

# CONQUER

A BATTLE PLAN FOR GETTING THINGS DONE



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# THINK LIKE A SOLDIER

“No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.”

— 2 TIMOTHY 2:4 —

There is a strong sense of resolve in a soldier—focus, determination. Soldiers have an objective. They eagerly put off things that might impede their efforts.

When writing to his young protégé, the apostle Paul used the picture of a soldier to emphasize a certain kind of resolve that all Christian leaders should have: “No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him” (2 Tim. 2:4). Herein, lie two characteristics that describe one who conquers goals.

**First, a soldier has clear vision.** It is “to please the one who enlisted him” (2 Tim. 2:4). A soldier has a distinct aim on something. He zeroes in on a target, draws a bead on a bullseye. In the same way, an aim gives us clear vision of our target and defines our endpoint to accomplishment.

**Second, a soldier has strong resolve.** Additionally, it tells us that a soldier is determined and will not waver or surrender to unnecessary defeat. For “no soldier gets

entangled in civilian pursuits” (2 Tim. 2:4). This is not that we must shun all “secular” life since all of life is lived spiritually, but that we must discern what is good for the mission. Likewise, we should set aside distractions and be fully devoted to the vision.

**Think like a soldier.** That is how you battle goals—get the picture and resolve to win. Conquering goals is not for the weak at heart, but for the strong soldier who is willing to lay aside distractions and wage war.

In the following book, we will work through methods to develop a clear vision and strong resolve to faithfully wage war on our goals. We will discover principles and practices that have been long used to wage the same wars of the past and be equipped to conquer the battles of the future. This is a small battle plan to get big things done for the glory of God.



PHASE ONE

## PREPARING YOUR BATTLE

“Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.”

— PROVERBS 16:3 —

Proverbs 16:3 has some very wise words for those who desire to conquer goals. The word “commit” in the original language literally means to “roll upon.” It refers to a sense of total trust as well as utter submission to the will of God. Literally, “Roll your work upon the Lord’s will, and your plans will be established.” Goals that are rolled upon the will of God are goals that God gets behind and goals that we conquer to His glory.

This is good news for believers. Goals are a big deal in our culture, possibly in all cultures in one way or another. People want to get things done. There is a sense of accomplishment and completion of work that abides in all

humans because we are made in God’s image and He is a working God.

In this phase, we will take some preliminary steps toward goal setting by dealing with past defeats and seeing the usefulness of our failures. Before that, we will take a careful look briefly at the will of man and of God, how the two work together, and what God desires for you as His image bearer.

It is my hope that you will roll all that you have upon God’s good will to find the glorious riches of His grace and your plans in this life established in His wonderful pleasure. Let’s prepare.

# SUPERIOR ORDERS

Humanity has always had its fair share of challenges with goals, but none has ever been as troublesome as this:

*“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit’—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.’ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” (Jas. 4:13-17)*

**First, we should view our goals with humility.** Setting goals is a biblical virtue. It is wise and seen in most biblical characters (Is. 32:8). Even God plans (Prov. 19:21; 21:30) and resolves to finish (Is. 46:10). Goals are a matter of the will, the intention to do something. Sometimes, sparks fly when our intentions collide with the intentions of God. When they do, needless to say, our intentions lose.

For this reason, James says, “Come now,” to those who presume their plans upon God. His will is final. Therefore, ours must be flexible. Moreover, it would serve us well to plan our goals in light of God’s good and gracious will.

**Second, we should view our goals with obedience.**

When we set goals without God, we are practicing self-theism. Consider the people who were building the tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9. These were people wise in the world, able to accomplish great goals by their own hands. They sought to honor themselves by their achievements.

God saw their plans and monuments and knew their sin of goal setting without Him was just the beginning. Their impressive spiral upward was the start of a sinful spiral downward. So, God mercifully showed them their folly and “dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth.” At the height of their arrogance, God showed them His will prevails.

John reminds us “the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever” (1 Jn. 2:17). A soldier yields to superior orders.

## Take Action

1. **Explain God’s will.** Read the following scriptures and write out God’s will according to the passage.
2. **Respond to God’s Word.** After reflecting on the scriptures, respond to them personally.

**1 TIMOTHY 2:3-4**

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**EPHESIANS 5:15-18**

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**1 THESSALONIANS 4:3-7**

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**1 PETER 2:13-15**

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**PHILIPPIANS 1:29**

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**PSALM 37:4**

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# RECOVERING FROM DEFEATS

Someone once noted, “Failure is merely a step on the ladder to success.” If that is true, and I think it generally is, then failure plays a key role in reaching your goals.

Most often, our goals require decisions based on good hunches at best. We simply don’t know what tomorrow will bring (Jas. 4:14). Our best guesses are guesses at best. Less often, failures happen. And since they do, we should be prepared to handle them wisely. We should—to borrow the metaphor—step on them effectively to rise to our goal. Here are some ideas to consider when recovering from past defeats.

**First, be real with failure.** Some would rather gloss over failure like it never happened. Don’t be that person. Failures are real. You shouldn’t act like they don’t happen. Acknowledge them because this plan won’t work when you are in denial.

**Second, be righteous with failure.** It’s one thing to acknowledge failures. If you failed because of sin, then there is something more to do. Repent. Be specific and take it to the Lord. If sin was the cause of your failure, confess it to God in prayer.

**Third, be reasonable with failure.** Sometimes, failure is due to unforeseen circumstances. So be reasonable; don’t give your failure more attention than needed. Some things are just out of your control.

**Fourth, be resilient with failure.** Bounce back! You need to recover from the past and get back on the ladder. Part of following Christ is adapting to change, knowing He is in control. Trust God and keep moving.

**Fifth, be resolute with failure.** Make your mind up now to overcome failures as they happen because they will happen again. Don’t be content with failing the same way twice. Resolve yourself to conquer.

## Take Action

1. **Write down your failures.** Committing your failures to paper will help you be real with them.
2. **Write down your reasons.** Whether the reasons for failure are internal or external, list them next.
3. **Write down your encouragements.** While listing your failures and reasons, think of some ways to encourage yourself to help you conquer next time.

