



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Why Not A River?

~~Despite the fact I have recently returned my Avis Rent-A-Car charge card because of their refusal to adjust an overcharge, the organization has something going for it.~~

In "Up The Organization," the president of Avis tells the story of the fantastic growth of the company. It started when the president said, "We're going to define our objective." It took six months, but when the dust had settled they had a 23 word objective: "We want to become the fastest growing company, with the highest profit margin, in the business of renting and leasing vehicles without drivers."

To achieve their objective they had to get rid of everything that didn't fulfill it. Some heads rolled and a lot of folks got angry, but in the end — after they decided what they were not going to do — they became successful.

Deciding what you are not going to do is equally important as deciding what you are going to do. In fact you

cannot do what you are supposed to, until you stop doing what you are not supposed to.

Producers get life sorted out. They eliminate in order to concentrate. They set up priorities and put on blinders. They learn how to focus. And to say "no."

This is the difference between the achiever and the under-achiever. I look around at the people who have achieved and notice all of them have learned the secret of focus. They have learned to say "no" to the trivial and "yes" to the important. They have learned to tell the "urgent" to wait until they finish the "important." They have learned to shut out all but the priority issues of life. Like the Apostle Paul, they forget those things which are behind and press on toward the mark of their high calling.

The major difference between a river and a swamp is that the river is going one place while the swamp tries to go everywhere. The river has a goal — an objective. It is determined to reach the sea. The

swamp, though, rebels against the discipline of riverbanks and remains a constant underachiever, producing only undesirable things like snakes and mosquitoes — with maybe a few alligators. Although swamps are notorious for bragging about all the territory they cover, they never will experience that glorious satisfaction of achieving one thing — reaching the sea.

Swamps are like a friend of mine who is an expert in nine different areas — from engineering to theology — but can't hold down a single job.

The achiever learns to say "no," especially to the good, in order to produce the best. He runs the risk of making people angry, of being called narrow, ("What's wrong with breeding a few frogs and snakes?") — but he achieves his goal.

It's not a sin to be a one-talent person. The sin lies in wanting to do 10 things with your one talent, and getting so frustrated you wind up achieving nothing at all.