

**FUTURE FOCUS FOR YOUR CHRISTIAN WALK:  
BRINGING YOUR LIFE INTO ALIGNMENT WITH GOD'S PLANS!**

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**The Future Focused Christian – Summary Points**

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**Get a Grip: Identify the Change**

Change can happen at any time, from anywhere. Things converge on us so rapidly that the knee-jerk reaction is to bury our head in the dirt and hope that it blows over. But when you bend over you leave yourself prone to be kicked right in the rear! A typical response to change is the “wait and see” approach. “I’ll wait and see what it looks like when it gets here, and then I’ll know better how I am supposed to respond.” But if you’re waiting for the future to reveal itself to you by knocking on your door, it will no longer be the future then. It will be TODAY, and that is too late to try to appropriately respond. The best approach is to face the future head on. Look around and take stock of all the sources of change that are impacting your life. What you identify, you can address. If you never identify it, it will continue to evade the three R’s—reasoning, resources, and response. You have to know what you are facing in order to meet the challenges it requires.

*Scripture Reference:*

[Hosea 4:6 NIV](#) – “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”

*Homework Assignment:*

Ask yourself, “What areas of my life have become so overwhelming that I cannot get a handle on them?” Write them down. Awareness is the first step in the process of taking action. Write down how not having these things in control is impacting your life. When you write down the costs of living a certain way, you become more committed to making the necessary changes.

**Mental Battlefield: Get Out of Your Own Way**

The primary obstacle to innovation is experience. Experience can be good or bad, depending on whether we learn the inflection point upon which it turns its head. Experience used properly translates into wisdom. Wisdom is where we extract the principles of our experience and use them as a learning aide or mental model—but only up to a point. The mind is a machine that relies on experience. Unless we teach it how to respond, it will automatically replay the last action we performed, which may or may not be what the situation requires. “Necessity is the mother of invention.” You’ll never get where you’re trying to go if you take a route leading to where you’ve just come. The opportunities of tomorrow require different actions than the problems of today. We have to be willing to break away from old patterns of thinking and ways of acting so that we can embrace the promise inherent in what is new. Jesus Christ demonstrated this concept most powerfully. He challenged everything about the way the Jews had thought up to that time. He wanted them to rise up higher and see that “new thing” God was trying to do in their lives. It’s the same with us. We have to get out of our own way so that the process of creativity can have a playground. When we are willing to challenge our own mind then we can discover or unearth that fresh soil for planting. You have to till the soil first, though. This process is called creative destruction. We break down the old and then build the new.

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*Scripture Reference:*

[Isaiah 43:19 NIV](#) – “Behold, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.”

*Homework Assignment:*

Find out what kind of learner you are first. Do you learn situationally or principally? People who learn situationally find themselves repeating experiences over and over. People who learn principally can take the lessons from one experience and cross-apply them to multiple experiences. That's wisdom in action. Second, begin the process of analysis. Write down the patterns of behavior that led to or have contributed to the current cycle of behavior. Discover for yourself whether experience is becoming an obstacle to the new thing God wants to do in your life.

**Dream Big: Paint the Vision**

Creatively thinking about your life can be an exciting time! Vision is very important to living future focused. We have to have a fresh vision for who we are and what we are to become. The canvas is clean because the old patterns have been broken and exposed. Now you are free to paint. This has to be time between you and God. God gives us grace for the things He has called us to do, not necessarily the things we want to do. You have to recognize the difference between the two. God-given vision requires God to fulfill it. We all have natural talents and we can use those talents to become successful in this life. But that does not necessarily mean that we used the talents the way God intended them to be used. Look at King David. When he was a shepherd boy, he had a natural talent for music. His talent made a way for him to be invited to live with King Saul. Imagine if David had said, “I'm such a good musician, I'll just do this for the rest of my life.” Would he have been successful? Absolutely! Would he have been living in his divine purpose? Absolutely not! We have to submit our talents, skills, and abilities to God and ask Him how they are intended to be used. When you let God paint the vision for your life, it far surpasses anything you would have imagined for yourself. We are reminded over and over in Scripture about God's plans for our lives. Don't you want to know just how God intended to use you on this earth?

*Scripture Reference:*

[Jeremiah 29:11 NIV](#) – “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”

*Homework Assignment:*

Examine the dreams that God has placed inside of you. Dreams are God-given visions and they are different from our desires. Vision is what gives your life purpose, while desires give your life enjoyment. This exercise is to discover God's vision for your life. First, prayerfully ask God to reveal to you His plans for your life, then analyze these dreams. Here are a few questions to help you with the process of knowing and discerning:

- a) Is it in alignment with a natural gift, talent, or ability?
- b) Will it require a spiritual gift to fulfill it?
- c) Does it require a sacrifice of something you cherish?
- d) Does it stretch you beyond your present comfort zone?

