**Setting Up Your Year to Flourish**

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"My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life." Jesus, John 10:10, NLT

“Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” Ps. 90:12

**Making More of Your Limited Time on the Planet**

Lord willing, an entire year is in front of you.

A year likely filled with opportunities for making a real difference, for growing, and experiencing times of rich happiness.

Yet, that same year can be one where you end up staying the same, waste real opportunities for doing what matters most, and perhaps slide deeper into regret and passivity. And, if you haven’t been growing for quite some time, people you care about are likely suffering as well because of your stagnation.

But, what if you could take some simple steps--that over the span of weeks, months and years--could really help you *value what matters most*, and ultimately help you do your very best to bring even greater glory to God? Where, as Paul says, you are truly making the most of the opportunities set in front of you (Eph. 5:3). Wouldn’t that be powerful? And perhaps just as important, when you are really clear about what matters the most, it is a lot easier to say “no” to what doesn’t.

**The Inevitable Need for Structure and Intentionality**

Given the countless asks for our precious time, and how the Enemy loves to have us waste or squander time, *having some kind* of planned, intentional structure for our weeks, months, and year can be tremendously valuable.

I know structure can sound confining to some people (like that nasty word “budget”). Yet, if we can set up structure the right way, it can help us live our lives in ways that actually *generates momentum*, in actively moving towards the good things I’ve mentioned.

In light of I’ve learned personally and over the past 15 years coming alongside Christian leaders, I’ve put together a framework that I pray will help you do just that.

This exercise is designed to help you clarify what *is absolutely the most important to you*, and then get that scheduled in your life a realistic way. It places more weight on the items that are most vital over the long term, because that is where most of us tend to go off the rails and unwittingly hurt ourselves and those we care about the most.

You are welcome to add or subtract as you see fit. The main thing is to make it work for you.

Investing just an hour or two of prayerful thought and reflection (okay, for some of you, maybe more) to create a one or two page document should provide you with a living exercise that will ideally help you flourish in powerful ways this coming year.

**Reviewing the Document Regularly to Greatly Increase Its Value**

Once you’ve finished this document, you have done something significant. But, the real value of the exercise has only just begun. Reviewing it regularly can be enormously helpful. Reviewing this may frankly sound dumb and boring on the front end. But think about time you spend in the Word regularly. Nearly every person reading this document has read the Bible over and over. Why? Because it is God’s Word. *And* because of how the Holy Spirit works in us as we continue to spend time in the Word, it continues to transform us, providing richer and richer insights that change our lives.

Now of course none of us are going to be writing any new Scriptures! The point here is that as we prayerfully develop godly, life-giving answers to these questions, and then as *we review* what we have written on a weekly or monthly basis, it gives the Holy Spirit a chance to help us feel good about and build on progress we have made (with God's help), and it also provides opportunities for us to make adjustments where they need to be made. Over time, as we work on the document, and perhaps journal on progress and setbacks, it can become a living document that enables us to see God's faithfulness in transforming our lives, *and* the ways that we have grown in our ability to help change other people's lives as well.

**Sharing the Document with your Spouse, Coach/Mentor/Therapist, Accountability Partner, and perhaps even your Boss**

What can make this document even more powerful, is to share it with those closest to you. Of course this is completely your choice. I do know that when we share our greatest commitments and most important aspirations with those who love us and know us well, it brings a whole new level of possibilities to the document. The people who know us really well have much better vantage point on what is realistic and what is unrealistic. (Many of us when we fill exercises like these out, myself included, can set up unrealistic goals, or just simply too many of them, and we can unwittingly sabotage our best efforts. Then it’s really tempting to drop all the invaluable attempts at structure that we simply just need.) Sharing the answers to these questions with some or maybe even all of the people listed above can help you be held accountable for the commitments that are most important to you, provide much-needed support and encouragement for progress made, along with help in navigating disappointments as well.

