New Year to set some goals, to make some plans. Maybe it's getting a FitBit wristband. Maybe that will be it.

Let's pray before we continue:

Lord, we love You. We praise You. You're worthy, Lord. Our times are in Your hands. Our times are in Your hands. This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Lord, this is a strategic opportunity to talk about goals. These are all good goals; good things. Things we should consider, things we should do. Things we should consider doing. But, Lord, there's something even more. There's an ultimate goal that I want to talk about today that You've put on my heart. The ultimate goal for every day of every year. That goal is Christ for Himself. Thank you, Jesus. Guide and lead and bless and bring this time alive. Fill it with inspiration. Make it practical, make it Biblical, make it relevant to every heart. We're all at different points and places in our journey here on planet earth, our time on planet earth. Just speak to our hearts, Lord, in a way that's relevant and specific and practical and Biblical and personal for every heart here today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Well, I've chosen a Scripture, many Scriptures could do and be very helpful, but I've chosen one that I think really nails what I want to talk about today in terms of this "ultimate goal." Christ in you, Christ in us, the hope of glory. It's found in Colossians: *I have become its servant by the commission God gave me.* I love that perspective. A stewardship perspective, a commissioning from God. *To present to you the word of God in its fullness.* This is going to be in its fullness. I mean, all of the Word is wonderful. All 66 books of the Bible anointed, approved of God, written by God through man. God approved. Yes, yes, yes. But, I love the

fullness of this perspective that I'm sharing today. It will be a life-changer. It's been a life-changer for me.

The mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations but is now disclosed to the Lord's people, to them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. You know, I think that would be helpful if we just said that out loud to one another right now. Even if it's not that real to you. Turn to the person to your right or left and say, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Someone that Pastor Elmer and Nancy Murdoch introduced to Mindy and me a number of years ago was a man that lived years ago by the name of A.B. Simpson. He lived during a time, 1843-1919, he lived on planet earth for 76 years. He was a passionate soul-winner. He was an active trainer of Christian workers. Would you believe he wrote 70 books on the Bible! He wrote many hymns and poems that have inspired the hearts of many and still live on. But perhaps he's best known for being the founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. It's his poem, if you will, that I would like to highlight today. Though he is in heaven, he still speaks. I'd like to go through this stanza by stanza with you today and mine some riches out for us that I pray will be practical. All these horizontal goals that I mentioned before are important. They're real. I mean, the human or humans is still in there. The new man is still a human. We're human. But you know it's real easy for these horizontal goals that I've mentioned— diet and exercise, spending, relationships, other disciplines—it's so easy (not that we intend it) it's so easy for those to become ego-centric or just pretty self-centered, self-serving. Mixed motivated. Real easy. No shame, no blame. Good things can become god things before we know it. But this ultimate goal I pray can be the overarching, undergirding (whatever you want to call it) perspective. —The ultimate perspective for every goal that you set. Let's go through it, stanza by stanza, with the first stanza:

Once it was the blessing, [*We love blessings, don't we?*] **Now it is the Lord;** [*It's so easy to give to get. It's so easy to seek a blessing, and we need a blessing. I love to bless, how about you? It's so easy to ask the Lord and ask the Lord for this, that, and the other thing and we need it! We need the blessing of healing we need the blessing of provision. We need, we need, we need. We're humans. We need. But, how about the Lord for Himself?*]

Once it was the feeling, Now it is His Word; [*You know, I hear this again and again and I'm sure we can all relate to it. We read a particular Scripture and we say, yeah, that's true but it's just not that real to me. Doesn't feel real. Well, we love what feels true, don't we? But you know, whether it feels true or not, the Word of God is the Word of God. He's the Authority.*]

Once His gifts I wanted, Now, the Giver own; [*Oh, I love the gifts. I love all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I love whatever God wants to give me and more. I mean, there's always more because of Him. It's so easy to seek the gift. A gift. A blessing. Are we seeking the Giver, only?*]

Once I sought for healing, [*Nothing wrong with that. Nothing wrong with that. We've needed a lot of prayer, had a lot of prayer for Mindy's dad in recent weeks and months. Our daughter Joy had foot surgery on Monday. There's been a lot of prayer. We need prayer. We welcome prayer. We thank God for prayer. But, there's something even Higher, something even better.*]

Now Himself

Once 'twas painful trying, Now 'tis perfect trust; [*Oh, it's so easy for us to try. You know, it's so easy to get into the mode of "doing for God," (laughter) instead of realizing Who He is already in us and being able to rest in that and enter into his Sabbath rest in that.*]

