

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with Christ through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that in turn you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network anywhere that deals with issues today's youth and their parents are facing, and provides answers from a Godly perspective.

In addition, we would love for you to help us by going to our web site at www.aldenson.com. Here you can write to us, order additional material like this booklet, check out all my music, have a daily bible study, and stay up to date on the ministry. You can also send us a prayer request and questions for the TV show. But more importantly, please continue to be in prayer with us as we work together to help those that are in need.

Thanks for watching and God Bless!

Sincerely,

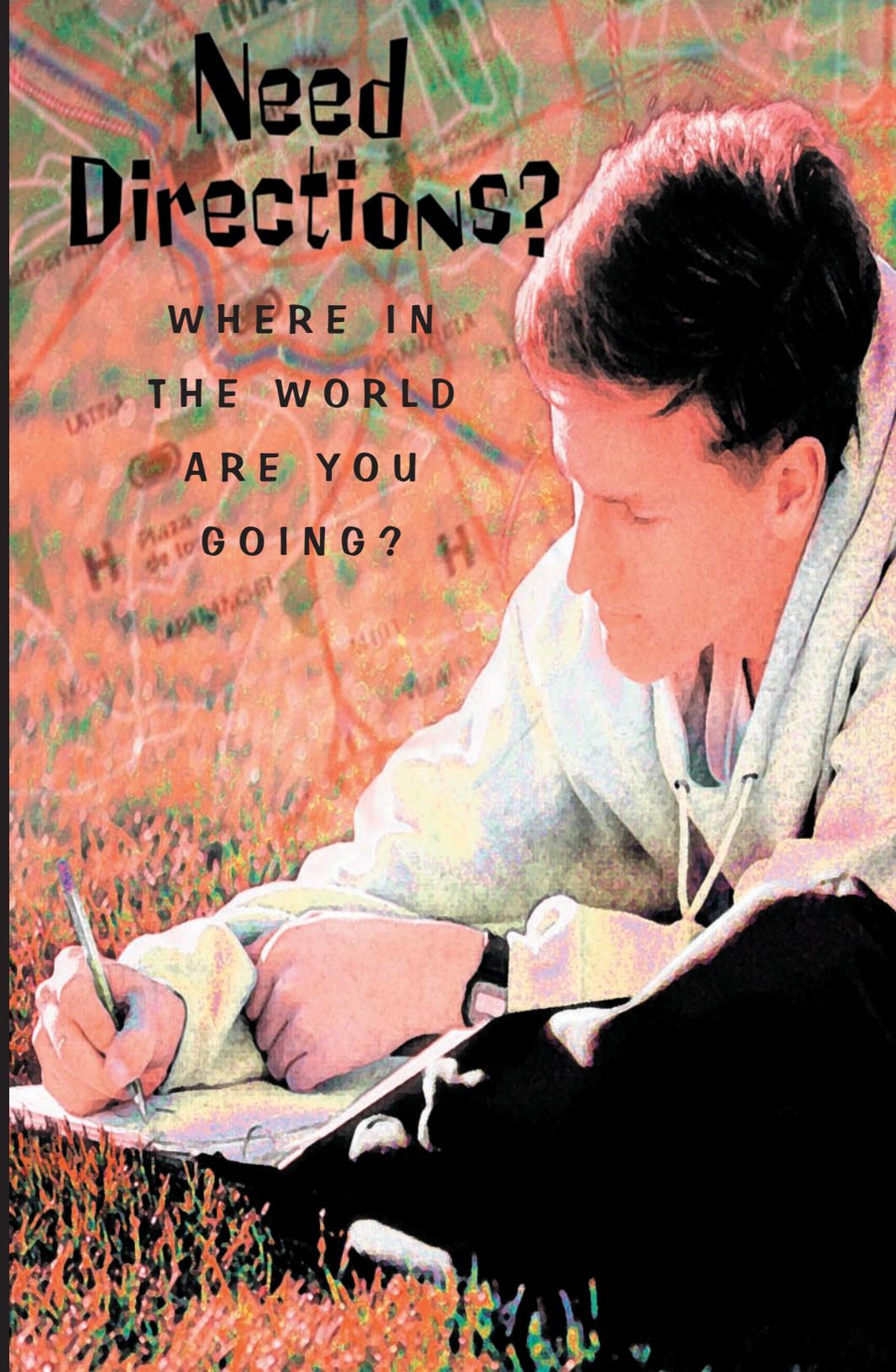


An Outreach of Celebration Ministries

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Need Directions?