Sample answers are provided throughout the document to help stimulate your thinking and provide some ideas to perhaps even build on. After you have read through document, all of the questions posed are listed, so you can address them all in one place. I encourage you cut-and-paste that part of the document to make it your own document. After you review your document each time, I encourage you to make a note of when you reviewed it, and perhaps consider writing briefly about progress made and adjustments that you are making to make it fit your life better. Ideally you will have a new document every year that helps you build on the one prior, until eventually your window of contribution closes, and you then joyfully join those who will “rest from their labor, as their good deeds will follow them” (Rev. 14:13). Let’s join that group with as much life we can have in our souls, and times of rich contribution behind us!

Okay, it’s time for the exercise.

Start with the foundation. Your life calling.

**Your Life Calling**

For a believer, your life calling is essentially a mission statement ordered around God.

It is meant to be a rock, (in a sense), to ground you in what matters most to you, and provide a basis for your big decisions.

It is meant to be holistic, fairly brief, and something you can memorize.

It is meant to provide a compelling framework to help you shape your schedule in ways that help you honor your most important priorities, such as growing in the Lord and investing in your most important relationships.

Lastly, your sense for your life calling should be intrinsically motivating; it should make your heart feel energized and engaged because of how it speaks to your soul.

Here are some examples:

*‘My life calling is to glorify God by flourishing and helping my family flourish.”*

*“Live my life to the fullest, as I continue to grow and discover and learn who God has created me to be.”*

*“My life calling**is to deepen my identity in God and my relationship with Him, so that I can reflect His character to others by loving, serving, and leading well.”*

**Your Vocational Calling**

For the bulk of the people doing this exercise, you will spend at least three fourths of your life on your vocation. That is a big deal!

Your vocational calling is centered around the heart of your ministry/job role, in whatever capacity that currently is. The essence of your vocational calling is how you are to bring more good to the world, and how you are to positively impact lives, for the glory of God. Your calling statement as well should be fairly brief and is meant to be written in a way that is motivating and grounding for you. Like your life calling, your vocational calling statement as well is meant to help you distill what is most important, to help you be crystal clear on most important priorities.

Here are some examples:

“My vocational calling is to: Help others see and live out their God –given potential and believe that God has a special calling for them.”

**Modeling growth in God’s love** as I **lead in creating a vibrant culture of health** within **thriving teams** of maturing Christians that are lovingly **guiding the young** people of Rockford towards flourishing in God’s grace.

“My vocational calling is to glorify God by flourishing and helping Christian leaders flourish.”

**My vocational calling:** is to model a flourishing life of balance with appropriate margin. Living into the creative tension of self-care and other-care. Leading in such a way that I replace myself by sharing leadership, making disciples, equipping saints for ministry.

**Your Core Values**

Clarifying our values can be enormously helpful in guiding our decision making and orienting our weekly and monthly schedules. (If you need a framework and set of exercises for helping you clarify your values, please go to www.finishwellgroup.com, click on the Resources tab at the top right hand of the screen, and click on Vision and Values work.)

When you have done your values work, I encourage you to put those here, for you to have more perspective on what is most important to you.

Core Values:

Transformation, Depth, Order, Healthy Structure, Contribution

Vibrancy, Fullness, Creative Tension, Joy

Beauty, Play, Rest, Renewal,

Strong Relationships, Finishing Well, Pleasing God

**Core Values**

* Loving family
* Delighting in God
* Making a positive difference
* Beauty
* Being in the present

My **core values** are:

 Creativity, Leisure, Family

 Learning, Organization, Problem-solving

 Reliability, Authenticity, Leadership

 Perseverance, Service, Making a Difference

**Top Priorities and Most Important Goals**

“If everything is important, nothing is important.” Source Unknown

Once you’ve finished your calling statements and values, I encourage you to prayerfully answer the following questions to help you see what the most important opportunities are God has put in front of you at this point in time.