Once a half salvation, [*I really believe, apart from the revelation of this truth that I'm talking about today, it kind of feels like a half-salvation.*] **Now the uttermost** [*Christ in us, the hope of glory. Christ for Himself. A full, whole salvation.*]

Once 'twas ceaseless holding, Now He holds me fast; [*I'm hanging on, I'm hanging on. Hoping in hope, faith in faith, hanging on by a thread. Commitment to a commitment, instead of realizing nobody's more committed to us than Him and He lives in us to will and to do His good pleasure and delight in He holds all things together. All things are held together in Him. All things hold together in Him, we read from the first chapter of Colossians earlier on.*]

Once 'twas constant drifting, Now my anchor's cast. Why do we drift? I know why we drift, or one of the reasons we drift is because we try to live the Christian life on our own strength and it just doesn't work and we have highs and lows and it feels like we're on a merry-go-round or a treadmill or a roller coaster at times and we feel good when we think things are going well, "I'm obeying the Lord; things are going well. I'm not giving into that temptation; it's going well." But then when we give into the temptation and have a sour attitude, feel down, feel discouraged, feel defeated, then, "See, I failed again. Am I ever going to get this right? Am I ever going to get this Christian life right? I've been a Christian for twenty years now and I still struggle! I guess that's just the way it is." So, a resignation attitude. Kind of a giving up, ebb and flow, not motivated, not participating. Drifting, at times.

Now my anchor's cast because I know who I am. I know why I'm here. I know Whose I am. I know Who lives in me. I know He's my righteousness, He's my holiness, He's my peace, He's my health, He is my [fill-in-the-blank.] He is those things that I've been asking Him for. He is those things that seem to be out there that I want to come in here, that He's already in here to be those things.

Once 'twas busy planning, [*I love to plan. Ask my family.*] **Now 'tis trustful prayer;** [*I've learned to be spontaneous, believe it or not. Ask those who go on Fresh Start trips with me. "Well, Steve, what's the plan for today?" "Well, I think we've got a general plan, but we'll just see how the Lord leads." That can be challenging because people tend to want to know what they're supposed to say, what they're supposed to do. Well, we know generally. We know why we're here, we know what our assignment is, but let's just see how the Lord leads. Let's just see what He has in mind. Let's be adaptable. Let's be flexible. We have a plan, but let's let Him direct the steps and trust that He will.*]

Once 'twas anxious caring, Now He has the care. [*Cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you. And He lives in You to care.*]

Once 'twas what I wanted, [*There we are, at the center.*] **Now what Jesus says;** [*Whatever You want, Lord, whatever You want. And yet, He wants something more specific because, as we are submitted to His Lordship and His authority, we would typically say, "Well, whatever the Lord wants, whatever the Lord wants, that's a good thing, that's a good thing." But I believe that He would turn that on us, in a good way, and say, "Dave, what do you want?" "Well, whatever the Lord wants." It's good to be at zero. It's good to be open. It's good to be submissive; it's what He wants. But when we believe that the desires that are in our hearts are His desires as He lives in us to will and to do His good pleasure and delight.*]

Once 'twas constant asking, Now 'tis ceaseless praise. [*You know, that was one thing that really came home to me when my father-in-law, who turned 91 this month, was going through a difficult time this fall. It all started September 8th when we were at Embassy Suites and he struggled with his health issues. He's better now and basically living alone again. Mindy's checking on him every day and not going over there as much. But while we were going through the heat of that and the worst of that and in the midst of the unknown, rather than asking, asking, asking, the Lord said, "Just praise Me for Me. Just give Me thanks. This is the will of God in Christ Jesus. Just submit to my sovereignty in the midst of the unknown. Praise Me because I am worthy, in the midst of the unknown. Praise Me because of*

Who I am.” The Lord gave me such a rest. I started reading again (besides the Bible, of course) A.W. Tozer’s Attributes of God, Volume 1 and I began to just soak in the realities of God’s truth, God’s Word, Christ in us the hope of glory and Who that is in us. Do you know Him? Do you know this One Who lives in us?

