

“Setting Intentions for the Future”  
Dianne M. Daniels; UUFS – November 9, 2025

**Sermon: “Setting Intentions for the Future” by Rev. Dianne M. Daniels**

What does it mean to “intend” to do something?

It means, among other things, that you begin to set up your time and situations so you can make your unformed intention a reality. When you know what you intend to do, you put energy and action behind it, and it brings you power that you can’t obtain by any other method.

It also means that by creating that intention, it’s on your mind consistently – at the forefront of your thoughts. You’re reminded of your goals and the path to success that you’ve laid out.

Your intentions can last for a short period of time – for instance, getting through a challenging and stressful day without diving into a big bowl of ice cream at lunchtime because you know that while the ice cream will taste good, the sugar high will make it nearly impossible to concentrate for the rest of the day. Another short-term intention could be to focus your efforts on completing one or more tasks on your to-do list every day – even if they’re small.

A longer-term intention could be to do your best work at the office consistently over the next 6 to 9 months to put yourself in line for a promotion or a raise at your next evaluation. Having both short- and long-term intentions will help you move in a positive direction and strengthen your persistence and courage in pursuing your goals.

Having and acting on your intentions puts you in the driver’s seat, allowing you to decide what you want in life and what you’ll do to achieve your goals. Making a conscious decision to accomplish something moves you forward – you pursue your desired outcome over the days, weeks, months, and years of your lifetime.

Intentions are a fascinating paradox because you control your intentions, and your intentions help drive/control your actions. Ultimately, setting positive intentions and working toward positive goals helps you to prosper in many areas of your life.

Making progress toward fulfilling your intentions increases your self-assurance – you become more optimistic because you KNOW deep inside that you’re going to achieve your goal. As you continue to achieve, your confidence grows. You have a plan to build a good life for yourself, and you’re going for it. The results? You live your dreams with passion because your efforts are galvanized and powered by what you’ve accomplished.

We all know that our fellow perfectly imperfect human beings, those who share the quality of inherent worth and dignity, may come to see us as role models – someone they can look up to, receive guidance from, and who sets a clear, positive example for others. Your intentions say a lot about you, and they empower you to be the one that others look up to – even if you don’t achieve every single goal you reach for.

Your intentions bring you great power over your future, and you’re more likely to rise to the occasion when you realize others see you as a role model.

There’s no more living a directionless life when you know what you truly want and what you’re going to do with it. Your intentions are powerful guidelines that bring you confidence, spark your motivation, and power you forward to live your best life each day. Accomplishing your intentions brings you toward living an intentional life – one that means you live with purpose and make decisions that support that purpose.

You’re not satisfied with the status quo – you’re not waiting around for a disaster to strike before you act.

Intentional living is about exercising your power to choose the type of person you want to be, the type of life you want to live, and then holding yourself accountable to be and live that way.

There are some things you can do right now, today, to start living a more intentional life and reduce your reliance on luck:

1. **Understand that your choices matter.** Living an intentional life is about making choices that align with your beliefs and values. Take our UU values and principles, for example – choosing to live by them makes a difference in your everyday life.

Choosing to treat others as if they have the same level of worth and dignity as you do makes a difference. The old saying “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you” takes on a new level of meaning when you set an intention to live up to it every single day.

You can set an intention to employ justice, equity, and compassion in all of your dealings with others. This is easier said than done, and well worth the effort to make this intention a reality.

Accepting and encouraging others to become their best selves and lean into spiritual growth is an intention that can last you all your life.

Encouraging others in a free and responsible search for truth and meaning is a lofty intention and goal – you may disagree with what they consider true or meaningful, but encouraging their journey is part of accepting who they are as individuals.

Supporting democracy and the democratic process to ensure that as many voices as possible can be heard not only enhances our sense of acceptance for one another and encourages growth, but also empowers us all to consider the opinions and viewpoints of others. In the end, this supports and promotes the improvement of the global community since we all must live here, on this imperfect and impermanent planet.

Respecting the interdependent web of existence means that our intentions don't just affect us – their influence moves out like the ripples from a stone dropped into a body of water. They spread far and wide, and we may never see the extent of the effect our ripples will have on our world.

2. **Give yourself a target to drive toward.** Think about how you'd like to live – be bold and outrageous and forget about your limitations – just for a moment.

What would your ideal day be like? How would you spend your time, and who would be by your side? Where might you live? Consider what your ideal financial situation would be like.

By drawing a detailed picture in your mind, you give yourself a tangible goal to guide you and help keep you motivated. Describe your target day in the life in writing and keep it nearby to refuel your motivation.

3. **Know your personal values.** A significant part of the intentional living puzzle is living your life on your own terms and according to your own values. It's not what's the fastest; it's about living on your own terms, and to do that, you must be intimately familiar with what's important to you and what you're willing to do (or not do).
4. **Set goals for the very important aspects of your life – your finances, career or business, relationships, physical, mental, and emotional health.** Examine areas of your life where you're unsatisfied with the status quo and create a plan to bring more of what you want (and less of what you don't) into your life.
5. **Be intentional about choosing habits that support your goals.** Overindulging in anything – alcohol, food, bad relationships – makes it much harder to be authentic and centered. You can stretch your willpower only so far – choose habits that help you attain your goals, and if an activity doesn't perform in that manner, minimize or eliminate it.

6. **Be intentional about how you spend your time.** Keeping your dreams and values in mind, what is the best action for you to take at any given moment? Feeling overwhelmed can become less of a problem when you have a limited set of actions you're willing to spend your precious time on. Make focused and well-thought-out choices and don't operate on autopilot.
7. **Control your impulses – you have the power!** Poor impulse control can lead you in the totally wrong direction – yielding to habit, overindulging in pleasure, or avoiding discomfort. Intentional living means making rational decisions and following through on them, regardless of temporary discomfort.
8. **Reject and discard distractions.** Being intentional requires your focused presence. Leave the past in the past, and don't get too preoccupied with a potential future. Focus on what you should be doing in the moment. Even performing “required” actions like paying bills can be a distraction if you should be taking intentional action to support your values instead.
9. **Take your measure every day – how did you do in your pursuit of living intentionally today?** You can change the “track” you're on in the next few minutes, half an hour, or the very next day. Learn something from each day and the progress you've made (or didn't make) and vow to improve your performance every single day.

Choose and create your life – don't just wander through life by default. Building and living a life you love will NEVER happen by accident. Decide the type of person you want to be, make your decisions, and choose your actions.

Be bold enough to choose and act on the life you want to lead. May your week ahead bring you the insight you desire and the strength to follow through on your intentions.

Amen, Blessed Be, Ashe.