What are my top personal priorities for the year? (up to 3)

Sample:

1. Grow in the Lord.
2. Love my wife and kids really well.
3. Live a rich and satisfying life

What are my top vocational priorities for the year? (up to 3)

Sample:

* Create two new sustainable small group environments
* Identity 3 new champions for community life groups
* Attempt whenever possible to share ministry with others. Work less alone / work to replicate and replace myself

What are my top vocational priorities for the next six weeks? (up to six)

Sample: In the next six weeks I will:

* Wrap up our Wednesday Night Out winter small groups initiative
* Plan and request Sabbatical through the office of Pastoral Ministries
* Be a spiritual mentor and leader during our upcoming Belize Mission Trip (March 1-11)
* Strengthen our existing four worship teams and launch a fifth Worship Team
* Continue strong with personal men’s small group

How can I set up my schedule to honor those top priorities, to help ensure that I execute around them?

Samples:

“I'm consistently blocking off time in the morning to work on my top priorities. I am sharing this document with accountability partners. I am reviewing this document on a weekly basis as well.”

“I’m setting a limit of 12 hours of work on sermons and using time in the mornings to block off time to work on these priorities. I am going to schedule time to do these things! I am reviewing this document every week.”

**Your Growth as a Person and a Leader**

Who you are as a person and leader profoundly shapes the kind of impact your life has. It is the most significant part of your legacy. It shapes everything you do. Investing in your continuing growth as a person and leader, to become more and more mature, is likely the most important thing you can do to ensure a rich legacy and a rich welcome into your eternal home.

But, due to the demands of leadership, the reality that growing is not “urgent,” and the way that real growth calls us out of our comfort zones and into some kind of vulnerability, it is tragically easy to neglect investing in our growth. As a fellow brother, I urge you actively reject the dark seduction of comfort and ease in how you live and lead...I am confident that’s not who you really want to be.

If we can intentionally pursue the growth we feel led by the Lord to go after, everyone is blessed around us. Our lives are richer, and the lives of those we lead are richer because they see us modeling growth. They are also given the gift of a stronger, healthier leader who inspires them by your growth, and who helps them mobilize and grow as well in ways that bring glory to God.

That said, please prayerfully answer these questions: (sample answers provided)

**Where do I to feel called to grow the most as a person in the next three months?**

To be more intentional in implementing these ideas, to schedule priorities and then protect them. To communicate the process to Whitney and to do the work. Just the discipline of implementing something new in my life in a sustainable way would be a huge accomplishment over the next three months!

**What am I going to do in order to grow in that area?**

Set aside each Friday afternoon to set up my personal and professional calendar and communicate/receive input from Whitney. Pray together for strength to follow through which can be a struggle for me.

**Where does that show up in my schedule?**

Right after lunch on Fridays so I can get a tentative schedule together ahead of time before reviewing it with Whitney during Leah’s nap at 1:30.

How will I feel if I reach that goal? Awesome. It would be great to look back and know I was intentional about creating a much better structure in my life to honor my life, family and calling in more and more significant ways.

**Where do I feel called to grow the most as a leader in the next three months?**

A growing priority for me as a leader is to model Christian growth and I am being very reactionary and sometimes unintentional about disciplined growth in Jesus. So, in this transition time between churches is a perfect time for me to grow in my ability to model something I know is really important and that I expect from my volunteers.

**What am I going to do in order to grow in that areas?**

I will schedule monthly half-days for spiritual retreats (maybe some occasional full ones as well). I will schedule an uncompromised hour of personal time with God each day as well as times to go to sleep at night (the real struggle)! I will schedule half an hour of ministry time each workday to devote to praying for those I minister to.

**Where does that show up in my schedule?**

Currently my personal time with God is a strong hour in the morning before 7 am

For now, I will schedule half days each month around events for my personal retreats.

**How will I feel if I reach that goal?**

I hope I would feel more loved of God more often. I hope I would feel more of God’s love for those I minister to. I know at the least I would feel less guilty, and more…substantiated as a Christian leader. I would feel peace about allowing time for God to speak into my life whether He does or doesn’t. I would feel as though I could minister from a place of consistency which is often not currently the case.