WHERE IN
THE WORLD
ARE YOU
GOING?





Most artists create for only a brief moment in time. That phenomenon was once known as “15 minutes of fame”. Yet even in a fickle world, there still emerge a talented few that transcends time and trends. With nearly 15 years as a major label recording artist and seven hit

albums to his credit, Al Denson is that kind of artist.

But the attention and acclaim his artistry has brought him over the years are anything but the routine rewards of worldly success. Rather, they are the fruits of a life of purpose and passion, and a mission that has always reached far beyond merely making music.

The millions of young people Al has performed for, befriended, counseled, consoled and clowned around with in his career already know that. And thousands more are finding out every day.

This past year has seen Al expand his efforts to a global audience through the reach of his daily syndicated television production, “The Al Denson Show.” “You’ve got to reach out to people where they are with the most powerful means and this form of media allows you to build trust and a rapport,” says Al. “This has all been so amazing. I can’t imagine what lies in store when the Lord finally calls me home, but I don’t have to wait for heaven to receive rewards. I get them every time a kid comes up to me and says, ‘I heard what you said, and I accepted Christ.’ You can’t ask for anything more or better than that.”

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Need Directions?

WHERE IN THE WORLD
ARE YOU GOING?

A Christian’s lifestyle is to be based on the absolute truths of God’s Word, and the boundaries that He gives us are very black and white. The Bible clearly states that certain things are right and others are wrong. But this

creates a major problem for teenagers today, because we are living in a society that tries to tell us there are no absolutes, that right and wrong are up for debate.

The result is that when a sense of what is “true” and what is “right” is lost, a very real feeling of aimlessness sets in. If there is one word that seems to describe the majority of teenagers today, it may be

the word “aimless.” John A. Howard, former president of the Rockford Institute, wrote:

“I am convinced that the one primary cause of the tragic self-destruction of so many of our youth is that they do not know the satisfaction of living for something larger than themselves. . . . If nothing is truly good, right, and worth striving and sacrificing for, life is meaningless. . . . Without larger goals, life is barren, life is a burden.” Yours may be the neediest generation of teenagers that has ever lived. Historian Eugene Genovese said, “It would be difficult to point out a set of values about which you could say that most Americans could agree. I think our society has become largely purposeless.”

Is it any wonder that kids today are aimless and confused about how to “do” life, about why they are here and where they are going? In the middle of all this gloom and doom is the very good news that God created you,

loves you and holds the directions not just for life, but for an abundant, full, meaningful life. In order to have this kind of life you must be willing to accept God’s definition of success. The world in which you live will define success by fame, fortune, power, accomplishments and social status. In other words, success is measured by what you do

and what you have. But God says that true success does not begin and end with what you do in your lives. It begins and ends with who you are. Success is becoming the person God wants you to be and then accomplishing the goals He has helped you set.

Before you can go any further, you will need to ask yourself some hard questions: “Do I really want God’s best in my life? Am I more interested in a full and meaningful life than the “stuff” that the world offers? Am I willing to accept God’s definition of success?” If so, then God has two words for you: Believe and Achieve. First, become the person He wants you to become by believing what He says.

If nothing is truly good, right, and worth striving and sacrificing for, life is meaningless...

Secondly, achieve the goals He has helped you set, and you will receive the incredible life that He has for you. Let's look at these a little more closely:

Believing that you are going to succeed in life comes when you understand that becoming the person God wants you to be is a life-long pursuit. If you have accepted Christ as your Savior, God says the moment you did that, you became on the inside holy, righteous, blameless, pure and pleasing because you are totally forgiven and unconditionally loved and accepted by Him. Now what God wants is for you to be on the outside like what you already are on the inside. Do you know where the WWJD movement really got started? Many years ago a man by the name of Sheldon wrote a book called, *In His Steps*. The book simply states that to be a Christian is to commit yourself to being like Jesus: to do whatever Jesus would do if He were in your shoes, to act like He would act if He were in your place;

to make the decisions that Jesus would make if He had your options. When, who and what you are becomes your priority, then you are well on your way to having a life that has direction, purpose and meaning.

