

## Step by Step

John Naple was an Olympic swimmer wannabe. He had a lot of work to do and an unbelievable challenge ahead of him. If he was to make the grade, he had to improve his time by four minutes. That is huge! He had four years until the next Olympics so he did the math and figured out that if he improved by a second per month he could be a winner. John came home from the Olympics with four metals, one for every year of preparation.

When I read this story months ago, I wrote it down in my notebook. I carry one of those 9x6 notebooks with me most of the time for just such occasions. When I hear something that helps me or inspires me, I write it down. This story spoke to me about goals. I have them, don't you? I have spiritual goals. I want to improve my integrity, so I work at saying what I mean and doing what I say. I have family goals. I want to know what makes my wife tick, you know, those love language thingies. I want to be a good dad that is both challenging and affirmative to my children. But let's face it. Goals can be discouraging. First of all, if you have too many you can't possibly accomplish them. Secondly, if you are like me, when you fall short of a goal you kind of feel like a loser. Anybody hear discouragement?

The cool thing about setting goals is that it gives us the challenge to stretch ourselves and grow. But growth is not like going down to Taco Bell and ordering a quick meal. Growth is designed to come slowly. Let's take Joshua for instance. He was under Moses' leadership for many years but one day it was his turn. He had the awesome privilege as commander and chief to lead Israel into the land that God has promised them. However, in the land there were many fortified cities, armies with superior weapons and just to make things fun, there were giants. When you take a look at the big picture you kind of get the feeling that the first spies had when they first saw the land of Canaan, "We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes and we looked the same to them (Numbers 13:33)." But Joshua was a man like his partner Caleb, he was a man of a different spirit (Numbers 14:24) because he trusted God and because he believed this word from the Lord, "I will give you every place where you set your foot (Joshua 1:3)." The key to taking the whole land boiled down to his ability to take it a "foot" at a time. Each city, army or giant had to be taken one by one. That is one of the great secrets of growth. It comes step by step as you stretch toward the goal. What steps do you need to take in getting to the goal that you have set?

Size does not matter. The goal can be as big as conquering Canaan, but if you know the steps to get there you can do it with the help of your God. Ask the Lord today for a step by step plan to conquer that thing standing in your way. Proverbs 16:9 says, "In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps." In four years John Naple was an Olympic star because he determined the steps to get there. In closing, listen to Paul's goal and how he intended to get there. "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...not that I have already obtained all this... but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ has taken hold of me...forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me, heavenward in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:10-14)."