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**ENCOURAGEMENTS**

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PHASE TWO

## PLOTTING YOUR BATTLE

“Prepare your work outside; get everything ready for yourself in the field, and after that build your house.”

— PROVERBS 24:27 —

Among the many wise sayings found in the book of wise sayings is one that speaks kindly to the preparation and planning of getting things done. Specifically, Proverbs 24:27 teaches the wisdom of first securing a good living before moving toward things more desirable. “Prepare your work outside,” which is acceptable living, “get everything ready for yourself in the field.” After that, says wisdom, you are fit to “build your house.”

People are so quick to jump into goal setting and goal doing, they fail to plot their course and properly lay the foundation of attack. This often results in repeated failure and defeat. Let’s not make that mistake.

In this phase, we want to examine the goal in goal setting. Goals are not an end in themselves but a means to reflect God’s glory. Then, we will broaden our perspective to think more comprehensively about goal setting. After this, our focus will be on goals and how to form good goals that can be conquered. We follow this up by making motivational elements to encourage our battles, smaller goals to achieve big ones, and start planning our years, months, weeks, and days.

There is no way around this critical step of planning and plotting your goals. So, let’s get everything ready on the outside, before we make our move to attack.

# TAKING AIM

Before attacking our goals, it is helpful to first consider the big “why” of goal setting. This is really where goals should begin. In fact, it is useful to reflect on the “why” periodically as we battle our goals in order to keep a proper perspective—that is what the “why” is all about. What is the purpose in setting goals? Why are they important? The way you answer these questions will determine how well you wage your war.

Goal setting should serve the purpose of glorifying God (1 Cor. 10:13). It should honor the Lord by saying to others that your goal is to declare God’s primacy above yourself most supremely. It is about taking aim. Here are a few ways goal setting glorifies God:

**First, goal setting shows serious intentionality.** God created all things with purpose (Col. 1:16). In the same way, our goals should be prayerfully intended to serve even the smallest part in God’s bigger purpose.

**Second, goal setting shows good stewardship.** All that we have was given to us by God to accomplish the things He desires. By setting goals, we show others that we acknowledge our master’s good gifts.

**Third, goal setting shows humble contentment.** God often interrupts our goal conquering to make changes (Jas. 4:13-15). Recognizing this reality will cause us to be content with what happens and humble with how the Lord deals.

Remember, the goal in goal setting is not primarily to achieve something, but to *be* something. It is to be the person God created you to be—a person who puts God’s glory on display.

## Take Action

1. **Consider your season.** There are different things that we should do in different times of our life. Think about your current responsibilities.
2. **Ask for input.** We all have others who depend on us for something (spouse, children, employer). Ask them how you might better serve them.
3. **Pray for direction.** It matters most what God wants. So, take your ideas to Him in prayer and patiently wait to see what He might show you. If nothing else, ask God to sovereignly open and close ideas you might be eager to attack.

**MY SEASON RESPONSIBILITIES**

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**MY DEPENDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

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**MY DIVINE RESPONSIBILITIES**

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# COMPREHENSIVE TARGETING

Let's think big picture-ish. You likely have some ideas on goals already, but let's think a little more broadly once again. When setting goals that glorify God, we shouldn't think too narrowly. Rather, we need comprehensive targeting. All of our life should glorify God, so all of our life should have goals. Here are six areas of life to help you be more comprehensive with your goal setting.

**First, think spiritually.** Your relationship and obedience to God should be the most important part of your life. So consider things that help your spiritual well-being, like daily devotional reading, journaling, or a Bible study class.

**Second, think healthfully.** Exercise and dieting are also important. Both help your blood circulation, heart, strength, rest, cognition, and more. Maybe weight loss, exercise programs, or firm bed times might be ideas.

**Third, think maritally.** For married people, there is no earthly relationship more critical in life. Consider how you might excel as a spouse with scheduling dates, praying together, helping each other's goals or vacation.

**Fourth, think family.** After marriage, the next critical relationship is found within your immediate family. Maybe

you are a parent or sibling or child who can help around the house, plan weekly games, or improvement projects.

**Fifth, think business.** We all have work. If not outside the home, then inside. If not for an employer, then for a family or an education. Your work is for God and you should excel at what you do. Maybe you can launch a product, cut expenses, organize, assist someone else, or improve communications.

**Sixth, think financially.** Finances (or whatever we care for and budget) are important to the Lord. God desires us to be abundant givers. To better position yourself to be a stronger giver, maybe you should pay off debt, save more, find a special charity, or plan for a large purchase.

## Take Action

1. **Think of goals for each category.** Think quietly to yourself and maybe consult with others to help you with ideas.
2. **Create new categories with goals.** There are spaces below for new categories if you have them.











# QUALIFYING YOUR TARGET

The SMART method for goal setting is the most popular and, in my opinion, most effective in conquering our goals. It was originally introduced by Peter Drucker as criteria for setting objectives. The idea is that every goal should be specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and time-bound. If not, our “goals” are nothing more than fanciful dreams. For this reason, we must qualify our targets.

**Every goal must be specific.** It should be clearly identifiable, obvious, and exact. For instance, a goal like “save money” is too vague. A SMART goal would be “save \$6,000 in my savings account by the end of the year.”

**Every goal must be measurable.** There should be a definite way to determine whether a goal is achieved or not. For example, “get into shape” is not measurable, but “lose twenty pounds this year” is.

**Every goal must be actionable.** SMART goals are actions, not states of being. Your goal should start with a verb. “Be more healthy” is not actionable, but “run for one hour each weekday” is.

**Every goal must be realistic.** Don’t be delusional with your goals. They can be out of your comfort zone, but not out of this world. For instance, most people cannot “triple my income this year,” but we could “increase revenue by 10% this year.”

**Every goal must be time-bound.** SMART goals have deadlines. Target dates help us focus and gives us a sense of urgency where open-ended ones fail. So, “paint the entire house” fails, but “paint the entire house by end of summer” is time-bound and effective.