**Weekly/Monthly Time Investments and Commitments Vital**

**to Genuine Flourishing and Long Term Productivity**

Once we are clear on the above, we are very well positioned for a fruitful year. Congratulations! The next piece that is vital to creating healthy structure in order to flourish is our weekly routine. These are the parts of our lives that are the essential building blocks for building a fruitful, fulfilling life. Get this part down well and you are regularly executing the small things that make a huge difference over the years. Please prayerfully answer these questions. (If you want to rearrange the order of the items, or add or delete things that go with weekly or monthly habits that support you flourishing, please feel free to do that.)

**Regular Time with the Lord**

Schedule: when, for how long.

Sample: Every morning for roughly twenty five minutes to a half hour. 15 minutes in the Word, ten minutes in prayer, and 5 minutes journaling. Longer on the weekends as I can.

**Exercise**

Schedule: when, for how long.

Sample: Wednesdays and Fridays or a weekend day at the health club. Cardio, weights and swimming. 15 to twenty minutes cardio at health club. Mondays, Tuesday and Thursdays resistance work at home. Monday and Thursday twenty minutes of cardio (walk and or run).

Summary: Six days of resistance work, 4 days of cardio.

**Sleep**

*When you typically want to go to sleep, and how long you want to sleep*

Bed between 9:30 and 10 every weeknight, up between 5:30 and 6 am. 8 hours a night, if not a bit more.

**Diet**

*What kind of foods and quantities, including desserts.*

During the week: Breakfast and lunch with a healthy portion of protein to help with energy and weight maintenance. Dinner more relaxed but not big portions. Two nights during the week a small dessert.

Weekend: More relaxed, but not crazy indulgent

**Play**

*What are the fun things that you want to be a part of every week, that renew your soul, relieve stress and are simply fun.*

What activities, when:

Racquetball once every other week in the winter time.

Movie night once a week, or fun replacement

Fun with family playing a game once a week

Golf once a month in the summer, spring and fall. (Maybe twice a month in the summer!)

**Date night (or Fun Night with a Friend, if you’re not marrited)**

*Date nights, (or fun nights with a friend) are vital to honoring and strengthening your most important relationships. If you continually invest in those relationship, especially over the span of decades, you will experience some of the greatest joy life down here can bring.*

When: Every other Saturday night…an activity at least every other time that she really enjoys…that brings life to her soul and demonstrates my love for her in tangible ways. I will ask her to write out ideas ahead of time, and brainstorm as well to figure out ideas too.

**Deep Work on Projects**

*If we are going to make substantial progress on our most important priorities, we must schedule uninterrupted time for that.*

Please list the days and hours of the week that you would most consistently like to do deep work.

Sample: Monday Tuesday, Wednesday Thursday: 8:30 to 9:30. Break for exercise and walk, then deep work from 10:05 to 11:05.

**Time with Accountability Partner(s)**

*Having one or two mature friends that you can share everything with and who will pray for you is vitally important to continuing to grow, and avoid many of life's pitfalls.*

Please list who you meet with, or at the very least how often you meet with a friend or two on a monthly basis.

Michael twice a month, Tom once a month

**Time with Coach and/or Therapist**

*Granted I have a bias here, but I know from personal and professional experience that talking with someone who is professionally trained in helping you grow, and perhaps heal, is vital to flourishing. Leaders who regularly invest in coaching or therapy give themselves a much better chance at flourishing.*

If you're comfortable with this, please list who you meet with and how often below.

Sample: Dr. Keith, bi-monthly

**How will I feel if fulfill these at 80% or above for the year?** I will feel incredible. I will be healthier, more rooted and established in love, and more equipped to fulfill my calling. I will be very grateful for God giving me both the time and grace to use the time he gave me to grow well, and ideally my family and many others as well will be blessed as well by my humble efforts.

