



# How to Create a Life Plan

*Love Deeply Tool*

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## How to Create a Life Plan

As you may know, I wrote an e-book called, *Creating Your Personal Life Plan*. In this tool, I share what a life plan is, why you need one, and how to begin creating one.





## How to Create a Life Plan

Over the course of my life, I have worked with a lot of planners. But I have met a few life planners—people who have a written plan for their lives.

Most are passive spectators, watching their lives unfold a day at a time. They may plan their careers, the building of a new home, or even a vacation. But it never occurs to them to plan their life. As a result, when they get into their 40s, 50s, and 60s, many of them are left wondering what went wrong.

They have become victims of The Drift. This is a metaphor for living without a plan.

Unfortunately, most people don't change course until something traumatic happens that gets their attention.



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## What is a life plan?

A life plan is a short written document (8–12 pages long). It is created by you for you. It describes how you want to be remembered. It articulates your personal priorities. It provides the action plans necessary to take you from where you are to where you want to be ... in every major area of your life. It is most of all a living document that you will tweak and adjust as necessary.

But don't be deceived by its brevity. Length does not necessarily correlate to impact.

- The Gettysburg address is only 256 words—a little more than a
- The Declaration of Independence is 902 words—about four
- The Sermon on the Mount is about 2,500 words long—about eleven

A life plan contains your answers to three powerful questions.



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## QUESTION 1: HOW DO I WANT TO BE REMEMBERED?

I have often found in planning anything that the best place to begin is at the end. What outcome do you want? How do you want the story to end? How do you want to be remembered when you are gone?

In a Commencement Address at Stanford University, Steve Jobs said it this way,

“Remembering that I’ll be dead soon is the most important tool I’ve ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything—all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure—these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important.”

In creating a life plan—and answering this first question—it is helpful to identify the key people in your life. How do you want them to remember you? I have seven individuals or groups that matter most to me:

- God
- Debi
- My children
- My parents
- My friends
- My colleagues
- My followers



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Then I wrote under each one, how I want them to remember me. For example, under “Debi” I wrote:

*I want Debi to remember how I loved her, understood her, and helped her accomplish her dreams. I want her to remember specific times that we shared together—times we laughed, times we cried, times we spent discussing things that were important to both of us, and times we just held one another and ...*

Under “My Colleagues,” I wrote:

*I want my colleagues to remember my servant-leadership, my integrity, my humility, and my commitment to having fun. I want them to remember how much they learned and grew as a result of knowing me. Most of all, I want them to remember how I stood for allowing Jesus to express himself through them so that they could be empowered to accomplish far more than they ever thought possible.*

Mark Twain said, “Let us endeavor so to live that when we come to die even the undertaker will be sorry.”



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## QUESTION 2: WHAT MATTERS MOST TO YOU?

Maybe you have never given yourself permission to ask this question.

- You know what's important to your parents.
- You may know what's important to your spouse.
- You most certainly know what is important to your
- But WHAT is important to you? What matters most?

This is a question about priorities. The life plan is built on a metaphor that compares your “life accounts” to bank accounts. Each account has a certain value. Again, let me illustrate from my own life plan. I have eight accounts:

- Spiritual
- Self
- Debi
- Children
- Friends
- Career
- Finances
- Ministry



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#1 is no surprise. Spiritual people often put that account first, but after that, they often get confused. What comes next? your spouse? your kids? career? I want to suggest that you consider putting yourself next. What does the flight attendant say right before the plane takes off?

In the event of a change in cabin pressure, panels above your head will open revealing oxygen masks. If this happens, reach up and pull the mask toward you until the tube is fully extended. Place the mask over your nose and mouth, slip the elastic strap over your head, and adjust the mask if necessary. Breathe normally and know that oxygen is flowing. Remember to secure your own mask before assisting others.

The bottom line is this: If you don't take care of yourself, you can't take care of anyone else.





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### QUESTION 3: HOW CAN I GET FROM HERE TO WHERE I WANT TO BE?

The other day I got to thinking a life plan is like a GPS System. This is true in at least seven ways.

1. A GPS requires you to input your destination.
2. A GPS gets you to your destination faster with less hassle.
3. A GPS gives you constant feedback on your progress
4. A GPS helps you get back on track when you get off.
5. A GPS re-routes you around roadblocks.
6. A GPS is not always accurate.
7. A GPS requires an investment.

In creating your life plan, you then create an action plan to get you from here to your destination. You do this for every major area of your life.

It consists of three parts. (In the e-book, I actually have five parts, but two of them are optional):

**1. Envisioned Future.** This is where you describe how the account looks when you have a “positive net” You need to describe the account when it is functioning at its best, using the present tense, like it is already a reality. For example:



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- My Children Account: “I am close friends with each of my c I demonstrate unconditional love and acceptance. They love to spend time with me because I am a good listener, a positive encourager, and a creative problem-solver. I am a mentor, teaching them by word and deed. Whenever they wonder what it means to be a spiritual leader, a loving husband and father, a committed friend, or a successful businessman, they look at me and model my behavior. I am the patriarch of a legacy of influential children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Together our lives are changing the world!”

**2. Current Reality.** Now it’s time to be brutally honest with Where are you in relation to your Envisioned Future? Don’t pull any punches. The more honest you can be, the more progress you will see.

I list these as a series of bullets and try to write down the first things that come to mind without too much analysis. In my Health account I said:

I feel good. My stamina is o.k. I was sick recently.



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- I'm not happy with my weight or my overall
- I am exercising one or two days a week for at least 60
- I am not presently doing consistent strength training. I am concerned this will eventually catch up with
- I am eating too much I would share more, but, frankly, it's too personal. And that is just how you want it. You want it to be so personal and so honest that if anyone else read it, you would be embarrassed.

**3. Specific Commitments.** This is where you specifically commit to certain actions in order to move from your Current Reality to your Envisioned Again, I list these as a series of bullets.

Using my Health account as an example, here are my specific commitments:

Run on treadmill at the Y four days a week.

- Do strength training three days a week
- Drink three liters of water a day from my blue water
- Make healthy food
- Record everything I eat in Lose It (a software application that tracks your calorie intake and exercise output).
- Get an annual physical and dental check-up. One of the beautiful things about a life plan is that it harnesses the power of incremental change over



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If this sounds interesting to you, I would encourage you to download my e-book, Life Plan. It's free. Then schedule a day or a couple of half-days to get alone by yourself, read through the e-book, and begin to map out a plan for your life.



## Thank You!

We hope you found this tool helpful for you and your partner. If you're looking for more helpful resources like this one, check out our website.

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