## Take Action

1. **Write your goal.** Write a goal down in one of the spaces below as you originally had it.
2. **Examine your goal.** Test the goal to see if it passes the SMART criteria. If not, write it again with changes.
3. **Repeat the process.** Do the same thing for all your goals until each one passes the SMART inspection.

**GOAL**

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- SPECIFIC
- MEASURABLE
- ACTIONABLE
- REALISTIC
- TIME-BOUND

**GOAL**

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# TARGET MOTIVATORS

Resistance is futile ... or something like that. SMART goals, no matter how smart, will be met with some resistance. But rest assured, resistance doesn't mean failure all the time. In fact, I'm convinced you can push through the resistance when your goals really matter to you.

When a goal has purpose, it matters. When it matters, I'm both intellectually and emotionally connected to it. Then, not only do I know my goal more intimately, but I also feel what's at stake. For instance, suppose you wanted to lose 20 pounds in a month—a very tough, but realistic, goal. It will involve pain and extreme discipline. You will undoubtedly face resistance that will be both emotionally and physically exhausting.

Now, suppose that same goal was motivated by a few reasons. Imagine you nearly had a heart attack and the doctor told you that your life depended on your losing 20 pounds. Furthermore, you are expecting your first child in less than six weeks and you don't have life insurance. Would these reasons set the fire under you and give you reason to conquer your goal? Of course it would. This is why goals need to be connected to reasons.

To press the matter more, our reasons are more motivating when they are bigger than ourselves. By that, I mean that we should find reasons in the things that please God. If you are a father, then God desires you to lead your family in His ways. If you are a child, then God wants you to obey and learn from your parents. If you work for a company, then God wants you to excel in your labor and be a witness to others. Our reasons are most motivating when they align to God's design and strengthen His kingdom here on earth. Some ideas might be planning a vacation to fortify the bonds of your family, reading through the Bible to better disciple your children, or learning more software to better serve your employer.

## Take Action

1. **Write your goal.** You will do this often during these exercises. It will bring you focus.
2. **List five motivations.** For each goal, list five reasons for the goal that are bigger than you.
3. **Write out one key motivation.** Find the one motivation and write it down as the big reason to keep you battling.

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**KEY MOTIVATION**

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# FRAGMENTING YOUR TARGETS

In a not-too-distant past, I was with my business partner making company goals for the next five years. After we made our short, but daunting, list of goals, he said, “Great, now let’s chunk ‘em.”

The first thing that came to my mind might have come to yours. “What? Is this some kind of weird exercise of commitment and memorization?” He didn’t mean throw our goals in the trash, but to divide each of them into smaller chunks of goals. It was a brilliant idea.

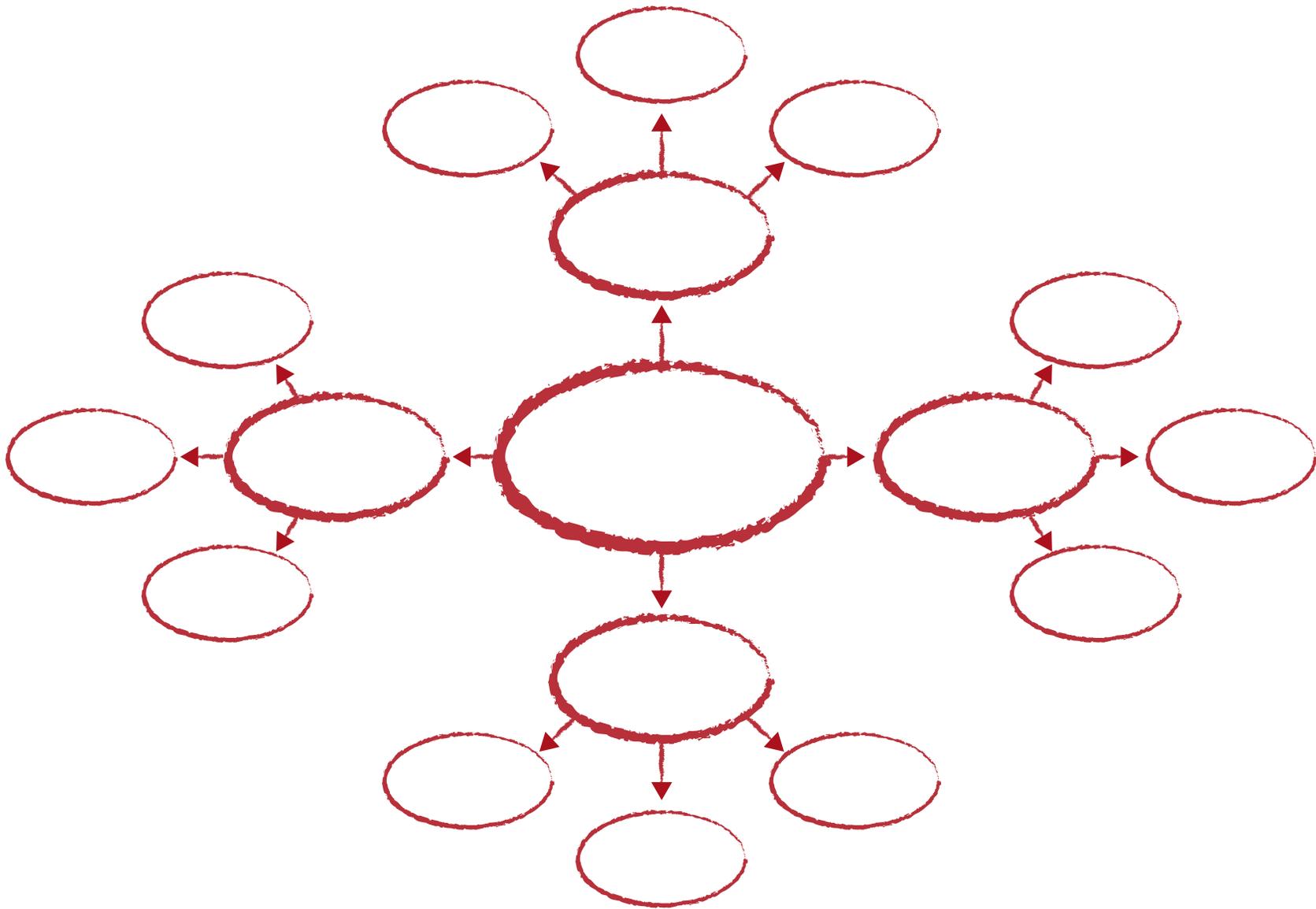
This is something you should put into practice all the time now. After setting SMART goals and supporting them with key motivations, you should take each goal one-by-one and chunk it—not in the waste bin, but into smaller, actionable pieces. If you are a visual learner like me, then you should draw a kind of mind-map.