**Structure for the Year**

***What are the most important events that you need to prepare well for in this coming year***

Scheduled Wm/FM Events (Retreats for Women/Retreat for teen girls/Marriage Retreat

Plan & organize a large ministry outreach for Southern Union Women’s Convention

Trip to Ireland

Family Reunion (with siblings & families)

**Dates for your retreats and vacations**

*Intentionally setting aside time for retreats and vacations, especially at the beginning of the year, is vital to help reduce the general stress on our hearts and minds, provides much-needed breaks for renewal and rest and fun, and helps prevent burnout.*

Please list out the dates for your retreats and vacations in the coming year:

Retreat days on: Feb. 23rd, April 23rd, May 18, July 6, Sept. 14, Oct. 26, Dec. 7,

Willow Creek Leadership Summit August 9-10

Vacations: April 3-10, July 22-August 5, Oct 14, Nov. 21-23, Dec. 21-Jan 1st (roughly)

**Dates for fasting or other intermittent spiritual disciplines:**

*Some Christian leaders set aside time intentionally for fasting or other spiritual practices. If you embrace those, please list the activity and when you plan on doing it here:*

Fast the first Wednesday of each month, and on special occasions.

**What you most want out of your coaching work for the year?**

*If you have a coach or mentor, besides sharing your answers to the questions in this document, it can also be really helpful to share with them your sense for what the most important things are that you want out of your coaching work for this coming season or year. That helps the work stay fresh and be more productive.*

Please reflect on the top three things you want out of your coaching work in the coming season or year:

Sample #1

1: To help me put things in perspective as I seek to grow and mature

2: To help me grow in discipline and focus in regard to being more productive on my most important priorities.

3: To help me be stronger internally as I navigate my callings.

Sample #2

1. To help me put into action this yearly plan.

2. To help me process how to recruit an adequate youth staff

3 To help me process how to create positive youth culture

On a closely related note, if there is anything in particular you would like your coach to do differently support your growth and development please list that here:

Sample: Check in on how I am growing spiritually more often to support me in that area more.

Below is a clean document where you can put in your own answers. Again, the goal is to create a document that provides the best motivation and structure for you to honor what matters most in your life and calling. Please take some time to make this document real and motivating for you, and I am confident it will help you live a richer life with greater fulfillment and fewer regrets.

May God bless your efforts as you cooperate with Him!

**Setting Up Your Year to Flourish**

**Your Life Calling**

Your life calling is essentially a mission statement ordered around God.

It is meant to be holistic, fairly brief, and something you can memorize. Ideally, it provides a compelling framework to help you shape your schedule in ways that help you honor your most important priorities, such as growing in the Lord and investing in your most important relationships. Lastly, your sense for your life calling should be intrinsically motivating, it should make your heart feel energized and engaged because of how it speaks to your soul.

My life calling is to:

**Your Vocational Calling**

Your vocational calling is centered around the heart of your ministry/job role, in whatever capacity that currently is. The essence of your vocational calling is how you are to bring more good to the world, and how you are to positively impact lives, for the glory of God. Your calling statement as well should be fairly brief and is meant to be written in a way that is motivating and grounding for you. Like your life calling, your vocational calling statement as well is meant to help you distill what is most important, to help you be crystal clear on most important priorities.

My vocational calling is to

**Your Core Values**

If you have done your values work, I encourage you to put those here, for you to have more perspective on what is most important to you.

(If you need a framework and set of exercises for helping you clarify your values, please go to www.finishwellgroup.com, click on the Resources tab at the top right hand of the screen, and click on Vision and Values work.)

**Top Priorities and Most Important Goals**

Once you’ve finished your calling statements and values, I encourage you to prayerfully answer the following questions to help you see what the most important opportunities are God has put in front of you at this point in time.

What are my top personal priorities for the year? (up to 3)

What are my top vocational priorities for the year? (up to 3)

What are my top vocational priorities for the next six weeks? (up to six)

How can I set up my schedule to honor those top priorities, to help ensure that I execute around them?

**Your Growth as a Person and a Leader**

Who you are as a person and leader profoundly shapes the kind of impact your life has. It is the most significant part of your legacy. It shapes everything you do. Investing in your continuing growth as a person and leader, to become more and more mature, is likely the most important thing you can do to ensure a rich legacy and a rich welcome into your eternal home.