When we ask question a) we are ensuring that our decisions are aligned with our natural strengths. When we ask question b) we are seeking for God to “fully equip” us for the work He intended us to do. When we ask question c) we are committing ourselves to the process (you have

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to give up to go up). When we ask question d) we are looking for God to fill in the stretch of space between where we are and where He is calling us to be. If you haven't taken a [spiritual gifts test](#), please do so. You may discover hidden treasure you never tapped into!

**Gardening: Sowing to Reap a Harvest**

Remember, the seeds we sow today reap a harvest in the future. If we're going to be future minded, then we need to be discriminating about what we spend our time sowing today. It starts with a plan to achieve the vision. When we align our plans with the vision then we can be assured that every step we take is leading us toward our goal. This can be a healthy checkpoint as well. We need to follow the course of our plans along the trajectory of fulfillment. Map out step A through step Z. If step Z doesn't fit where you wanted to wind up, then you might need to reassess whether you need to take step A. Keep the main thing the main thing. We have to have the wherewithal to compartmentalize our objectives. Two competing objectives lead to an unrealized goal. When we become investors in our own future, we understand the fundamentals of sowing and reaping. We make investments and tend to those investments so that they reap the harvest we were intending. When we find a misalignment between our sowing and our reaping, it generally means that we made plans that were conflicting, plans that were shortsighted, plans that were not in alignment with our natural talents, or plans that were not in alignment with God's plans.

*Scripture Reference:*

[Galatians 6:7-9 NIV](#) – “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

*Homework Assignment:*

Sit down and write out a plan for how you will bring your vision to pass. Identify the steps you will have to take, and the changes you will have to make, in order to get on track toward realizing your God-given dream. Then, prayerfully submit your plans before the Lord. He will let you know if you're on the right track. Remain alert to God's voice. He'll let you know if the plan needs to change along the way. As long as you're willing to do your part and sow into your life, God will do the rest.

**Future Focus: From Light to Laser**

One reason why we share our plans with God and let Him drop the vision into our spirit is so that we are Spirit-led. We let God sift through the possibilities of what can be achieved until we arrive at the place where we're ready to step out on faith. We are all called to be light on the earth. We can shine that light any way we want to shine it. I believe that our unique talents, gifts, and abilities become our footprint for how our light is shone. Light is an interesting phenomenon. Did you know that light, at its highest form of concentration, becomes a laser? When we live future focused lives, we use our light to become lasers. We are singularly-focused and operating at our highest level of expression. This is how the Apostle Paul described his action in 1 Corinthians 9 as he raced for the crown. He said that he did not run with uncertainty and he did not fight wildly, like someone beating the air. He led his life with discipline and humility. When we know who we are and the purpose God has set aside for our lives, our light is transformed into a laser. We become living examples that pierce deeply into the lives of others as the purest expression of life and godliness. In [2 Peter 1:3, 4 NIV](#), Peter describes this perfectly. He says that God's divine power gives us all that we need for life and godliness, and that we receive these great and

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precious promises from God so that we may become expressions of the divine nature of God. A life lived in the light of God's presence is a beautiful thing to behold, indeed!

*Scripture Reference:*

[1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NIV](#) – “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

*Homework Assignment:*

Take stock of your plans and commitments. Compare what you are doing today with where your vision is supposed to take you. If you find things in your life that do not move you forward toward the fulfillment of your vision, be willing to trim the fat. Learn also how to say “no” to plans and commitments that look good, but might not be your highest and best calling. Keep yourself free to do what God has called you to do—and by all means, do it!

**Holy Determination: Seize the Day**

Future focus means being alert to the business of each day. Every day presents opportunities and risks to our vision. Every decision that we make leads us forward or away from that mark. When we live future focused, we can no longer afford to live absent-minded. We already learned how the mind works; it can very quickly revert to an old pattern of behavior. We have to be diligent and intentioned about each action we take. Some days are going to be better than others. Some days we're going to do things that set us back a step or two. But it is always easier to change direction while a ship is in motion than to direct a ship that is stationary. Lesson: Keep moving forward! If you set out with big expectations, a setback can lead to a sense of failure. That is why we have to make small plans leading to big visions. Keep the proper perspective when it comes to fulfilling your vision. You have to be both flexible and agile. Flexibility is a must because you have no way of controlling what each day will bring; you have to adapt to the demands and know how to process the setbacks. Agility is the speed with which your whole body responds to a force of change. When you're in motion, you can quickly respond to change. When you're not in motion, you're caught flat-footed and you cannot make adjustments in time. You have to keep moving and persevering when times get tough. And believe me, times will indeed get tough! To be able to go the distance requires perseverance. [James 1:2-4 NIV](#) says that our tests develop perseverance, and “perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” So make every day count. Even if you can only do just one small thing to contribute to your overall goal, do that one thing! When we commit ourselves to the process, then we can no longer be tossed to and fro by the waves that rise up around us. We have a holy determination that keeps our feet steady on the course.

