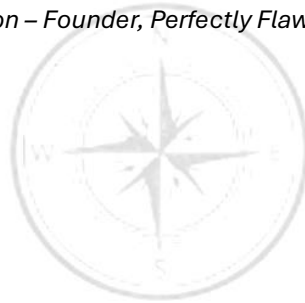




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# Biblical and Practical Goal-Setting Framework for Leaders

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# The **S.A.C.R.E.D. Framework** for Christian Leaders

## **Satisfying** - Goals That Feed Your Soul

Biblical leaders must set goals that genuinely align with what brings them deep satisfaction, not just what looks impressive or meets others' expectations. This connects to the biblical concept of calling—God created you with specific desires, gifts, and sources of joy.

**Biblical Foundation:** Psalm 37:4 says "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart."

This isn't a formula for getting what you want, but a recognition that when you're aligned with God, your desires begin to reflect His purposes. Your goals should excite you, not just obligate you.

### **Practical Application:**

- Before setting a goal, ask: "Does this genuinely energize me, or am I doing it because I think I 'should'?"

- Identify what you're uniquely passionate about within your leadership sphere
- Notice when you lose track of time or feel most alive—build goals around these areas
- Example: Instead of "I should lead a weekly Bible study," ask "What form of spiritual investment actually brings me joy?" Maybe it's one-on-one mentoring, creating written resources, or facilitating discussions.

### **Autonomous** - Goals You Choose Freely

Autonomous goals are ones you genuinely own, not those imposed by others' expectations or comparison. This reflects the biblical truth that each person has a unique calling and that leaders must discern God's specific direction for them, not simply copy others.

**Biblical Foundation:** Galatians 1:10 challenges us: "Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people?" Paul had to resist pressure to conform his ministry to others' expectations. Similarly, Galatians 6:4 says "Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else."

**Practical Application:**

- Distinguish between goals driven by external pressure vs. internal conviction
- Ask: "If no one knew about this goal, would I still pursue it?"
- Practice saying no to good opportunities that aren't YOUR opportunities
- Involve trusted advisors, but make final decisions based on your own prayerful discernment

- Example: Your organization may push for aggressive expansion, but if God is leading you toward deepening existing relationships and sustainable growth, honor that—even if it looks less impressive on paper.

## **Creative** - Goals That Invite Innovation and Play

God is the ultimate Creator, and we're made in His image. Goals that allow for creativity, experimentation, and even play reflect this divine design. Leaders who only set rigid, formulaic goals miss opportunities for innovation and personal growth.

**Biblical Foundation:** The diversity and beauty of creation reveal God's creative heart. Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 affirms that enjoying one's work and finding satisfaction in labor is a gift from God. Jesus used parables, creative questions, and unexpected methods—His approach to ministry was anything but formulaic.

### **Practical Application:**

- Build flexibility into goals for discovery and experimentation

- Allow room for the process to be enjoyable, not just outcome-focused
- Set goals that let you try new approaches, not just repeat what's proven
- Include "learning goals" alongside performance goals
- Example: Instead of "Increase team productivity by 15%," try "Experiment with three new team collaboration approaches and implement the most effective one." This invites creativity while still pursuing improvement.

### **Realistic** - Sustainable, Not Overwhelming

This is perhaps the most countercultural element in achievement-driven leadership circles, yet it's deeply biblical. God designed humans with limits, modeled rest in creation, and commanded Sabbath. Goals that chronically dysregulate your nervous system aren't honoring to God or sustainable for leadership.

**Biblical Foundation:** Jesus regularly withdrew to rest and pray (Luke 5:16). He prioritized time with His Father over constant activity. Psalm 127:2 warns against anxious overwork: "In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves." God designed you with a nervous system that needs regulation, not constant stress.

