

Life Planning Workshop
Or “Some things I wish someone had told me when I was younger”

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“I’m so disorganized”
 “I can’t get my act together”
 “My life is a mess”
 “I’m so bored”
 “I have no idea what I’m doing tomorrow.”
 “I’m lost in life – no vision or direction.”

I’ve heard these words many times – in conversations over breakfast, in my capacity as a pastor, in the living room of many homes. The words do not always come from people whose lives are falling apart or who are on the verge of some disaster. They may be from men and women who appear very busy and seem to have it all together.

At first I was shocked, but now several years later I realize it’s a common struggle. Join us in a very basic yet fundamental workshop on how to make life plans and put a bit of order into your world. Our two major themes will be focusing on priorities and making life goals.

Why is this Workshop Important?

- **NEGATIVE:** Boredom, apathy, disorganization, idleness, laziness, feeling of being lost, depression, lack of motivation, in a rut/gutter, confused, giving up
 All breeding grounds for sin – the devil’s tools
- **POSITIVE:** Every Christian has the potential for an abundant, fruitful life
 - God is intrinsically interesting (go deeper, think wider)
 - John 15:8
 “This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit”
 - John 10:10
 “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”
 - There is such a concept as “Crowns” to be sought after by Christians
 Handout – “Crowns”

Making Life Goals – Some Preliminary Comments

Not Sinful To Make Plans:

- God has a *Purpose* for our lives
 - Colossians 1:16b
 “...all things were created by him and for him.”
 - Psalm 138:8a
 “The Lord will fulfill *his purpose* for me;”
 - Acts 13:36a
 “... David had served God’s purpose in his own generation,”

- God has a *Plan* for our lives
 - Ephesians 2:10
For we are God's workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*
 - Psalm 139
 - 13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.
 - 16 your eyes saw my unformed body. *All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*
 - Acts 17:26b
“...and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.”
 - Jeremiah 29:11
For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.
- It is *expected* that godly people will make plans
 - Psalm 20:4 (part of a blessing)
May he give you the desire of your heart and *make all your plans* succeed.
 - Proverbs 12:5
The plans of the righteous are just, but the advice of the wicked is deceitful.
 - Proverbs 16
 - 1 *To man belong the plans of the heart*, but from the LORD comes the reply of the tongue.
 - 2 All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the LORD.
 - 3 *Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.*
 - 9 *In his heart a man plans his course*, but the LORD determines his steps.
 - Romans 15 (Paul's plans)
 - 23 But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you,
 - 24 *I plan to do so when I go to Spain.* I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while.
 - Isaiah 32:8
But the noble man makes noble plans, and by noble deeds he stands.
 - 1 Corinthians 9:26
Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.
- Consider the life of Robert Wilson (handout)
- We are called to love God with all our minds – not to be ‘mindless’ in our walk
 - Mark 12:30 (The Greatest Commandment)
Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul *and with all your mind* and with all your strength.

- The unexamined life is not worth living
 - Practice journaling (don't 'go cheap' on the purchase of a journal)
- Knowing yourself (your gifts and weaknesses) is one of the greatest gifts you can give to the world
- Easier to be spontaneous when you have plans
 - Can't enjoy a vacation unless you've got a job
 - Can't score if you don't have a goal
 - Fail to plan, plan to fail
- Life gets intentional (everything – ie. conversations, shopping, etc. has a purpose)
 - You don't want to 'go nowhere fast' – like a plane with no destination
 - Advocating intentionality – even if it's intentional fun!
- When you know where you're going, it's easier to ask others to join you
 - In all areas (career – retain employees, relationships, inspiring others, etc.)