*Scripture Reference:*

[Luke 14:28-30 NIV](#) – “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’”

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*Homework Assignment:*

Write out your plans in small, medium, and large goals. If you find that you have a large block of time, then aim to complete a larger goal from your list. If you're dog tired at the end of the day and can't find the energy to complete a goal, then select one of the small goals from your list. This way, you have still made a contribution toward your vision. Try to do something every day.

**Reality Check: Know Who is in Control**

This principle can be summed up no better than by the Word in [Deuteronomy 8 NIV](#). You see, God has a Promised Land in store for each of us, just as He did the Israelites. The Wilderness is the place where we learn perseverance so that, after our testing, we may be found approved to receive all that God has in store for us. But God tells us in verse 11 that we should be careful about remembering who is in control, for we might be tempted to look upon all that God has done for us and begin to give ourselves credit for God's work. Verse 18 says it is God who gives us power to get wealth. As you begin to move forward, you will see success in every area of your life. Success is a natural byproduct of future focus. So is pride. Many a great person has been destroyed by pride. We've seen people with incredible success sink to extreme lows because of the trappings of pride, lust, and money. Even if you don't fall victim to these trappings, you might find yourself a victim of Do It Yourself mentality. Do It Yourself mentality leads us to believe that we are acting alone and that we are in control. It can lead us to spend enormous amounts of energy trying to "make it happen" when things aren't going the way we would like for them to go. The Scripture does not tell us, "having done all that you know to do, DO MORE!" the Scripture says, "having done all that you know to do, STAND!" ([Ephesians 6:13 NIV](#)). Be still, and know that He is God. Remember, one of the prerequisites for the vision to be set was that it had to take God to fulfill it. If you can do it on your own, then there's no glory for God in it. So, then, we let God be in control and we keep our hands off the wheel. You have to know how to rest in this peace. When the waves begin to crash around your boat, you start to panic and your first instinct is to take control. We want to use a hatchet when a scalpel is the best tool for the job. You can cut off more than was necessary if you don't have God's sense of perspective. How many times have we let go of things out of desperation only to find out later that we tossed something out of the boat that we actually needed? When we let the peace of God reign in our lives, we can rest in the confidence of His control.

*Scripture Reference:*

[Psalm 37:4-7, 23, 24 NIV](#) – "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: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. If the Lord delights in a man's way, He makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with His hand."

*Homework Assignment:*

Have you fallen victim to Do It Yourself mentality? Or are you caught up in the distractions and trappings of this life? Are you spinning your wheels trying to make things happen when you really could better invest the time by dwelling in God's presence? Look for areas where fear, anxiety, desperation, control, and all other failings of the flesh are holding you captive. Turn these areas of your life over to God and trust in His Word. If you've submitted your plans to Him, then He will surely catch you before you fall, and He will bless your plans and watch over them until they meet with success.

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**Spread the Word: Becoming a Community of Learners**

The final piece in the future focus puzzle is that of learning. In Habakkuk 2:2 we are told to write the vision down so that he may run who reads it. What does this mean? It means that we must become a community of learners. We have to be willing to share our testimony, be willing to risk vulnerability so that others may catch the fire of our spirit. Sharing what you are doing by documenting each step in the process leaves a credible roadmap for others to follow. We have to be willing to live OUT LOUD. That means placing our lives on display for the world to see. This is our faith in action. If you tell the story after all is said and done, how has your faith been exercised? If you tell the story while the story is still unfolding, placing all of your trust in God to see you through, then all the more powerful will the testimony be when you arrive at last to your place of victory. Now that's a story someone else can run with who reads or hears it! Be bold as you live out this life. When you have done all the work of lining up your life with God's vision, then you can afford to walk in the confidence of His careful attention. He watches over His Word to perform it, and that means He is watching over you. Share, share, share. The Scripture in [1 Corinthians 10:13 NIV](#) says that no temptation we face is uncommon. Everyone goes through the same thing. When we share what we learn instead of hoarding it, then our faith is strengthened. The future is constantly changing and we should be evolving in response to it. We never live our lives in isolation. Everything we do impacts those around us. So, then, we need to nurture those around us, letting God's glory shine through our example, so that others may perceive God's purposes for their lives and run the race He intended for them!

*Scripture Reference:*

[Habakkuk 2:2, 3 NIV](#) – “Then the Lord replied: ‘Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.’”

*Homework Assignment:*

Write down your testimony. Keep a journal as you go through your spiritual walk. Find a group where you can share what is going on with you in a community of other learners. The resources available through the experiences of others will save you time, give you encouragement, and help keep you focused on your goal. Surround yourself with the environment you need to help your seeds to grow into a bountiful harvest for the Kingdom of God.