Once it was my working, His it hence shall be;

Once I tried to use Him, Now He uses me. [*That’s an interesting thing. When we’re a willing recipient of being used by God, that makes a difference. But I believe, and the Lord has shown me in His providence that, even in the medical profession, whether the doctor and the nursing staff know the Lord or not, I believe from our point of view, as ones who are submitted to the Lord and have the Lord living in us, He wants us to have the perspective that He is not the helper of the doctors and the nursing staff, they are serving His purposes. He is the Great Physician! He is the Healer! Whether they love Him or not, whether they know Him or not, they serve Him and His purposes. That is from the vantage point of one who knows Him as King, knows Him as Life– Lord and Savior and Life–and knows Him as an indwelling King and Healer and Sufficient One. We want to be used, however. It’s a dangerous place, dangerous perspective when we need to be needed–so that if we feel needed or used, then we feel more valuable. He doesn’t want that perspective. He doesn’t want us to need to be needed for value’s sake. He wants our value to be settled in Him. He lives in us, we’re already sons and daughters. We already have ultimate value and worth, so we live and give out of that. So, we don’t need to be needed, but we love to be used for His glory.]*

Once the power I wanted, Now the Mighty One; [*He came to heal the broken-hearted and set the captives free, true. I remember for years I struggled. I think I struggled from the time I came to saving faith, which was the summer of 1974, until this time of year, Christmas time, a little after Christmas time, right here, right now, week after Christmas. All those years I struggled with insecurity and kind of an insecure flavor of rejection. I mean, most people didn’t know it. Mindy knew it. The Lord knew it. I knew it. But I maintained poise. I wasn’t drowning in it, but it was on my radar screen. It was nipping at my heels, and God was getting a lot of mileage out of it. As I repented of pride, repented of idolatry, I came into a deeper revelation of who I am in Christ and Who He is in me. But I wasn’t free-free yet. Something that preceded being free-free, where it’s not an issue now, it’s not even a temptation, it’s just a non-issue. Something that preceded it that this speaks to is I prayed to the Lord, I said, “Lord, I want You more than I want to be free. And if You allow what’s going on that’s on the radar screen of my consciousness, whether it’s my own immaturity and insecurity or whether it’s the enemy harassing me or a combination of both, if You choose to*

allow that to continue to serve Your purposes, to keep me pressed into You, then I submit to that. Because I want You more than I want to be free.” It was right after that, the Lord set me free. Free-free, non-issue, a greater revelation of Christ in me, His power to deliver the hope of glory.]

Once for self I labored, Now for Him alone. [*Audience of One. Audience of One, and He’s the One. I care about what you think, for the sake of relationship, but I don’t care about what you think for the sake of defining me. He defines me. He lives in me. It’s what He thinks that matters most. But I care, for the sake of relationship, but He is the audience of One. He is that One. Now for Him alone.*]

Once I hoped in Jesus, Now I know He’s mine; [*Boom. Wonderful. I’m so thankful for Pastor and Nancy Murdoch introducing this glorious truth to us many years ago, this spiritual secret. And we’ve been mining and applying the riches out of this glorious truth many years since and still will. There’s always more with the Lord. It doesn’t end. As long as we’re on planet Earth, there’s going to be more opportunity.*]

Once my lamps were dying, Now they brightly shine.

Once for death I waited, Now His coming hale; [*He’s going to come with a shout. He’s going to come to receive His bride. Whether you’re alive, you’ll be risen from the dead. If you’re here on planet Earth, you’ll be taken up with Him. He’s coming. He’s a coming king. We’re not just surviving, waiting for the death toll to sound, where we die and even if we die and go to Heaven. But this is going to be a celebration. This is going to be an event like no events, when the King comes to take His bride home!*]

And my hopes are anchored, Safe within the veil.

He’s my King. Do you know Him? I know Him. I’m getting to know Him more and more all the time. Who He is. Who He is in me. There’s a prerequisite here that’s involved. To know Him for Himself requires us to know Him as our King. Until we submit to Him as our King, how can we ever know Who He is? Do you know Him? He’s my King; is He your King?

Give your attention to this video:

“My King” – Dr. S.M. Lockridge (abridged version)

“The Bible says my King is the King of the Jews. He’s the King of Israel. He’s the King of righteousness, He’s the King of the ages, He’s the King of Heaven, He’s the King of

glory, He's the King of kings, and He's the Lord of lords. Now that's my King. I wonder, do you know Him?

My King is a Father King. No means of measure can define His limitless love. He's enduringly strong. He's entirely sincere. He's eternally steadfast. He's immortally graceful. He's imperially powerful. He's impartially merciful. Do you know Him?

He's the greatest phenomenon that has ever crossed the horizon of this world. He's God's Son. He's the sinner's Savior. He's the centerpiece of civilization. He's unparalleled. He's unprecedented. He's the loftiest idea in literature. He's the highest personality in philosophy. He's the fundamental doctrine of true theology. He's the only One qualified to be an all-sufficient Savior. I wonder if you know Him today.

He supplies strength to the weak. He's available for the tempted and the tried. He sympathizes and He saves. He's strong God and He guides. He heals the sick. He cleanses the lepers. He forgives sinners. He discharges debtors. He delivers the captives. He defends the feeble. He blesses the young. He serves the unfortunate. He regards the aged. He rewards the diligent and He beautifies the meek. I wonder if you know Him.

