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Leaping to Success

A Shaping Vision

Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she smiles at the future. (Proverbs 31:25)

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Twenty-eight years ago, I worked at a large, old company in Dayton, Ohio. I thrived in the collaborative environment! Every day, a huge stack of mail was dumped on my desk to distribute. A little booklet appeared in the mail that no one wanted, so I read it. It gave a list of principles for achieving one's goals. I was attracted to its purity, simplicity, and freshness.

I typed the list and placed Scripture verses under each principle with notes about my gifts and desires for the future. Every three months or so, I revisited the list, modified my notes, and deleted the desires that God had fulfilled.

This week, one of the principles came to my mind. I retrieved the document; it had been seven years since I reviewed it! This time, I was struck by how God had used this simple list to shape my life. Many goals that seemed impossible to reach had been reached. God had led me in the path of His choosing. It was not a path I would have chosen, but it led to the fulfilling of my deepest desires. He had led as I abided in Him. (For more about this path, please see my writing *Chosen for the Surge*.)

So, the principle that came to mind this week has probably been the most significant through the years. It reads: "**Embrace failure** – Slippage in performance is a positive sign. Loss of momentum occurs in the changing of gears. Be prepared for confusion, anxiety, and failure. Failure does not equal defeat." I needed to be reminded of this! Why had I seemed so disoriented at the beginning of this year? Ahh, yes! The friction I felt must be *the changing of the gears*! God was calling me to rest, listen, and focus on His lead.

After I reviewed the list again, I retitled it *Leaping to Success – A Shaping Vision*. This title seems ironic, because a dear, longtime friend, De, cannot walk right now, let alone *leap*. She is in constant pain with chronic multiple sclerosis and other complications, and she is uncertain about her future. I tried to see this list through her eyes, as well. I remembered Habakkuk 3:17-19:

Though the fig tree does not blossom and there is no fruit on the vines,
Though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food,
Though the flock is cut off from the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls,
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!
Adonai, Yahweh (The Master and Great Sovereign I Am) is my strength,
He makes my feet like hinds' feet, (a large species of deer) and makes me walk on high places.

When abundance is scarce, God enables us to leap like a deer! "Even when we were dead in our sins, He made us alive together with Messiah and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places..." (Ephesians 2:5-6). I pray De's spirit leaps like a deer on the mountains high above this prison she is experiencing... just like the Spirit enabled the Apostle Paul, John the Immerser, King David, the Prophet Daniel, and all who went before us.

The list of 7 principles is below if you are interested. It bears little resemblance to the original list!

My 2023 goals are in **green**, and the goals I prayed for De are in **blue**. Maybe *you* will find encouragement in these principles right where you are and write your own desires for the year!

Leaping to Success – A Shaping Vision

★**The key for each principle is** – Listen to God and be led by the Spirit in each step. (See Romans 8:14)

1. **Begin with the Root.** Passion is critical. What lights the fire in your heart and gives you joy.

BA – Reach the world with God's love by magnifying the beauty of His Word with art, devotional writing, and teaching. Promote gratitude, giving, listening, and rest.

De – Father, 1 Peter 1 tells me the many ways You have blessed me as Your child. **I greatly rejoice**, “even though now for a little while I have been distressed by various trials that the proof of my faith, more precious than gold which is perishable even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Messiah...” (1 Peter 1:6) Keep me in joy.

2. **Understand the Goal.** Act with a sharp, defined mental image of the outcome you seek. Don't think about *how* to get there, just about *where* you want to go.

BA – Expand the reach of the cards and tools. Create a devotional book. Thrive within a balanced life of work and play, solitude and community, health, and giving.

De – Father, “fix my hope completely on the grace to be brought to me at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:13) I will continue to reach out to my friends for prayer and trust You. Lift me!

3. **Yield to the Process.** Don't control, ride the wave. Take a risk without a perfect plan. Use resources and support systems that are offered to you along the way.

BA – Depend on God for each step as the Holy Spirit empowers. Follow the inclinations He gives.

De – Father, You said, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall have everything I need.” I trust You to protect me and to take care of my needs. I yield to Your Spirit.

4. **Pursue Growth.** Radically depart from some habits (doubts can be habitual); shift gears. Act on longings. Don't limit yourself; God will provide beyond your imagination.

BA – I will risk and embrace opportunities that expose my excuses.

- I will declare and sing God's truth over me and others every day, rejecting negative self-talk.
- I will not care about what others think or about my influence.
- I will pursue a life of large leisure, unhurriedness, quietness, and pure love of God.

De – I will believe You can heal me. At the same time, I will accept the obvious decline in my body. Your ways are perfect. I will trust You in this storm and declare Your faithfulness! I will do my best.

5. **Be faithful in the smallest of actions.**

BA – I will thank God for every small kindness.

De – I will thank God for every small kindness.

6. **Look for simplicity.** Precision, efficiency, and order will ease the demand on your energies and emotions. More effort is not the answer.

7. **Embrace failure.** Slippage in performance is a positive sign. Loss of momentum occurs in the changing of gears. Be prepared for confusion, anxiety, and failure. Failure does not equal defeat.