Making Life Goals – Some Concrete Suggestions

Step One – PRAY

- Spend an extended period of time in prayer & the Word
 - Listen to God first – avoid distractions
 - Let God 'grab' your face in His hands
 - What gets your attention, gets you (this is why they spend millions of dollars for a 30 second TV ad during the Super Bowl)
 - The longer you pray, the easier it will be
- Prayer helps to avoid pride – everything is tentative depending on God's plans
 - James 4
 - 13 Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money."
 - 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.
 - 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."
 - 16 As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.
- Ask for the Spirit's leading
 - Acts 16
 - 6 Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.
 - 7 When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.
 - 8 So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.
 - 9 During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."
 - 10 After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Step Two – WRITE THINGS DOWN

Gives you 100% memory

Clarifies thoughts – if you can't write it down, do you really have it?

The more work you do on your personal mission statement and goals, the better

- Choose the main areas of your life that you want to deal with
Don't deal with trivial matters – deal with the 'elephants' in your living room

Suggested areas to consider:

Career and Financial Goals
Spiritual Life and area of service
Relationships
Health

- Develop a Mission Statement (show my "Lifetime Goals")
Demonstrates your values and purpose in life
Brainstorm, dream big!
- Start from back to front (5 yr. plan, then a 1 year plan)
In general, 5 yr. plans tend to be far less than what is accomplished
And 1 year plans tend to be overly optimistic
- Develop **SMART** Goals:
Specific,
Measurable,
Accountable,
Realistic,
Timeline-oriented (due dates)

i.e. I want to weigh so much in five years, run so far, daily exercise, report to..

- Consider opposition/obstacles and contributing factors (Force Field Analysis)
I'll get a trainer, join a health club, run with someone every morning
Obstacles: cost, time, equipment
How I'll free up time, set alarm clock, go to sleep by, rewards
- Suggested Books:
"Purpose Driven Life" by Rick Warren
"Ordering Your Private World" by Gordon MacDonald
"Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" by Stephen Covey
"What Color Is Your Parachute?"
"Life on the Edge" by Dr. James Dobson

Step Three – SHOW YOUR WORK TO OTHERS FOR THEIR COMMENTS

- Get the advice of friends and advisors
 - Godly mentors (different mentors for different aspects)
 - Proverbs 15:22
"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed."
 - find accountability partners who have the authority to ask you the 'tough' questions

Step Four – GET STARTED

- Easier to steer and direct a moving car than one that is parked
- Jogging – no good time to start, no excuses, can't stop, never easy

Step Five – PERIODIC FEEDBACK AND REVIEW

- Continually 'adjust' your plans as you go along
- Remember to deal with Priorities and the important (not urgent) things
Most important things not urgent, most urgent things not important ('tyranny of the urgent')

Illustrations:

- Bethlehem Steel Consultant – First things first
- Big Stones, Small Stones, Sand, Water – do big things first
- Sharpen the Saw (education, training) don't work harder, work smarter
- Life's first priority is to enjoy God – become a Christian magnet

Some Warnings

- Plans are just a tool – don't be 'burdened' by them or let them weigh heavily on your conscious
- Not advocating a full To Do list (When you die, you'll still have a long list!)

Illustration: my brother-in-law Luc and his full closet theory
Before adding anything, what can you toss out?

Don't go full tilt, 24/7

Sometimes sleep is the most godly thing to do
(need extended sleep, not disjointed sleep, to get rid of trivia)

Don't burn candle at both ends, live like a chicken without a head

Why are you so busy? What are you trying to prove?

Do one thing at a time-only schedule on large task for the morning, noon & night

Remember the need for a Sabbath

"If you're stressed out as a pastor of 50, you'll be stressed out as a pastor of 500"

Lee Iacocca "If he can't manage to book a small vacation with his family, why should I entrust him with the company's millions?"

We advance like caterpillar (stretch, relax, stretch, relax)

We need 'margins for error' (contingencies) in our lives (make 'space for God')

- Learn "when to say yes, and when to say no"
Read the classic "*Boundaries*" by Cloud and Townsend
- Success is faithfulness, not amount of fruit or results (those are up to God)
Who's in your grandstand? Get everyone off except God

- Take advantage of opportunities – Kyros vs. Chronos time (Good Samaritan)