Achieving your goals involves understanding the importance of having goals and then setting goals. A goal is an aim, a purpose, or a sense of direction toward which you move all of your energies, desires, and efforts. Goals are targets toward which you can point your life. As you begin to think about goals for your life, you need to first be aware and fully convinced that you do not belong to yourself, you belong to Christ. I Corinthians 6:19-20 says that Christians are not our own any longer, that we have been bought with the blood of Jesus and that we are now His possession. Many Christians have difficulty "finding God's will for MY life," because they don't realize that it is not their life anymore. So, the goals that you set should all have one thing in common, which is to bring glory to God.

Having goals in life will do several important things for you. They will:

- help set your priorities;
- help you focus your efforts and keep you from being distracted;
- help you set your schedule so you don't waste time; and
- help you balance your life.

All this "setting goals" thing may seem like a big hassle and a lot of work, but let me describe the life of a person who has no goals:

- This person will have no excitement, no enthusiasm, no ambition in his life.
- This person will have no direction or purpose in his life.
- This person will tend to be very critical of others, especially those who are hard working and successful.
- This person will tend to settle for second best in life.
- This person will look back over his life and be disappointed.

What it all comes down to is what you really want out of life. Aimlessness, or direction and purpose? Emptiness, or a full and meaningful life? Wouldn't you like to know that ten years

after you are gone from this earth people will still be saying that it mattered that you were here? That you made an impact and a difference in your world?

So how do you get started with this thing of goal setting? One of the most important things you can do is to begin to put your goals in writing. Whenever God speaks to you or gives you a challenge it is always good to write it down. Over and over again in the Bible, God instructed His people to write down what He said to them. Daydreaming about what you would like to do can be fun, but it won't get you anywhere. You must document your goals.

Begin by praying and asking God to direct you, then be quiet and listen to what He brings to your heart and mind. You should have goals in these six areas of your life:

1. **Spiritual** Your priority goal should be getting to know Jesus in a personal, intimate way.
2. **Personal** Being the best you can be physically. This will give you the energy you need to accomplish your other goals.
3. **Family** Make sure that family relationships are as good as you can make them. Unresolved issues here can keep you from succeeding in life.
4. **School/Vocational** Begin now, if you haven't already, to think and pray about what God would have you do for a career, and what you will need to achieve in school to do that.

When, who and what you are becomes your priority, then you are well on your way to having a life that has direction, purpose and meaning.



5. Social “Show me your friends and I’ll show you your future,” is a very true statement. What kinds of friends do you have and what kind of friend are you? What changes need to be made here?

6. Financial It is never too early to start learning to handle money wisely, and working toward financial responsibility and independence.

In each of these areas you will want to set immediate (daily, weekly), short-term (one month to one year) and long-term (life-long) goals. This may seem overwhelming at first, but understand that goals are reached one step at a time.

The key here is commitment. You will find that commitment is the most important thing in life. If you are a Christian it is because you have committed your life to Jesus Christ. If you have a successful marriage it will be because of commitment. If you are successful as a parent, a friend or in your vocation, it will be because of your commitment. Commitment is everything in life and there are very few truly committed people in this world.

You know, setting and achieving goals in life is not about will power or self-control, it is about being so convinced and committed to doing the right thing, that the resisting and not doing the wrong thing will just come naturally. Ask God to give you a supernatural commitment to Him first, and then to the goals He has helped you set.

God really does have a will and a plan for each of His kids. There is no need to go through life wondering, “Why am I here?” or “Where am I going?” He has a set of goals for you along with directions for achieving those goals. If this is true, then why is it that so few Christians actually seem to reach the goals that God has for them and receive the abundant life that He offers? The reason that Christians sometimes fail to reach the goals that God has for them is found in Hebrews 12:1-2. It says, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off every weight that hinders us and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” These verses are telling you that there are two things that can keep you from accomplishing our God-given goals and completing the race He has for you to run in this life: weights and sins.

Weights are the things that trouble you in life; worry, fear, frustration, discouragement. Sin is the compromise that you allow in your life. Both will slow you down and trip you up in your race for Christ.

Dr. Charles Stanley gives four of the most common “weights” in life that keep you from reaching your goals:

1. Fear This is probably the weight that will cause you to fail more than any other. Fear is the uneasy feeling that you don’t measure up. It shows up when you feel threatened or incapable. It keeps you from setting goals in the first place. Fear causes you to fail where normally you would succeed. Fear keeps you from reaching your goals. When this happens, you need to face the fear and ask yourself exactly what it is that you are afraid of, then take your focus off of your fears and put it on God. Remember, it is His strength, not yours, that you are depending on, and the ultimate goal is to become more like Jesus. Leaning on Him when you are fearful makes you a success in His eyes!

