

Dear friends of Vital Signs Ministries,

July 2025

Intentionality. It's a very important word. Indeed, along with winsome, pilgrim, orthodox (which literally means "of the correct belief"), reward, and ambassador, intentionality has, in the last couple of decades, become one of the most valued words in our vocabulary. The word (and the concepts behind it) have been coming up a lot lately in our ministries and I thought I'd take a little space in this LifeSharer letter to explain why.

"Intend/intention" derives from the Latin word *intendere* which is a composite of *in* (meaning "through") and *tendere* (meaning "to stretch"). Thus, the English word means to strain in quest of something, to be zealous with a purpose, to diligently pursue a course of action. It is used in this way the 10 times we find it in the Scriptures, 8 times being in the New Testament. My 55-year-old copy of the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE) defines "intend" as "the direction of the mind toward an object" while suggesting Luke 14:28 as an appropriate example: "For which of you, *intending* to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?"

The reasons for "intentionality" becoming more important in our lives are many, but there are two which are paramount nowadays. **1)** The need for clarity and priority as we try and efficiently manage the duties that pile up in our never ending "to-do list" and **2)** The desperate need to fight the temptations constantly whispered to older people (like us!) urging us to relax and take it easy, to rest on our laurels, to comfortably coast the rest of our way to heaven. God forbid we fall prey to such attitudes -- attitudes that I spoke of this past month in an adult Sunday School presentation I titled "The Retirement Trap."

There's no doubt about it; careful, prayerful intentionality is absolutely indispensable for Christians who want to be genuine ambassadors for Jesus all the way home. You'll remember the writer of Hebrews weighing in on these subjects. "Let's hold firmly to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let's consider how to encourage one another in love and good deeds, not abandoning our own meeting together, as is the habit of some people, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:23-25)

"Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, He Who is coming will come, and will not delay. But My righteous one will live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not among those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith for the safekeeping of the soul." (Hebrews 10:35-39)

"Therefore, since we also have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let's rid ourselves of every obstacle and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let's run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking only at Jesus, the originator and perfecter of the faith, Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider Him Who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” (Hebrews 12:1-3)

Here’s how I described these matters a few years ago in “Purposeful Planning Produces,” the second portion of my presentation *On Spiritual Disciplines*, “Before the Christian disciple starts firing at the targets of spiritual discipline, he must be ready, and he must take careful aim. Indeed, he needs to know just what his targets are! And thus enters the indispensable matters of intentionality and planning. As the apostle Paul describes it in I Corinthians 9:26, he doesn’t run aimlessly; he doesn’t box as if he were beating mere air. No, Paul’s passionate desire to pursue an imperishable reward moved him to organize his priorities and strategies.

“Taking the responsibility to plan is underscored in several of the proverbs. ‘The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage’ (Proverbs 21:5a); ‘Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be established’ (Proverbs 16:3); and ‘Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they will succeed’ (Proverbs 15:22). Certainly, plans are always to be made with wisdom, in keeping with God’s overall will, and with earnest dependence on the Lord to work His purposes in (and beyond) them. Nevertheless, we must play our part, making careful plans that will help us invest well and fulfill our calling.

“The biblical metaphors are quite clear. The athlete plans, the farmer plans, and so too do the king and commander. So must the disciple plan with a commitment to then follow through as God directs and empowers. The English word ‘plan’ appears over 200 hundred times in Holy Scripture. God was (and is) a planner. Joseph and Moses and Joshua were planners. That’s a huge part of their success. Nehemiah and David and Daniel and Peter and Luke and Paul were also planners before they were doers. And Jesus’ disciples (including you and me) are instructed to be intentional in our planning, our disciplines, and our perseverance. Don’t beat the air. Don’t be double-minded. Count the cost. Invest in heaven’s treasures. Be wise as serpents. Don’t run aimlessly. Occupy until the King comes back.”

You see why we are so strong on intentionality? It’s because we need to be! And because God tells us to! And because He has promised those of His servants who plan carefully, invest wisely, and work with faith and enthusiasm the most splendid rewards in the world to come!