But, due to the demands of leadership, the reality that growing is not “urgent,” and the way that real growth calls us out of our comfort zones and into some kind of vulnerability, it is tragically easy to neglect investing in our growth. As a fellow brother, I urge you actively reject the dark seduction of comfort and ease in how you live and lead...I am confident that’s not who you really want to be.

If we can intentionally pursue the growth we feel led by the Lord to go after, everyone is blessed around us. Our lives are richer, and the lives of those we lead are richer because they see us modeling growth. They are also given the gift of a stronger, healthier leader who inspires them by your growth, and who helps them mobilize and grow as well in ways that bring glory to God.

That said, please prayerfully answer these questions:

Where do I to feel called to grow the most as a person in the next three months?

What am I going to do in order to grow in that areas?

Where does that show up in my schedule?

How will I feel if I reach that goal?

Where do I feel called to grow the most as a leader in the next three months?

What am I going to do in order to grow in that areas?

Where does that show up in my schedule?

How will I feel if I reach that goal?

**Weekly/Monthly Time Investments and Commitments Vital**

**to Genuine Flourishing and Long Term Productivity**

Once we are clear on the above, we are very well positioned for a fruitful year. Congratulations! The next piece that is critical to creating healthy structure in order to flourish is our weekly routine. These are the parts of our lives that are the essential building blocks for building a fruitful, fulfilling life. Get this part down well and you are regularly executing the small things that make a huge difference over the years. Please prayerfully answer these questions. (If you want to rearrange the order of the items, or add or delete things that go with weekly or monthly habits that support you flourishing, please feel free to do that.)

Regular Time with the Lord. Schedule: when, for how long.

Exercise *What kind of exercise(s) and when*

Sleep *When you typically want to go to sleep, and how long you want to sleep*

Diet *What kind of foods and quantities, including desserts.*

Play *What are the fun things that you want to be a part of every week, that renew your soul, relieve stress and are simply fun.*

What activities, when:

Date night: *Date nights are vital to honoring and strengthening your most important human relationship. If you continually invest in that relationship, especially over the span decades, you will experience some of the greatest joy life down here can bring.*

Deep Work on Projects: *If we are going to make substantial progress on our most important priorities, we must schedule uninterrupted time for that.*

Please list the days and hours of the week that you would most consistently like to do deep work.

Time with Accountability Partner(s)

*Having one or two mature friends that you can share everything with and who will pray for you is vitally important to continuing to grow, and avoid many of life's pitfalls.*

Time with coach and/or therapist

*Granted I have a bias here, but I know from personal and professional experience that talking with someone who is professionally trained in helping you grow, and perhaps heal, it is vital to flourishing. Leaders who regularly invest in coaching our therapy give themselves a much better chance at flourishing.*

If you're comfortable with this, please list who you meet with and how often below.

How will I feel if fulfill these at 80% or above for the year

**Structure for the Year**

Big events that you need to prepare for the most

*What are the most important events that you need to prepare well for in this coming year?*

Dates for your retreats and vacations

*Intentionally setting aside time for retreats and vacations, especially at the beginning of the year, is vital to help reduce the general stress on our hearts and minds, provides much-needed breaks for renewal and rest and fun, and helps prevent burnout.*

Please list out the dates for your retreats and vacations in the coming year, and even more importantly, put them in your calendar:

Retreat days on:

Vacations:

Dates for fasting or other intermittent spiritual disciplines:

*Some Christian leaders set aside time intentionally for fasting or other spiritual practices. If you embrace those, please list the activity and when you plan on doing it here:*

What you most want out of your coaching work for the year?

*If you have a coach or mentor, it can be very helpful to share with them this document as mentioned, but also to communicate with them your sense for what are the most important thing that you want out of your coaching work for this coming season or year. That helps the work stay fresh and be more productive.*

Please reflect on the top three things you want out of your coaching work in the coming season or year:

On a closely related note, if there is anything in particular you would like your coach to do differently support your growth and development please list that here:

*Dates reviewed, including reflections on progress, and other adjustments to make to your plan(s)*