**Practical Application:**

- Assess your current stress levels honestly before adding new goals
- Consider your energy capacity, family season, and other commitments
- Break ambitious visions into smaller, manageable steps
- Build in recovery time, margin, and Sabbath practices
- Notice physical signals—chronic anxiety, sleeplessness, or burnout mean goals need adjustment

- Example: A pastor feeling called to write a book shouldn't add "Write 2 hours daily" on top of 60-hour work weeks. Instead: "Write 30 minutes three mornings per week, delegating two current responsibilities to create space."

## **Evolving** - Goals That Can Adapt and Grow

Biblical wisdom recognizes that we "plan our way, but the Lord establishes our steps" (Proverbs 16:9). Healthy goals have flexibility built in—they can evolve as you learn, as circumstances change, or as God redirects.

**Biblical Foundation:** Throughout Scripture, God's people had to remain flexible. Abraham didn't know where he was going when he started. Paul's missionary plans were repeatedly redirected by the Spirit. James 4:13-15 reminds us to hold plans humbly: "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

### **Practical Application:**

- Set review points (monthly or quarterly) to assess and adjust goals

- Embrace the learning process—early assumptions may prove wrong
- View pivots as wisdom, not failure
- Ask: "What am I learning that should shape how I approach this?"
- Hold goals with open hands, willing to let God redirect
- Example: You set a goal to launch a new ministry initiative by year-end, but three months in, discover a different need. Rather than rigidly pushing forward, you adapt the goal to address the real need you've discovered.

### **Deep** - Goals That Create Lasting Transformation

Deep goals focus on sustainable growth, character development, and meaningful impact rather than surface-level achievements or quick wins. They prioritize being over doing, formation over performance.

**Biblical Foundation:** Jesus consistently emphasized heart transformation over external compliance. The Sermon on the Mount addresses internal attitudes, not just behaviors. Paul's prayers for churches focused on deep spiritual maturity—love, knowledge, righteousness (Philippians 1:9-11)—not just numerical growth or visible success.

**Practical Application:**

- For every "doing" goal, set a corresponding "being" goal
- Focus on root issues, not just symptoms
- Ask: "Who am I becoming through this goal?"
- Prioritize character formation: humility, wisdom, love, patience
- Invest in relationships and people development, not just projects
- Consider long-term legacy, not just immediate results

- Example: Instead of only "Lead our team to 20% revenue growth," add "Develop three team members into future leaders through monthly mentoring and quarterly leadership development experiences, while cultivating patience and generosity in how I lead through this growth."

## Integrated Application Process

**Step 1: Prayerful Assessment** Begin with prayer and self-examination. Assess your current season, capacity, calling, and what genuinely matters. Ask God to reveal both opportunities and boundaries.

### Step 2: Test Each Goal Against SACRED

- Is this **Satisfying** to me personally, not just impressive?
- Is this **Autonomous**—truly mine, not driven by comparison?
- Does this invite **Creative** engagement and discovery?

- Is this **Realistic** for my nervous system and current capacity?
- Can this **Evolve** as I learn and as God directs?
- Will this create **Deep**, lasting transformation?

### Step 3: Create Supporting Structures

- Build in accountability with people who understand this holistic approach
- Schedule regular reflection and revision times
- Establish daily/weekly routines that support your goals without overwhelming yourself
- Practice self-compassion when adjusting or releasing goals

**Step 4: Monitor Wholeness** Regularly assess: Are these goals drawing me closer to God? Am I becoming more loving, peaceful, and joyful? Is my body telling me something through stress signals? Adjust accordingly.

## Why This Matters for Christian Leaders

The S.A.C.R.E.D. framework prevents the burnout, people-pleasing, and hollow achievement that plague many leaders, even in ministry. It honors the reality that you're a whole person—body, mind, and spirit—and that sustainable leadership requires sustainable goal-setting.

This approach produces leaders who are effective; not despite their flaws, but honoring God in them. These are people who pursue God's purposes through paths that work because He designed them to thrive in that environment. These are disciple-makers who model a better way of leading for those who desire to follow.