I mentioned at the beginning of this letter that the matter of intentionality has “been coming up a lot lately.” One example of how these subjects emerged this past month (in addition to the Sunday School class I mentioned earlier) is my underscoring the virtues of intentionality, investment, and faith in action in a sermon at Herman Community Church on June 15. That sermon examined Luke 19:11-27 and the parable about wisely “investing minas” that Jesus taught to a large audience in Jericho shortly before His crucifixion. But these themes also showed up in a sermon I preached June 1st at Wellspring Church on the high-risk intentions that Ebed-melech (a minor official in King Zedekiah’s employ, a Gentile) demonstrated in saving the prophet Jeremiah from certain death. Finally, being convinced that

the urgency of intentional, visionary discipleship is greater than ever in these last days, Claire and I have been talking about it in all kinds of settings: the exhortations I shared in a funeral sermon delivered at Grace Bible Church, our personal correspondence (we sent 22 letters this past month), and our social media platforms.

Intentionality. Planning. Confidence in heaven's rapture and rewards. Staying alert. Spiritual disciplines. Joy and gratitude in sharing the Faith. Bearing the armor of God. An ongoing invitation to the Holy Spirit into our daily lives for purification, direction, and empowerment. Remarkably, all of these divine gifts are available to us, moment by moment! Don't leave home without them!

Okay, before I close this month's letter, let me mention a few of the other *intentions* that we sought to turn into *investments* these past few weeks.

* We added two more senior facilities to our "When Swing Was King" schedule and so we're now back up to 11 places a month. (We are seeking to add one more.) Our shows continue to be a rich blessing to both our audiences and to us. I might also note that with the ongoing aging of our audiences, our experiment of stirring in early rock songs with the songs and photos of the Big Band era is paying off big time!

* The articles on Vital Signs Blog this month have included **The Top 5** every Saturday as well as "Praying for the U.K.," "On Fortune Tellers," "The Awesome Power of Music," and "Chemical Abortions Don't Count?"

* In the "iron sharpening iron" category, I'm pleased to say that this past month we enjoyed more fellowship hours than usual. God must have known we needed the encouragement! We had several very engaging times with friends at dinners, breakfasts, coffees, and hospital visits as well as the regular fellowship opportunities that come with our prayer meetings outside the abortion business and our Sunday afternoon church services.

* And speaking of church, the church services we conduct every Sunday afternoon at Aksarben Village Senior Living have been going really great...as has sending the links to each of the 3 songs we use in the service to friends who have requested them.

* Our prayers and pro-life witness with colleagues outside Planned Parenthood continue though I must say (with no small amount of heartbreak) that we are a much smaller team than in past years. Because of health limitations, several of the pro-life champions who once stood alongside us are now unable to do so while some of our beloved colleagues have passed on to their heavenly home. And, unfortunately, the Church hasn't been very *intentional* in sending us new help!

* June saw us travelling again to Wichita to visit my little sister Sherry who is in hospice care for the effects of her severe dementia. Our 5 visits over 2 and a half days were largely “the ministry of presence” but we were able to serve Sherry (and thus help out the staff) by taking the job of watching over her and feeding her meals. Our ministry there also involves talking to other residents, thanking and affirming staff, and providing pies and other baked goods for dessert treats.

* I would be remiss if I didn’t admit that a whole lot of June’s hours were spent in lawn and garden duties, including the care of our new neighbor’s lawn who is in China for 2 months! But, if I dare say so myself, things are looking terrific around here! In fact, just today we made a “film tour” of our lawn and gardens for my sister Linda in California (also dealing with severe dementia) and we know she’ll enjoy noting our progress.

* Well, I guess the last category of our June activity would be our reading. Besides Bible reading, I very much enjoyed re-reading this month one of my all-time favorite novels, *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexander Dumas (Yes, the 1,200 plus page unabridged version!) as well as another substantial re-reading project, the masterful work by Andrew Roberts, *The Storm of War: A New History of the Second World War*. Claire’s booklist this month also involved things she has read before: *Persuasion* by Jane Austen and two Nevil Shute novels, *Trustee from the Toolroom* and *Pied Piper*.

As you can see, June was packed. But packed with *intently intentional* efforts! Thank you for all of your kind and generous support for our work...and for every single prayer lifted to the Father in our behalf. We are forever grateful.

Denny

Postscript 1) In case you’d like to look further into the *Our Spiritual Disciplines* course I made reference to earlier, you can find all 7 “chapters” on the Vital Signs Ministries website. Look for *On Spiritual Disciplines* in the Articles Section.

Postscript 2) I leave you with one last example of intentionality, one that uses our well-kempt lawn that I referred to above as the backdrop for a winsome (and continual) pro-life witness to our neighborhood and folks driving by. Cute little fella’, isn’t he?

