

Life Planning Tool

Adapted from Brian Howard and Daniel Harkavy

Getting started

1. The **purpose** of this life-planning tool is to intentionally think through the major areas of your personal life (not your professional life) and prioritize particular areas for growth in the next year. This process involves assessing where you are in life, identifying what is important to you, writing out a vision for who you want to be, and putting specific action plans in place to carry out your vision.
2. You need to set aside one **full day** to complete this. We're talking eight hours of consecutive, uninterrupted time to think through your life. Think of this as a personal planning retreat.
3. You need to go Amish for one day when you do this. That means turn off your computer, your smartphone, or anything else that might chirp or buzz to break your focus. All the planning and thinking should be done on paper to make sure you're focused.
4. Bring a notebook, pen, and a Bible. Start your day with extended Bible reading, prayer, and journaling. Confess your sins to God and practice repentance. Consider reading through large portions of the book of Proverbs to incline your heart to practical life thinking and wisdom.

Evaluate Your Life and Priorities

1. Think through these categories and evaluate two things. **First**, rate yourself from 1-10 by asking yourself, "*how am I doing?*" in each area. Honest self-assessment is vital here (Romans 12:3). If you think you are doing pretty well in an area, indicate that.
2. **Second**, rank each of these priorities, from 1-10, in order of what you believe to be the most important for you to focus on over the course of the next year. *Use each number only once*. When you're done, you should have your priorities ranked from most to least important.

Note: It is important that you **do not moralize** these areas. As you evaluate these areas, ask yourself, "*am I satisfied with how things are going in this area? Is this area in my life in crisis? Are the other areas of my life in more urgent need of attention?*" For some people, their top priority might be to develop some recreational hobbies; for someone else, it might be friendships, or even learning how to type. Someone else may decide that his or her marriage needs more attention. Someone may choose to do counseling to address personal issues. That's totally fine.

Life Priority Areas	How am I doing?	Priority Level
Relationship with God		
Finances		
Family (Parents, Siblings, In-laws)		
Self Development		
Marriage		
Health		
Recreation/Hobbies		
Children		
Friendships		
Career		
Other		

Optional: Other helpful steps in the process:

- Write out a definition of success for you.
- What do you want to be known for?
- What do you want to be remembered for?
- What's most important to you in life?

Choose the life priorities that you would like to focus on

1. Choose 3-4 of the areas from step 1 areas that you want to prioritize over the next year. (Examples: Marriage, Finances, Health etc.)
2. Give each area it's **own page** in a new document. (If you have 4 life priorities you will have 4 pages in your document.)

Write a Vision Statement for each Priority

1. Write this statement in the **Present Tense**.
2. Define exactly who you want to be in each life priority. What do you hope to see when you look into your own future?
3. Feel free to search the **Scripture** as you determine what God has called you to be.

4. Example of a marriage vision statement *“I am a man who loves and leads my wife. My marriage is the number one priority human relationship in my life and my wife can clearly see that this is the case. She respects me, sees me as a godly and loving leader in our marriage. My wife sees me as a man who puts her interests before mine and lives out love as defined in 1 Corinthians 13.”*

Make a plan for growth using specific activities

1. The key question that you are answering here is **“what am I going to do in order to grow in this area?”** What will you do daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly or annually to grow in each of my priorities?
2. Identify 3-5 **strategies**/action steps that will help you grow in each area.
3. These should be written down as action plans that are **measurable** and that can be completed. For example:
 - a. *Goal:* Grow in intimacy with my wife.
 - i. *Action step:* I will take my wife out for weekly date nights.
 - ii. *Action step:* I will budget money for meals out, etc.
 - iii. *Action step:* I will find a babysitter who can commit to being there
 - iv. *Action step:* I will write encouraging notes/emails to my wife once per month this year.
 - v. *Action step:* I will pray with my wife five nights per week.
 - b. *Goal:* Grow in my knowledge of scripture.
 - i. *Action step:* I will choose a bible reading plan to implement.
 - ii. *Action step:* I will spend 30 minutes each day in God’s Word.
 - iii. *Action step:* I will memorize one key verse per month.
 - c. *Goal:* Grow in my physical fitness
 - i. *Action step:* I will run for 30 minutes, four times per week
 - ii. *Action step:* I will use an app on my iPhone to keep track
 - d. *Goal:* Grow in self-development
 - i. *Action step:* I will choose 12 books to read in the coming year

Ten ways to begin to live out your life plan

1. Record your action plans in your calendar as commitments.
2. Remember they are your life priorities.
3. If you can’t enter these activities into your calendar, spend more time on this step. You need to be able schedule and track your progress and success. Each action plan must be quantifiable and measurable.
4. Read your life plan weekly to assess where you are.
5. Friday morning or Monday morning are two good times to do this.
6. Record this in your calendar weekly as an appointment
7. Plan the following week based on your priorities.
8. Find a partner who will hold you accountable in these areas of your life, so that you can reach the goals you have set for yourself.
9. Meet monthly to review together
10. Read Jonathan Edwards’ resolutions for ideas and inspiration.

SAMPLE LIFE PLAN

Vision

I am a man who lives his life with a passion to honor and glorify God, my creator. I live a gospel-centered life in light of my salvation through the person and work of Jesus Christ. I consistently am devoted to communicating with God in prayer and daily spend time in the Scriptures so that I can learn about him and how I can glorify him. The result of this is that my I am a holy and godly human being who loves and honors God.

Key Scripture:

2 Timothy 2:22 "So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."

Action Plans:

1. I will read 1 chapter of the Bible every day and think about it throughout the day.
2. I will continue on until I have read the whole Bible
3. I will keep a weekly Sabbath day from work.
4. I will memorize the book of Colossians. (2 verses per week)
5. I will listen to one sermon weekly from both Tim Keller and John Piper and be pastored by them.