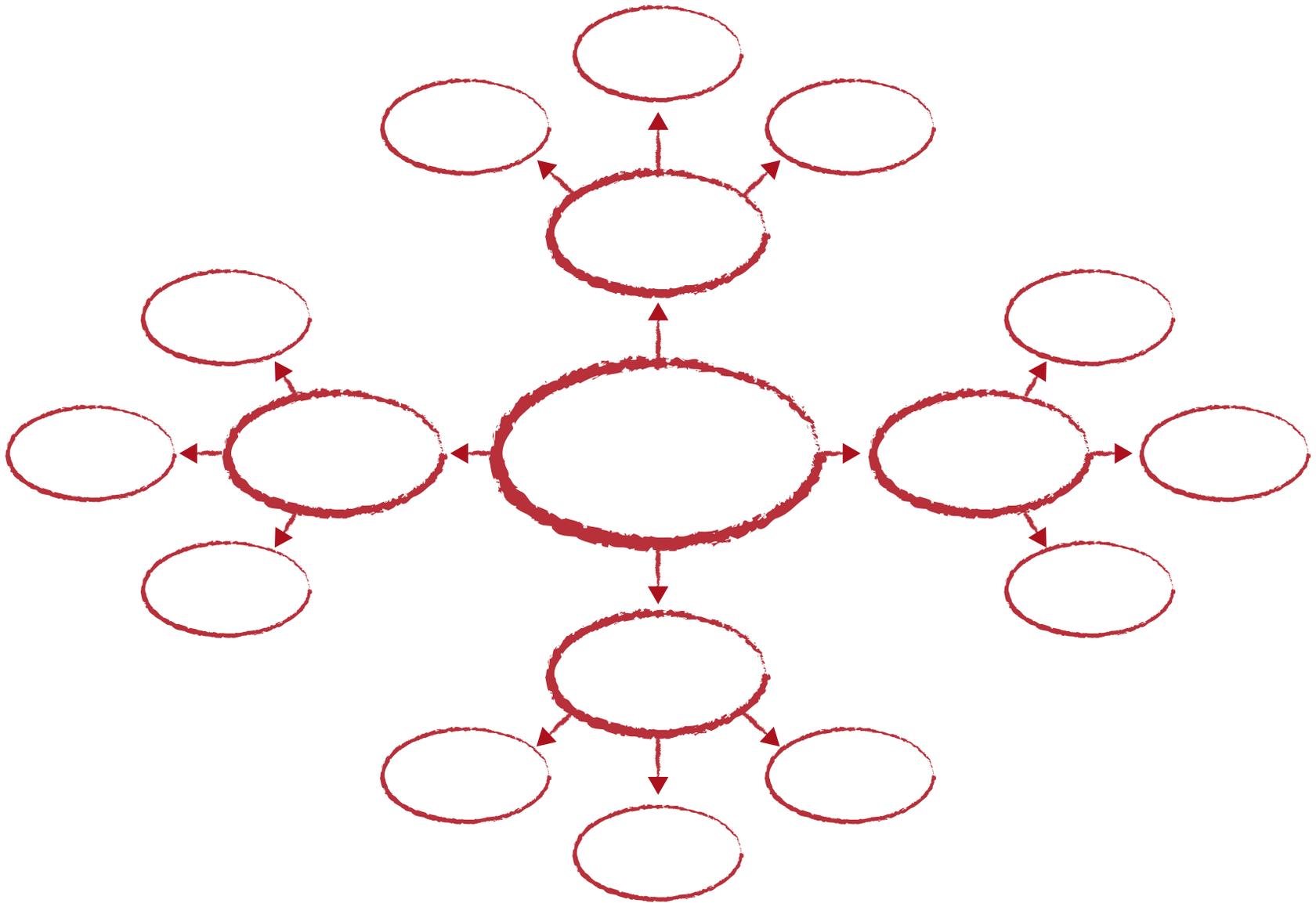
The object of this exercise is to make a big goal more manageable. Goals that challenge us are not done overnight and often require several other things to be done first. For instance, if your goal is to read through the Bible in a year, then you have to figure out how much of the Bible you should read each day while factoring in holidays and weekends. Or, if you plan to read a book in a month,