2. Doubt Doubt can cause you to lack the assurance that you can achieve your goals. You need to deal with doubt the same way you deal with fear: face them honestly and then rehearse the truth of God’s Word. Remind yourself that the Bible promises that “He will never leave you or forsake you,” and that “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” You may be having doubts because you have failed a lot in the past. God wants you to know that your past doesn’t determine your future. You need to let go of the failures in your past and trust God to supply everything you need to accomplish your goals.

3. Excuses Most of the time when you make excuses you are really playing the blame game. That means blaming the way you feel, other people, maybe a lack of finances or advantages in life as the reason for failing to reach your goals. Excuses are a weight that will keep you from running the race that God has for you.

4. Procrastination This is putting off until tomorrow what you know you should do now. The truth is you find time to do the things that really are important to you. You find the energy, the money, whatever you need to accomplish what you want to do. When you put things off, it is because you may really be fearful of not being able to do things well enough, so it is easier not to do them at all than to try and fail. Or perhaps you are afraid that if you do try and fail, that others will criticize or reject you. So in order to avoid possible pain, you do nothing.

Let us fix
our eyes on
Jesus, the
author and
perfecter of
our faith

If you always take the easy way, you will never develop persistence or endurance

Sin, or compromise, is the second thing that will hinder you from reaching your goals in life. The pursuit of becoming what God wants you to be is like a lifelong race, and just like in an athletic competition, no one ever starts out a race with the idea of quitting. The thing that will hinder you in this race is compromise. This usually doesn't start out as a big thing. You don't just wake up one morning and say, "I think I'll begin to make horrible choices and destroy my life." No, you simply allow little compromises to creep into your life that look fairly innocent and harmless. You think, "no big deal, this won't affect me, just this once..."

But before you realize it, those little, harmless compromises have begun to drag you down as they give way to bigger and bigger compromises. Next, fatigue and disillusionment set in, and before you know it, you have dropped out of the race. There will be times when you must choose between right and wrong. But as you grow and develop in the Christian life, you will begin to find that the challenge will not be so much deciding between right and wrong, but between what is good and what is best. Settling for even second best (what is good over what is best) is just as much of a compromise as choosing what is fifth or sixth best.

If you were crossing a huge lake in a power boat during a storm you would line the bow of your boat up with the particular harbor you are trying to reach. You desperately want to reach your destination, but the wind and the waves keep slapping the side of your boat, knocking

you off course. You can be going at full power, but unless you are constantly making the necessary course corrections, you won't reach your destination.

If you only make a course correction occasionally during your crossing, you will end up a long way from where you wanted to be. Making the necessary corrections more often will put you closer to the harbor, but to miss it two degrees is still to miss it. If you are going to come to the end of your life being the person God wants you to be, you must continually be guarding against compromise, and you must be evaluating your life daily to see if there are "course corrections" you need to make. Zig Ziglar has said, "What you get by reaching your destination isn't as important as what you become by reaching that destination."

Hebrews 12:1-2 also says, "let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us..." Let's face it: It is always easier to quit than to persist. It's easier to watch television at night than to do your homework. It's easier to run away from a problem with another person, than to stay and work it out. It's easier to stay in bed in the morning than it is to get up and workout. Mark Twain put it like this, "Make it a point to do something every day that you don't want to do. This is the golden rule for acquiring the habit of doing your duty without pain." He was saying that if we will practice every day not giving into the negative feelings that make us want to quit, persistence will become less and less painful the more we

continue to push on, and do what we ought.

If you always take the easy way, you will never develop persistence or endurance, and as a result, you will not have what it takes to face the challenges of life. But if you determine that you are not going to quit, you will find that every time you choose to hang in there, you will be a little stronger than you were the last time. So when the next challenge comes, even if it is greater, you will have more determination than you did before.

Dr. James Moore tells this story that took place at the 1968 Olympic games that were held in Mexico City: "One of the most moving moments in the history of the Olympics came on the day of the marathon. A large number of well-trained runners from most every continent gathered at the starting line. The gun sounded, and the twenty-six mile race was underway. It wound through the streets of Mexico City and concluded in the Olympic stadium. The stadium was filled to capacity, and millions more watched by television as the race was finished



and the awards ceremony began.