He's the key to knowledge. He's the wellspring of wisdom. He's the doorway of deliverance. He's the pathway of peace. He's the roadway of righteousness. He's the highway of holiness. He's the gateway of glory. Do you know Him?

His light is matchless. His goodness is limitless. His mercy is everlasting. His love never changes. His word is enough. His grace is sufficient. His reign is righteous. His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

I wish I could describe Him to you, but He's indescribable. He's incomprehensible. He's invincible. He's irresistible. You can't get Him out of your mind. You can't get Him off of your head. You can't outlive Him and you can't live without Him.

Well, the Pharisees couldn't stand Him, but they found out they couldn't stop Him. Pilate couldn't find any fault in Him. Herod couldn't kill Him. Death couldn't handle Him and the grave couldn't hold Him. That's my King."

King of Heaven

King of Heaven, come down
King of Heaven, come now
Let Your glory reign
Shining like the day
King of Heaven, come

King of Heaven, rise up
Who can stand against us?
You are strong to save
In Your mighty name
King of Heaven, come

And the King has come. He has come! He has come and He lives in us. The King of Heaven lives in our hearts, for those of us who have repented and believed. For those of us who have given the keys and controls of our life to the King. Is He your King? His name is above every name. Let's worship the King the way He deserves to be worshiped; not a human being just doing the best you can for God, but God lives in you to worship the only true God.

Your Great Name

Lost are saved find their way at the sound of Your great name
All condemned feel no shame at the sound of Your great name
Every fear has no place at the sound of Your great name
The enemy he has to leave at the sound of Your great name

Jesus, worthy is the Lamb that was slain for us, son of God and man
You are high and lifted up and all the world will praise Your great name
All the weak find their strength at the sound of Your great name.

We were made for this. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Let everything that has breath. We were made for this! Body, praise the Lord! Whether you're sleepy, whether you're tired, whether you're sluggish, praise the Lord! Soul, praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! He's worthy! He's worthy! And He lives in us to ignite us. He lives in us to ignite our hearts. Worthy is the King.

All the weak find their strength at the sound of Your great name

Hungry souls receive grace at the sound of Your great name
The fatherless, they find their rest at the sound of Your great name
The sick are healed and the dead are raised at the sound of Your great name

Jesus, worthy is the Lamb that was slain for us, Son of God and man
You are high and lifted up, that all the world will praise Your great name

Your great name
Redeemer; my Healer; Lord, almighty
My Savior, Defender, You are my King

Once it was the blessing, Now it is the Lord;
Once it was the feeling, Now it is His Word.
Once His gifts I wanted, Now the Giver own;
Once I sought for healing, Now Himself alone.

Once 'twas painful trying, Now 'tis perfect trust;
Once a half salvation, Now the uttermost.
Once 'twas ceaseless holding, Now He holds me fast;
Once 'twas constant drifting, Now my anchor's cast.

Once 'twas busy planning, Now 'tis trustful prayer;
Once 'twas anxious caring, Now He has the care.
Once 'twas what I wanted, Now what Jesus says;
Once 'twas constant asking, Now 'tis ceaseless praise.

Once it was my working, His it hence shall be;
Once I tried to use Him, Now He uses me.
Once the power I wanted, Now the Mighty One;
Once for self I labored, Now for Him alone.

Once I hoped in Jesus, Now I know He's mine;
Once my lamps were dying, Now they brightly shine.
Once for death I waited, Now His coming hail;
All my hopes are anchored, Safe within the veil.
Hallelujah!

Jesus, worthy is the Lamb that was slain for us, Son of God and man
You are high and lifted up, that all the world will praise Your great name

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Seated on the throne of grace, unto You alone may our voices raise

Happy New Year. This is going to be a great year, 2014. Our daughter, Joy, has given me a challenge for this year and I'm still praying about it. She said, "Dad, I've received a challenge to get a word from His Word for 2014 and I'm still praying about it. But I'd like to challenge you and Mom in the same way. To seek a word from His Word for 2014." I'm still praying about it. I've got some things coming on my radar screen; Mindy does, too. I would extend that challenge to you, to seek a word from His Word for you for 2014. Yes, your diet and exercise goals. Yes, your spending goals. Yes, your relationship goals. Yes, disciplines in every other area of life. Yes, yes, yes, no problem. But most of all, if you want to open the door for revelation; if you want to open the door to get the mind of the Lord for each and every day, living one day at a time, seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you each and every day. Embrace the ultimate goal: Christ, for Himself. He is worthy.