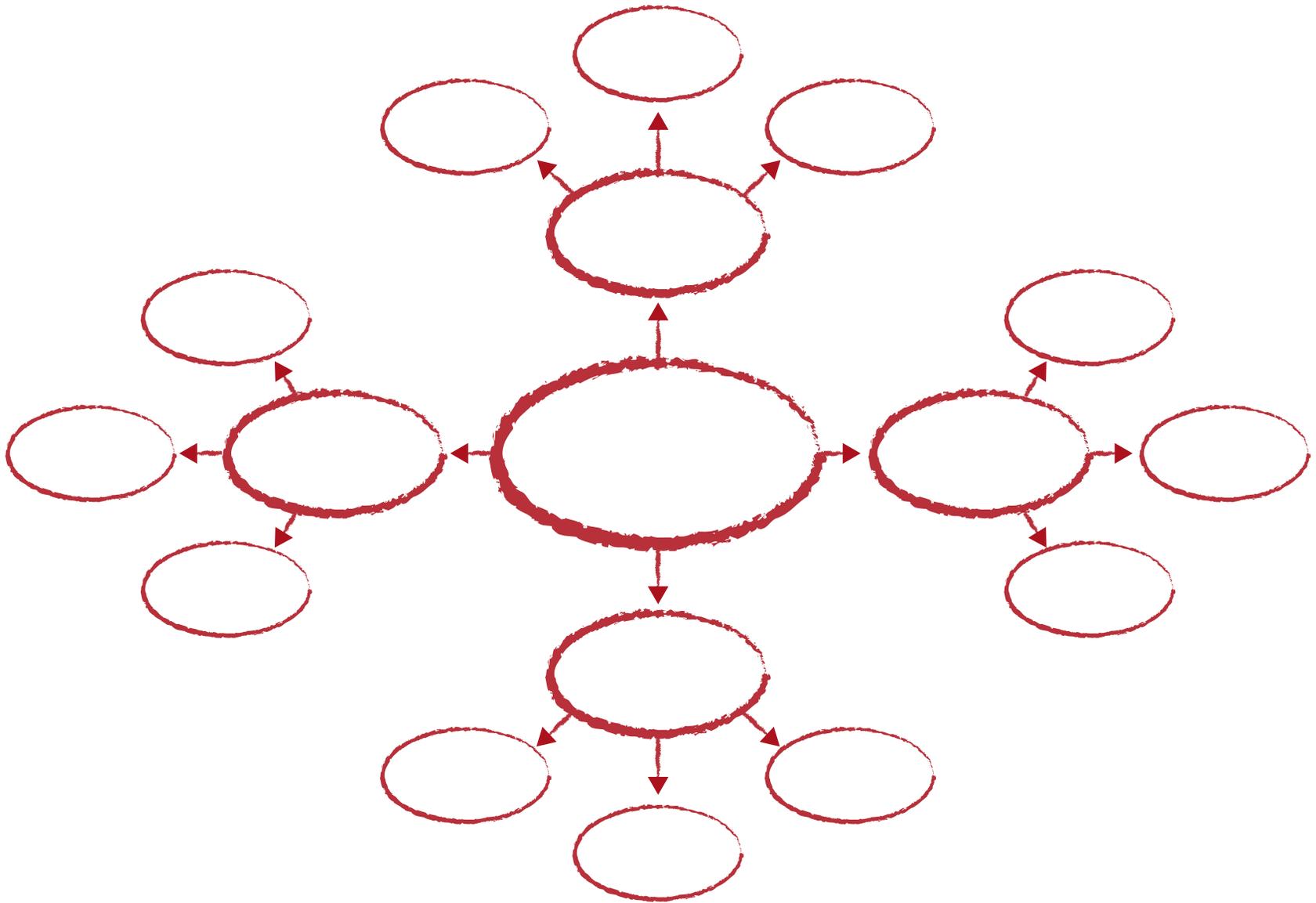
you want to divvy up the chapters accordingly. Likewise, if this year you plan to have \$6,000 in savings, then you will need to factor in \$500 each month to conquer that goal. Point being, goals usually have smaller, bite-sized actions that must be conquered progressively. Think of them as smaller goals. You are fragmenting your targets.

