

Dreaming, Doing and Reaching

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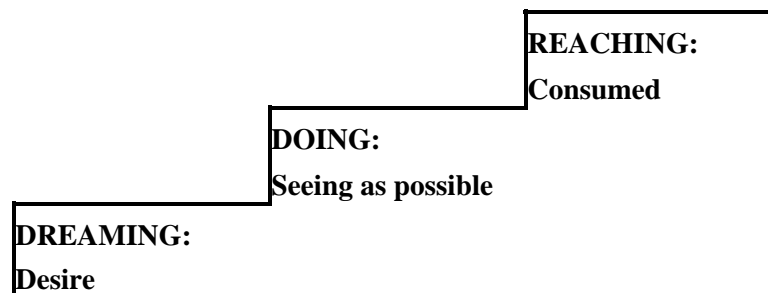
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My philosophy of life is that if we make up our mind what we are going to make of our lives, then work hard toward that goal, we never lose - somehow we win out. - Ronald Reagan

In my years as a competitor and a coach in the sport of wrestling, I have learned many valuable life lessons. One of those lessons is that of dreaming, doing and reaching – how to realize a dream.

In my early years as a competitor, my brother Phil often challenged me to set goals and work hard to achieve them. That was when I first began to think about how to make my dreams real.

I gained a greater understanding of that concept when a preacher named Wendell Kempton sat down with me and told me about the three steps to reaching a difficult goal. A man of great intensity, Mr. Kempton drew the following diagram on a napkin to help him deliver his important message:



I have used these principles as a competitor, as a coach, and as a man. I believe they can help you reach your goals and full potential, too.

DREAMING

Dreaming is the first step. Let yourself dream of a better tomorrow. As you dream, consider how those dreams relate to what is right and godly. One of our clinicians at Camp of Champs had a coach who used to tell his wrestlers, “Make your mother proud.” The realization of your dreams should be something good.

Also, be willing to change your dreams where needed to conform them to God’s will. I could dream of being a great jockey, but it would never happen, no matter how much work I put in. I’m simply too big. God did not create me for success in that arena.

DOING

The next step is to check out the possibilities: “What am I capable of?” Only working at the task will give you the answer. Use and test your talents, your experiences, your resources, and pray for God’s help and blessing.

This step can be discouraging or even embarrassing. A young wrestler can dream and talk all he wants, but he must get out on the mat and take some lumps while he is learning and sharpening his skills. It’s important to be patient and humble as you work toward your goal and begin to understand your capabilities.

Will you take the risk and see what is possible?

REACHING THE GOAL

After dreaming and checking it out, we need to pour ourselves into the task. In this step, entirely new motivations are formed: “This must be done.” “Others are depending on me to do this.”

There will be setbacks along the way. But if you're truly sold out on realizing your dream, you will pick yourself up, learn what you can from those experiences, and press on. Abraham Lincoln was a man who pressed on. He wrote: "I am not concerned that you have fallen; I am concerned that you arise."

Will you become consumed with your God-honoring goals?

These three steps are to be performed in a cycle. Dream, do, reach, and then dream all over again. We do our best in life when we're striving toward a lofty goal.

My dream in wrestling was to win a Wisconsin state championship. I tested my capabilities and lost my share of matches along the way. I continued to work hard to achieve my goal, but missed it by one match.

I started dreaming again, this time about NCAA titles. It was a whole new level of competition, and I had to test my capabilities against tougher opponents than I had seen before. I had to take my lumps again. My college teammate, Dan Gable, taught me to pour myself into my dreams even more than I had before. When my collegiate career was over, I had won two NCAA titles.

After that, I dreamed of Olympic gold medals. Training alongside my brother John, I went through the same steps all over again. I realized my dream in '72, and then fell a match short in '76. The 1980 boycott brought a disappointing close to my third try.

My competitive career over, I started dreaming again. I set goals for my coaching career, my ministry, and my personal life. There were always setbacks, and sometimes my dreams were beyond my capabilities. Some goals I accomplished; others, I did not. Some, I'm still working toward.

For the competitors in this week's NCAA Championships, this is the culmination of many years of dreaming, doing, and reaching. Most will not realize their dreams of an NCAA title. For many, this will be the end of their wrestling careers. Their next dreams will take them elsewhere. Others will wake up tomorrow and start dreaming of the Olympics. Sometimes the dream is reached, but often it isn't. The glory is in giving it your all and doing your best, making a valiant attempt at a noble goal.

In the Bible, the Apostle Peter had an intense desire to follow Jesus. He found he was even capable of walking on water, as long as he kept his eyes on Christ. But he looked away and began to sink. He said he would never deny Jesus, but then he did – three times in one night. He wept over his failures. But he pressed on, and later stood without fear, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to thousands of people. In one day, he saw 3,000 turn to Christ in faith. His confidence grew. His sinking, denying and failures were replaced with great boldness. He accomplished more than he could ever have imagined because he poured himself into his God-honoring goal.

So do your dreaming, but then do the action. Expand your confidences and your skills; then get consumed with reaching higher. It will change you even if your dreams are not fulfilled. You will see a whole new attitude for your future.

My challenge to you is the same as to myself: Fulfill good dreams with a strong faith in God and a willingness to work with a burning desire. I encourage you to mark down your goals and to press toward the mark.

Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat. – Theodore Roosevelt