

# Personal Development

## Reflection on *Twelve Pillars* (Chapters 4 – 7)

### Chapter 4 – Achieve Your Goals

In this chapter, Michael meets Charlie at Mack's Diner to talk about how things have changed since they last spoke. Michael shares how the gardening metaphor helped him improve his relationship with Amy by putting in more effort, like planning intentional date nights. The conversation shifts to his career, and Michael admits he doesn't have clear goals. That's when Charlie introduces one of Mr. Davis's main principles: write it down. Writing goals forces clarity. It activates your mind to start looking for ways to make them happen. But Charlie also explains that goals aren't just about achievement. The real value lies in who you become while chasing them. He tells Michael to write 100 life goals and break them into short-, mid-, and long-term categories, using the example of saving \$50,000 in five years to start a business.

### My Reflection:

I've always written my goals down. In 2022, I wrote a 15-page letter to myself about where I wanted to be in five years. That letter played a big part in my decision to go back to school, so writing goals wasn't new to me.

What hit me harder in this chapter was the idea that goals transform you. I've usually focused on the result, like finishing school, getting certified, or moving up in my field. But now I'm starting to see how the process itself is just as important. It's shaping my work

ethic, my discipline, and how I handle stress. That shift gives my goals more meaning. It's not just about achieving something. It's about becoming the kind of person who can.

## **Chapter 5 – The Proper Use of Time**

Michael tells Charlie he doesn't have time to work on goals. Between work and family, he feels overwhelmed. Charlie shares one of Mr. Davis's strongest beliefs: we all suffer from the pain of discipline or the pain of regret. Discipline weighs ounces, but regret weighs tons.

Charlie explains that time is limited. Every day we spend is one we'll never get back, so we need to use it wisely. He warns about getting trapped by "urgent" tasks that feel important but actually pull us away from our long-term goals. Without a personal plan, we end up following someone else's, and those plans rarely have our best interests at heart.

### **My Reflection:**

This chapter was uncomfortably real. I was supposed to start school in 2020 after my brother graduated. COVID delayed me, but honestly, I delayed myself too. I got comfortable. Then in 2023, it hit me. If I had started when I planned, I'd be in my third year now. That realization stung. I felt like I had wasted time.

Now I understand exactly what this chapter is saying. Time is going to pass no matter what. You can either spend it building your future or look back full of regrets. I'm trying to be more intentional with my time now. I remind myself that every day matters. Every decision adds up. Even when life gets chaotic, I need to stay focused on the bigger picture.

## Chapter 6 – Surround Yourself With the Best People

Michael goes to see Charlie again and shares some good news. He finally wrote down his 100 goals and sorted them into categories. Charlie congratulates him and introduces the next pillar: surround yourself with the best people.

Charlie explains that the people we spend time with shape how we think, what we say, and how we live. He asks Michael to think about his three closest friends, who all seem stuck, angry, or unmotivated. Even though they've been friends for years, Charlie challenges him to consider what kind of influence they really have.

He introduces a framework:

- **Disassociation** – people you need to cut off
- **Limited association** – people you see less often
- **Expanded association** – people you spend more time with because they challenge and inspire you

He explains that successful people build strong, positive relationships on purpose. To attract better people, you have to become better yourself.

### My Reflection:

This chapter made me think about my own circle. I'm the youngest in my friend group and I love my girls. We've been through a lot. But I'm starting to move in a different direction. I'm not better than them, but I'm in a new season that demands more discipline and focus.

At work, I'm surrounded by smart, driven people. My manager is one of the main reasons I went back to school. He gives me work that aligns with my degree, especially in coding and

Al, and he always pushes me to grow. That kind of support has done more for my confidence than anything else.

This also reminded me of something I read in *Atomic Habits*: “If an engineer isn’t working at the moment, is he still an engineer?” The answer is yes, because identity isn’t just about action. It’s about mindset. That stuck with me. It reminded me that who I’m becoming matters more than what I’m doing at any one time. So now, instead of networking just to say I did, I focus on who I’m becoming and how I show up. I want to attract people who are on a similar path.

## **Chapter 7 – Be a Life-Long Learner**

Charlie shares the next pillar: be a lifelong learner. He explains that formal education gives you a foundation, but self-education is what leads to real success. He quotes Mr. Davis: formal education will make you a living. Self-education will make you a fortune.

Michael resists the idea at first. He says books are expensive and question their value.

Charlie pushes back, saying not reading has already cost him years of progress. He argues that books give us access to the thoughts of the greatest minds and are one of the most powerful tools for growth. Charlie also points out that learning happens in other ways, like observing others and reflecting on your own experiences. By the end, Michael is convinced and agrees to read *The Magic of Thinking Big* before their next meeting.

### **My Reflection:**

I loved this chapter because it aligns so closely with how I live. I’ve always believed in

lifelong learning. We have more access to knowledge than ever before, and I think it's a waste not to use it.

Last year, I set out to read the entire Bible and 23 other non-fiction books. I didn't finish all of them, mostly because of how busy school and work got. But I didn't give up. I adjusted. This year, my goal is 8 non-fiction books and 365 Bible verses, one a day. That balance helps me stay grounded and consistent.

I've already read / listened to a few books from Mr. Davis's list, and now *The Magic of Thinking Big* is going on my next reading list. Books like that help me reset when things get chaotic. They remind me of my purpose and what I'm building toward. This chapter reinforced something I've always believed. Growth never stops. If I want to build the life I see for myself, I need to keep feeding my mind, spirit, and vision.

**Degree Program:** Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Applied Artificial Intelligence

The top three skills I've developed are:

### **1. Python Programming and Object-Oriented Design**

I've had the chance to get a lot of hands-on experience writing code in Python. I've also learned how to apply object-oriented principles and use data structures effectively.

These skills are really important for building AI applications that actually work.

## **2. AI Model Implementation (Generative AI, NLP, Vision)**

Between my classes and getting certified as a Microsoft Azure AI Engineer, I've learned how to design and deploy AI solutions. That includes working with generative AI, natural language processing, and computer vision.

## **3. Technical Problem Solving**

Because of my background in technical support and network monitoring, I've developed a strong problem-solving mindset. I've learned how to stay calm under pressure, figure things out quickly, and use data to make smarter decisions. Now that I'm studying AI, I can see how those same skills apply to building smarter systems that actually solve real problems in tech operations.