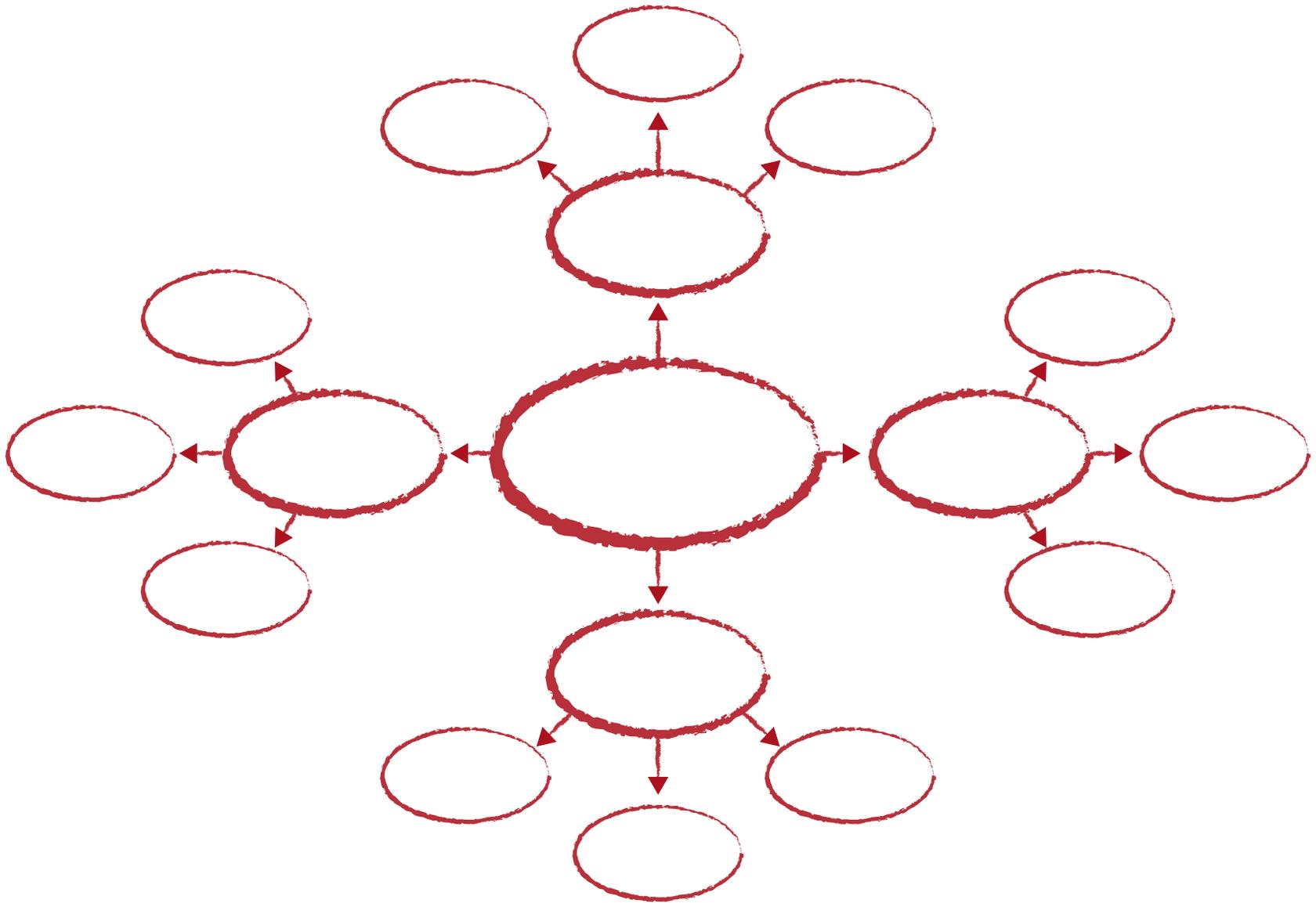
## Take Action

1. **Choose your goal.** Grab one of your goals and write it down—yes, again. If you use the diagrams below, write the goal in the center circle.
2. **Make your chunks.** Ask yourself what broad steps you will need to take in order to conquer your goal. Write them down in the surrounding, smaller circles.
3. **Make your chunks chunky.** Some goals are so big, they need a second layer of steps (smaller chunks to contribute to bigger chunks). In the circles surrounding your chunks, write these down.
4. **Relax.** You will not think of them all now. Some will come when you get to the battle. So, relax and repeat.









# FRAGMENT ANALYSIS

Ready ... Set ... Hold up. Now that you have your SMART goals with key motivations and have chunked those goals into bite-sized goals, it's time to start planning your attack. Like any plan, you want to assess what you're up against and chart a course for battle.

If you haven't already made your way to an electronic form of goal setting, now might be a good time. I recommend using Google Docs, Evernote, or Apple Notes. The main thing is to use something you can access from your computer or phone, anywhere. I have some friends who prefer a moleskin or small journal. Whatever the case, be sure it is something you can easily and often access. (We'll talk about why this is important later.)

At this point, we want to provide a time-based deadline of some kind. It is only an estimate. (This is where software comes in most handy—you can refine your chunks and deadlines as you go.) Each chunk should have an ending. It might be a hard date like "March 15th" or a length of time that depends on the prior chunk like "two weeks later." Whatever the time, make sure every chunk has a time-based deadline to keep you on track.

Additionally, you want to make sure you don't stretch yourself too thin or draw out your deadlines too far. For example, you can't expect to finish six one-week chunks in a month. It is impossible, unless you are expecting to finish your chunks sooner each time. Still, it is best to set realistic expectations and to be honest. In fact, I would suggest you give yourself breathing room. We will discuss the importance of rest and celebration in the future. So, breathing room is good.

## Take Action

1. **Arrange your chunks.** Order your chunks sequentially. Remember, these are consecutive steps to a big goal.
2. **Allocate your time.** Estimate the time required for each chunk and round it to days, not hours.
3. **Add the time.** For goals that are not recurring, add up all the time necessary for goal completion.
4. **Appoint the deadlines.** With your calculations, appoint chunks to days and weeks in your calendar.
5. **Assign the chunks.** Copy these calendar dates and times to your file system that you carry with you.

**GOAL**

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**KEY MOTIVATION**

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**OTHER MOTIVATIONS**

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**CHUNKS**

**DEADLINE**

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**GOAL**

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**KEY MOTIVATION**

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**OTHER MOTIVATIONS**

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**CHUNKS**

**DEADLINE**

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# JANUARY 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

## FEBRUARY 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
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# MARCH 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
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## APRIL 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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## MAY 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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## JUNE 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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# JULY 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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## AUGUST 2023

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## SEPTEMBER 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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## OCTOBER 2023

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## NOVEMBER 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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## DECEMBER 2023

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# OPERATION SCHEMA

Let's plan for battle. With our goals and chunks planned to a calendar, we should now look at each week. This step should become a part of your week, every week.

Like a calendar year, our days come with a natural reset. For the most part, our weeks look like seven days beginning on Monday—the reset day. Your “week” may look differently, but you still have a reset of some kind. In the same way, our day consists of twenty-four hours that reset sometime in the morning. To get your chunks done, you will need to plan each day at the start of each week, when possible. Think of it like time budgeting.

If you're a fan of Dave Ramsey, you can easily think in terms of making your time work for you instead of you working for your time—however that pans out. You want each hour of your day to be planned and purposed for something useful so that it doesn't go to waste.

Here is an easy example. Suppose you had a goal to write a particular book in a year. The book consists of twelve chapters equal in size. So, you chunked each chapter into one month. Then, you divided each chapter into four parts with one-week deadlines. You chunked these parts further into five steps of writing: research,

notes, outline, draft, and final copy. Now, you have expectations for each workday and weekends for any fallbacks.

Let's go further. Each workday, you have the evening hours to conquer this goal. So, on your weekly scheduler, you block out 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. for your project. If you do this with each of your goals and chunks, you will fill your schedule and be on your way to conquering goals. This is your operation schema.

## Take Action

1. **Identify your chunk deadlines.** Consolidate all of the deadlines for your goals that fit in this week.
2. **Book existing commitments.** Certain priorities should be booked first like, work lunches, dentist visit, etc.
3. **Book chunk goals.** Fill in empty hours with actionable chunks that are due this week.
4. **Set up alerts.** For those using software for this, it is good to set up alerts and notifications to keep you on top of your actions.
5. **Prepare to say “no.”** This is your calendar. Unless your spouse calls, there is little reason for you to change it.

## WEEK AT A GLANCE

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## WEEK AT A GLANCE

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PHASE THREE

## WAGING YOUR BATTLE

“We are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”

— ROMANS 8:37 —

It's battle time. Everything you've done so far has led to this very moment. You prepared for battle. You plotted your attack. Now it is time to act. It's time to conquer your goals.

God's love is so strong that there is nothing that can thwart His affections for those He cherishes. “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31). God is the one who justifies and sanctifies (Rom. 8:32-33). It is through His love and by His power that our salvation is secure. For this reason, “we are more than conquerors” through Christ (Rom. 8:37). This phrase comes from a compound Greek word which means to over-conquer. We are conquerors

who conquer completely the threats of anything that would come between Christ and the love that He has for us.

