

**Setting Realistic Goals**

**Theme**: The value of self-awareness.

**Teaching**: This weekend, college football begins in earnest—and every team at every level has expectations as to what they want to accomplish during the 2012 campaign. For some teams, adjusting to new coaches and new systems is the highest of all priorities and goals. For other teams, finishing the year at .500 would be considered a huge success—and making a post-season bowl would be a great reward for that progress. Other programs, however, have bigger fish to fry. As a West Virginia fan, I can assure you that the Mountaineer nation is not likely to be satisfied with simply making it to a bowl game. They are dreaming about a Big 12 championship, a BCS bowl (at the least), and possibly a shot at the national championship game.

And that can be a problem. Almost all disappointment in life is rooted in unmet expectations—and so unrealistic goals and expectations can become a self-fulfilling prophecy of disappointment, frustration, and even anger. The Mountaineers are in their first year in a new conference. They will be debuting a brand-new defensive scheme. They will travel more miles than ever before. Those factors should bring a level of realism to the expectations so that, when goal-setting begins, they are rooted in real possibilities—not wild dreams of grandeur and glory.

This speaks to one of the more valuable perspectives of life—not only for sports teams, but for all of us. It is the perspective of **self-awareness**. If we set goals that are utterly unrealistic to who and what we are, we condemn ourselves to a very frustrating time. We must balance our desires to do good, do right, and do well with the facts that we all have limitations and must live within those limitations. That is not pessimism. It is life.

Paul recognized this, and told the church at Rome:

**I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. Romans 12:1-3)**

Wisdom says that, as we engage the possibilities and opportunities of life, that we view them recognizing that, even with the most noble goals of life, we are dependent upon the God of all grace. To that end, in v.3, Paul reminds the Romans to “think soberly”—and to “not think … more highly…” Why? Because the realities of human frailty demand that we look beyond ourselves and to our God—not only in setting our goals for life, but also in living them out.