

As the date of our wedding approaches life seems to take on an ever-increasing, frenetic pace. But the weeks and days that remain before our wedding day are nothing compared to the years that lie ahead of us in marriage. What will our marriage look like and what legacy will we leave is a admittedly a more pressing question than what gift to give the groomsmen – unfortunately it will receive little or no attention. Therefore it is imperative that couples have a plan that goes beyond their honeymoon. We need to take a prayerful look into who we want to be so that we can work backward and organize our lives in order to accomplish what God has called us to live our lives for.

Biblically, Paul called this running the race well (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). Jesus modeled this principle of reverse engineering one's life to achieve specific God given objectives when he said that He had completed the work the Father had given him to do, thereby saying that he knew exactly what His life objectives were and strategically devoted His life to those thing (John 5:36).

This assignment will take some hours to complete and should be done together so that both of you are like minded on your priorities and the life God intends for you to live together. And, as life changes so must your plan which means this exercise may be undertaken yet again in various seasons of life. Our hope is not that you would simply have a great wedding, but that you would live a holy life and finish your life well in your marriage, family, and ministry without a failure in any area.

A Few GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Rule #1: Your life is a checkbook and you write a check every day (Time, Energy, Emotion)

Rule #2: You must see the macro before the micro. (Big picture down to the details)

Rule #3: To see the macro you need faith and an imagination.

Rule #4: If you are going to dream, dream big.

Rule #5: You must have a plan and it must be written down.

Rule #6: You must count the cost in everything you do.

Rule #7: You need a safe place to contemplate the downside (a sounding board)

Rule #8: Premeditated fun must be in your plan.

Rule #9: You need an acceptable release valve for your pressure or you will end up sinning or breaking down (Hobby, Exercise, Friend, etc.).

GUIDING PRACTICES

Step #1: Write out your 7 priorities and prioritize them in order of importance (e.g., physical health, spiritual health, marital intimacy, parenting success, preaching, teaching, counseling, administration).

Step #2: Pick a day for yourself, your family, and your ministry sometime in the future (e.g., 2 years, 5 years, 10 years) and envision that day. To do so, answer as many pertinent, specific questions about life on that day as you can reasonably generate. Examples include:

Health

- How much will you weigh?
- How much will you exercise weekly?
- What will have changed about your appearance?
- How many hours of sleep will you average a night?
- How many times a week will you nap?
- On which day will you Sabbath?
- What do your vacations and holidays look like?
- Other?

Practical

- Where do you live?
- What are the features of your home (e.g., parking for guests, square footage, size of yard, number of bedrooms, home study, hardwood floors, air conditioning)?
- What vehicle will you drive?
- What furniture and appliances will you have gotten rid of or acquired?
- Other?

Financial

- What is your job?
- Where do you work?
- How much money do you make?
- How is your money spent?
- How is your money saved?
- How is your money invested?
- How is your money tithed?
- What is your insurance, medical, and dental package?
- Other?

Marriage

- How often do you pray together?
- When is your date night?
- How do you take better care of one another?
- Why has your love grown?
- How has your home become a place for unplanned connecting?
- What brings you together?
- Other?

Family

- How many children will you have?
- How old will your children be?
- How will they be educated at that time?
- What special attention will each child need regarding their maturation up to that day?
- Which family and friends are you closest to as a family?
- Other?

Extended Family

- Which close relatives are not living?
- What is your relationship like with each close family member (e.g., mom, dad, brother, sister, grandparent)?
- How are families related to vacations and holidays?
- What has changed with your extended family?
- Other?

Friends

- Who are your closest friends?
- Which people have you dropped as friends?
- What things do you do with your friends?
- Who no longer has your direct phone number and/or email?
- Who have you invited into your lives to act as a life coach or mentor?
 - Before you engage that person will you ask you spouse, "Do you trust these people for me to have an accountability relationship with?"
- Other?

Learning

- What areas have you studied deeply?
- How many books have you read by that date? What are some of the titles?
- What other learning experiences have shaped you (e.g., conferences, mentors, spiritual disciplines)?
- How many minutes do you read each day?
- Other?

Ministry

- What ministry are you in?
- What role do you play?
- How much time do you invest weekly?
- How many nights a week are you out for ministry?
- What things are you no longer doing?
- What new responsibilities have you picked up?
- Other?

MAKING CHANGES

Changes

- What 3 things do you hope have changed with your spouse? Yourself? Your ministry?
- What top 3 emotion, time-, and energy-wasters do you need to drop immediately?
- What 3 changes in your life would make the biggest difference?

- What 3 things do you need the most (e.g., new car, computer, home office, cell phone, high speed wi-fi at home)?

- What obstacles are keeping you from living by your convictions (e.g., a cluttered house, no budget, lack of prayer time)?

People

List the people who are wasting your time and how many hours a month or year they take (include the time you are thinking about them).

Things

List the things you need (e.g., workout equipment at home or a gym membership, new appliances, car, computer, clothing, furniture, bed).

Handing Off

List all the things you can hand off to someone else (e.g., ordering groceries online and having them delivered, mowing your lawn, doing your taxes, household projects, watching kids, running errands, outsourcing dry cleaning and ironing, scheduling appointments, answering your phone).

- **Establishing Your Schedule**

- What will your weekly schedule look like in light of your new priorities?
- What changes must be made?
- What does a typical week look like?

PROTECTING YOUR PRIORITIES

Question #1: Can you do it?

1. Something you think you can control and you can = DO IT	3. Something you think you can control and you can't = LET IT GO
2. Something you think you can't control and you can = DO IT	4. Something you think you can't control and you can't = LET IT GO

Question #2: Should you do it?

<p>Quadrant 2</p> <p>These things are important and urgent. These are sudden crisis and critical things that demand to be done right away and must be done.</p>	<p>Quadrant 1</p> <p>These are things that are important and not urgent. They need to be done, but do not need to be done right now. These items are often the most easily overlooked.</p>
<p>Quadrant 3</p> <p>These things are not important but are urgent, often because they are important to someone else who is seeking to make them important to others. These items are the most deceiving because this person's pleading or demands can cause time and energy to be wasted.</p>	<p>Quadrant 4</p> <p>These things are not important and not urgent and therefore simply a waste of time and energy.</p>

Taken from Covey's "First Things"

The key is to regularly assess your schedule and work in 1 and 2 and get out of 3 and 4. For example, in you're your relationship with God and with your spouse, finances, etc. If 1 is not done, then the important matter slips into 2 and becomes urgent because it has reached a crisis phase.

We must be proactive - identify what is important and what is urgent and do not allow people to take up your time with 3 and 4 when such things can be done by someone else, or should not be done at all.

Question #3: Are you working from guilt or conviction?

Question #4: Should you have a "TO do" list or a priority list each day?

Question #5: What good is it to put something on your daily priority list if you don't plan to do it?

Question #6: Why do we exchange results for busyness?