This doesn't speak directly to conquering goals, but it does infuse into our lives a sense of strength and resolve to get things done for God's glory. In this phase, we get to work. We'll first discuss making the first step and making decisions of priority. We'll then talk about the importance of reviewing, asking for help, and making punch lists to sock goals in the nose. Finally, we'll talk briefly about the benefits of celebrating your victories. So, roll up your sleeves. This is how you wage war on your goals.

# ATTACK WITH RESOLVE

I'm sure it's unwise to start on a bad note, but here goes. Most people who do the work of preparing and planning their battles fail before even waging them. This is because they never take the first step to get started. For them, it's the most difficult part in attacking goals. It is, however, the most necessary. Without starting, you are guaranteed to fail. Duh.

Taking the first step is a matter of leaning into the daunting tasks ahead of you. It is likely that those who shy from this are fearful of defeat or just terrified of the monstrous goal ahead of them. The truth is, when we chunked our goals, we made them much smaller and easier to battle. The big goal of writing a book or losing thirty pounds is very intimidating. But, we've chunked those big goals for a reason. Instead of going toe-to-toe with the big goal, we are facing off with the small chunk, and the small chunk intimidates no one.

Keep this in mind when you set foot at the starting line. You are not expected to conquer a goal right now. You are only going to war with a small chunk that might take you less than an hour to do. However, when three months have gone by, you will look back and see victories—small chunks that you have slaughtered each day. And, ahead of

you will be a less intimidating goal. It is about being fixed and persevering. Attack your targets with resolve.

## Take Action

1. **Don't think, do.** One of my favorite movie quotes comes from the second installment of *Night at the Museum*, where General Custer cries out in a moment of excitement, "We're Americans! We don't plan, we do!" Take his philosophy. Don't think, do.
2. **Don't worry, trust.** Thinking too much can stop you from getting started. So can worry. You did your work to plan the attack, now give it to God and trust in His timing and changes. Trust your plan while you trust your God.
3. **Don't stop, go.** Don't hesitate. Take the first step. Tackle the small chunks. Finish your day. Don't look at the next, fix yourself on today and get it done. Completing daily chunks will fuel your energy for tomorrow, but let it work today.

# DETECTING PRIORITIES

Ahh, the sound of a phone on silence. The dings and rings of our mobile devices and desktop software fight for our attention each moment of the day. Behind those sounds are usually people who each have the most critical, most important, most urgent thing for you to do. Truth is, these are the sounds of distractions that bring you out of battle and to defeat.

If you're human, then you have multiple responsibilities requiring your attention and effort. These are healthy parts of life. If you only had one, you would live on a secluded island somewhere, and even then you might have to creatively find food while fighting off wild animals. Our problem is not that we have too many responsibilities (although that may be an issue) but that we handle so many at once. We need to prioritize.

In his popular book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey describes what many have come to refer to as a Time Management Grid. It is the practical way to stay on target.

All the tasks you perform in a given day can be effectively categorized in one of four different buckets. These buckets indicate the level of urgency and priority for you to consider. Certain things are high priority and

others are not. In categorizing tasks, you easily filter those things that say they are critical, but are really time suckers and can be done later. The grid helps you find value in tasks and enables you to make the right choices in getting things done. It helps you detect priorities.

## Take Action

1. **Put a task in a bucket.** If it is urgent and important, put it in box one. If not urgent but important, put in box two. If urgent but not important, put in box three. If not urgent or important, put in final box.
2. **Manage box one.** Urgent and important tasks should be managed, but not focused on. Just get them done.
3. **Focus on box two.** Important but not urgent tasks should be your focus. These are generally your chunks.
4. **Avoid other boxes.** If possible, avoid tasks that are in boxes three and four. Tasks that are not important but urgent are usually false. Tasks that are neither important or urgent are just plain wastes of time.

## TIME MANAGEMENT GRID

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	1	2
NOT IMPORTANT	3	4

## TIME MANAGEMENT GRID

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	1	2
NOT IMPORTANT	3	4

# RECURRENT EVALUATIONS

Now that you've taken the initial steps to attack your goals, the momentum has begun. Each step causes you to lean toward the next. The pace may have even picked up. While you don't want to kill the momentum, it's vital that you periodically pause and review your progress.

Reviews can be quick so they don't interfere with progress. But make no mistake: you cannot pass them up. They are necessary and beneficial to your attack. You can be encouraged and challenged by what you discover. You will recognize your failures and make adjustments. You will identify your successes and repeat those methods.

A good review will help you be more effective in your attack. It is a matter of keeping a good eye on the battle. Here are some things to remember when you make points to review your progress.

**First, reviews should be intentional.** Don't wait for some unexpected downtime to review. Be intentional. Plan your time just like you planned your chunks. Reviews should be set on your calendar at good "reset" times (end of month, end of week, end of day). Also, be intentional about what you'll review. As you progress through your goals (between your reviews), write down your out-of-

scope and think-about-later ideas so you can pull these up during review. Be prepared to review what's necessary.

**Second, reviews should be consistent.** The intentional time you set aside for review should be repeatable. If it's at the end of the week, then do it at the end of every week. End of the month? Then, every end of the month. You should also be consistent with your review method in order to build consistency and form habits so it's like a reflex—a goal reflex. The repetition will help you get into the groove of reviewing so you can do it more quickly and effectively each time.

**Third, reviews must be concrete.** Since reviews are so critical to reaching your goals, put a high value on their time, just like chunk schedules. Don't pass them up.

## Take Action

1. **Write the chunk goal.** Yes, again. You need to know what you are dealing with.
2. **Write what you conquered.** Acknowledging your accomplishments will encourage you to do more.
3. **Write what challenged you.** This will help you identify where or how you can improve.

**CHUNK**

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**CONQUERED**

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**CHALLENGES**

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# ASSEMBLING REINFORCEMENTS

You need others when you battle goals. This cannot be overstated. By this, I don't mean that you need to flippantly blurt out requests to everyone you know. You should own your goals and not cast them on others. Rather, carefully share your goals and chunks with people you trust. Here are some benefits of asking others.