The bronze medal was presented, followed by the silver and finally the gold medal was draped around the neck of the winner. He stood there proudly, eyes glistening, as the national anthem of his country was played and the flag of his country was raised. When the awards ceremony was over, people turned their attention to other events. Some time later, there was a murmur in the crowd as the people in the stands realized that the marathon was not over. A runner was still on the course. The other marathoners had finished over an hour ago. But here came this young man from the African nation of Tanzania, limping his way agonizingly toward the finish line. He was in great pain. You could see it in his face and in the awkward way he was forcing himself to keep running.

He had been injured in a fall early in the race. Now his knees were bleeding, his muscles were cramping, and dehydration was setting in; yet he kept on running. He would not stop. He would not quit. Finally, painfully, he crossed the finish line and fell to the ground. A television reporter later told the story of the runner's injury and his determination to run through the pain. Then the reporter said to him, "You knew you could not win the race. Why didn't you just give up? Why didn't you stop? Why didn't you just quit? He answered, "My country did not send me five thousand miles to start the marathon. They sent me here to finish the marathon."

perseverance...

Over and over again we have seen it up close and personal in the sports world, the political and other high profile arenas: Leaders who have started strong, but faltered and failed, and because they didn't have what it took to see it through, were unable to finish what they started. What is the difference between these people and that young runner from Tanzania? What is this "magical" ingredient that he possessed that is missing from so many other lives? The difference? Perseverance. It is the difference between success and failure, between mediocrity and greatness. It is what keeps you, keeping on, continually moving toward your goal when anyone else would have already quit.

In the book, *Chicken Soup For The Soul*, we learn that Beethoven's teacher said that he was hopeless as a composer, that the Great Caruso's teacher said he really didn't have a voice at all, that Thomas Edison's teacher said he wasn't smart enough to learn anything, that the editor of the *Kansas City Star* fired a young cartoonist named Walt Disney because he said Disney couldn't draw and wasn't creative, that Albert Einstein couldn't speak until he was four years old and couldn't read until he was seven, and that his teacher described him as "mentally slow...". Louis Pasteur was ranked 15 out of 22 students in his chemistry class, that the author of *War and Peace*, Leo Tolstoy, flunked out of college because he was told he couldn't learn, and Winston Churchill failed the sixth grade

and had a lifetime of other failures before he became Prime Minister of England at age 62. What did all these people have in common? Perseverance.

In the early part of the 18th century, there lived a young boy who wanted more than anything else to be a writer. This boy was from a poor family and had only been able to attend school for four years. His family moved a lot and his father ended up in debtors' prison. To earn a living he got a job putting labels on bottles of blackening in a dirty, dilapidated warehouse. He found a horrible attic in which to sleep, and had to share it with others who couldn't afford anything better, either. This boy was determined to write and he wrote day after day. Finally he got the courage to send a manuscript to a publisher, but the manuscript was refused.

Time after time, again and again he submitted his writings, but the answers were always the same. No one was interested in his work. But, so great was his desire to write, that he refused to quit. Finally, one of his stories was accepted. He received no money for the story, but the editor did praise his work. It was the best moment of his life and he cried for joy because someone had believed in him. This bit of encouragement gave the boy the courage he needed to go on to greater things. And in a few years, people all over England were reading his writings. His name was Charles Dickens. He too, had perseverance.

There is another great individual in American history, who illustrates as much as anyone who has ever lived, the value of this quality. Life was difficult for him and he tasted defeat many times along the way until he finally succeeded.

This man...

failed in business at age 22;
ran for the Legislature and lost at age 23;
failed again in business at age 24;
was finally elected to the Legislature at age 25;
lost his sweetheart at age 26;
suffered a nervous breakdown at age 27;
was defeated in the race for Speaker at age 29;
was defeated in the race for Elector at age 31;
was defeated in the race for Congress at age 34;
was finally elected to Congress at age 37;
lost his Congressional seat at age 39;
was defeated in the Senatorial race for the Vice-Presidency at age 47;
was defeated again in the Senatorial race at age 49;
but was elected President of the United States at age 51.

This man was Abraham Lincoln. He also had perseverance.

Finally, you need to understand that persistence is about making choices. Persistence is simply choosing what is the best in the long run, and ignoring what, in comparison, is not as important. You can make those choices. Never let anyone or anything tell you that you can't. Dr. John Maxwell has said that most people think success (reaching our goals) is instantaneous. They look at it as a moment, an event, a place in time. It's not. Success, as God defines it, is really a process. It is growth and development. It is achieving one thing and using that as a stepping-stone to achieve something else. It is a journey.

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