**First, asking others can help you clarify your goals.**

Getting caught up in the attack can sometimes cause us to lose focus on the goal. The details can be distracting. I've even caught myself thinking the chunks were the goals. Asking others requires you to articulate and explain your goal, which brings more clarity of what it is.

**Second, asking others can help you gain wisdom.**

This should go without saying. Reaching out to other people usually leads to gaining new perspectives. You'll likely find yourself taking the long way to your goal when you're working so hard on the chunks alone. Another person can help you get on a better track to success.

**Third, asking others can help you find delegates.**

Believe it or not, there are other people who can do some of the chunks you've scheduled for yourself. In fact, they might be able to do some of them better than you. Asking

others allows them to get involved in helping you reach your goals. They may even do it better.

**Fourth, asking others can help you create accountability.** When you involve other people, they are connected to your goal in some way. This is different for different people. But, everyone who knows what you're doing suddenly becomes an accountability partner for you, even if they don't intend it.

**Fifth, asking others can help you find encouragement.**

In addition to accountability, you'll find that some people will actually pray for your success. If so, they will likely be emotionally connected to you reaching your goal and find value in your effort. Then, it's advantageous for them to encourage you along the way. They're the people in the stands urging you to finish the race.

## Take Action

1. **Ask others.** Find those you trust and share with them what you are doing. God will orchestrate the rest.
2. **Prepare beforehand.** Be sure to have some action steps for those who are willing to help you see things get done.

# EMPLOYING A HIT LIST

It's time to get violent with your goals! You need to create your *punch list*. A punch list is exactly what it sounds like—a list to punch. Think of it as your boxing opponent taunting your every move. You want to punch and punch until you knock it completely out.

The list will contain your current chunks and goals to punch out. I recommend a monthly or weekly punch list. Anything more would take too much of your time to make. Anything less would make your list too long. I make mine in Google Docs and print it out to pin to the wall in my office, right where I face when sitting at the desk. It's like it and I are going toe-to-toe.

**First, your punch list needs to be concise.** The more pithy your chunks, the better. You don't want long descriptions written out on your sheet taking up space. They are simply short line items for you to mark off. In fact, they should only be one line. For example, "Write twenty articles" is a great item for a punch list.

**Second, your punch list needs to be accessible.** Nothing is more important than the accessibility of your punch list. Do not, I repeat, do not print out your punch list and slide it into a drawer. It needs to be front and center.

You need to see it often. It's your personal reminder of small goals to complete. Make sure it's accessible.

**Third, your punch list needs to be writeable.** In addition to being accessible, you need to make sure you can write on it. You will be writing one of two things on it. First, when you complete a task, you want to draw a line through it. Second, when you have ideas that you need to review later, you want to write those notes outside the task.

**Fourth, your punch list needs to be easy.** Remember that your punch list is a tool to help foster encouragement and keep you focused, not rob you of your time. You can make your punch list interesting, since it will be displayed in public sight. But don't spend all your valuable time on it. Remember, you'll be making more punch lists as you go.

**Fifth, your punch list needs to be trashable.** Look, this goes without saying, but I'll say it anyways: make sure your punch list is made out of something you can trash or erase. Don't paint it on your wall because you'll need to mark off chunks. On the other hand, if you're into painting a lot, maybe that's not a bad idea.

# COMMEMORATE VICTORIES

When a battle is won, commemorate your victory. You've come along way now. First, you started by setting SMART, comprehensive goals with God's glory and will in mind. You supported those with key motivations and independent chunks. After that, you planned your attack on goals right down to the day and started to attack by making the first step, points to review, efforts to ask, and creating a punch list. Only one thing remains. Celebration!

If you're not the kind of person who celebrates achievements, give it a try. Celebrate the victories in your battle against goals. It will encourage you and give you something to look forward to. It may even spur others along in their goal attacking. Here are three keys for ideal celebrations.

**First, celebrate your victories.** Depending on your goals, it's good to celebrate at key moments in your progress. The most obvious time is at completion. But if you have goals that stretch to the end of the year, you should consider key points along the way. For instance, my family is reading through the Bible this year. So, when we finish a month of reading, we go out to eat pizza to celebrate.

**Second, celebrate appropriately.** Your celebrations should be appropriate to your achievement. When you triumph over big goals, have big celebrations. For small goals, have small celebrations. You want to train yourself to look forward to the appropriate reward. The longer you wait, the harder you work, the bigger your celebration should be. Big victories need big celebrations.

**Third, celebrate together.** Finally, celebrate with others. It's particularly important to include those who helped you reach your goal. People who invested in your goal should be rewarded and celebrate the victory with you. Your family, although they may not have directly contributed to reaching your goal, did play a vital role. Bring them along and celebrate together. It will encourage you and others to reach their goals.

Celebrating is key to your conquering. It is worth you counting it as one of your chunks to assure you get it done. Whatever you do, remember to commemorate your victories.



PHASE FOUR

## WINNING YOUR BATTLE

“For the Lord of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?”

— ISAIAH 14:27 —

Conquering your goals is nice. But, there are greater things to be gained in these battles for godly stewardship. Things like a stronger faith and a deeper relationship with God and others. These things can happen when we walk away from our goals in defeat. Inside we are more than conquerors.

God has a purpose for your life that is expressed in His *permissive* will. He has things He wants you to do, but will, for reasons of His own, allow you to do things that are not divinely desirable. At the same time, God has a purpose for your life that is expressed in His *providential* will. This is the big picture. It entails the master plan that will not be

altered by any choice you make. There is no stopping this plan.

When our goals and plans conflict with His providential will, we will either fight His plans in vain or alter our plans to agree. Fighting God’s plans will inevitably result in our disappointment. We will not win. Rather, we should make the adjustments to align ourselves with His design. It is a matter of *surrendering* our battle to God. It is not a matter of losing, per se, but a matter of gaining. I mean, would you like to achieve your goals and lose your soul?

**Be a conqueror.**

**Get things done for God’s glory.**

[www.JacobAbshire.com](http://www.JacobAbshire.com)