

anything at all. Personal research can make or break a decision, so get facts from reliable sources. Often a wrong choice comes from leaving out pieces of the decision puzzle. However, be careful how long you take in this stage. I like Harold Geneen's reasoning: "If you wait to make an important decision until all the information that you might want is in, you will never make it in time. Depending on the risks, on what the stakes are, you have to settle for 75, 70 or 65 percent of the information that you need, because the time and the cost of getting, say, the last 25 percent are not commensurate with what you might gain by deferring the decision."⁴

3. Get wise counsel. Scripture tells us not to trust in our own wisdom but to seek advice from our Heavenly Father, who guarantees His promises. The New Testament writer James reminds us, "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you" (James 1:5 NIV). Secondly, check your facts and feelings with a friend or mentor, asking for his/her guidance.

4. Know the long-range impact. If you're making a major decision, this is the time to ask yourself whether anyone else will be affected by the choice you make. The truth is that we are all, to some extent, interconnected with other people, and the decisions we make will have consequences for them, as well. If marriage, career, or eternal destination is on your current list of decisions, you had better look at the

long-range implications.

5. Make a definite choice. If you are waiting for a thunderbolt from heaven or circumstances to line up by themselves, the chances are slim you will ever get a decision. Of course, if you procrastinate, time will dictate the final answer, but not necessarily the one you would choose. Hence, after gathering all the information, listening to your feelings, and seeking the wise counsel of others, it is time to bite the bullet and make that decision. Without a time limit, you will vacillate forever. My favorite author, Ellen White, wrote: "It is even more excusable to make a wrong decision sometimes than to be continually in a wavering position, to be hesitating, sometimes inclined in one direction, then in another."⁵

6. Manage the decision. Once you have had the courage to decide, that decision is of little value unless it is regularly managed. Keep in mind William Pollard's advice: "It is not always what we know or analyzed before we make a decision that makes it a great decision. It is what we do after we make the decision to implement and execute it that makes it a good decision."⁶

I hope these ideas will help you get started on creating your life-list today!

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The STEWPOT

A POTPOURRI OF PRACTICAL IDEAS to help you become a better steward

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DEVELOPING *a* LIFE-LIST

BY GORDON BOTTING DRPH, CHES, CFC

Imagine that most people have a bucket list of things they want to do or places they want to visit before they die. I have my own list, and several years ago I had the privilege of checking off three items.

For 45 years, I had wanted to visit the red-rose city of Petra. When I was a young evangelist, I preached about how archeology proves the Bible to be true. During my talks, I showed my audiences pictures of the Middle East, and one of my favorite themes was the secrets of the valley of Petra. To hike in, round the curve, and see before me the treasury building of that ancient civilization was a dream come true!

Another item I checked off was sailing through the Panama Canal. I was moved and inspired as I stood on the deck of the cruise ship and watched the water rise in the lock system built over one hundred years ago. My third accomplishment was climbing the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Twenty-five years earlier I had been to the same cathedral site, but the tower was being repaired, and I couldn't go up. What an experience to finally climb those many steps—always at an angle—and finally view the City of Pisa from the top!



STEWARDSHIP is a total lifestyle. It involves our health, time, talents, environment, relationships, spirituality, and finances.

WHAT'S A LIFE-LIST?

As fun as a bucket list is, I believe it's more important to have a life-list. What's a life-list? Coined by leadership expert and pastor John C. Maxwell, it's "a personalized list of things you want to do every day in your life. This list is motivated by dreaming about the sort of person you aspire to be rather than the kinds of things you want to do."¹

Start today, at the beginning of this New Year to make your life-list. What will you commit to doing each day to reflect your values and become who you want to be? Here are a few suggestions from Maxwell.²

1. "Your life list should consist of just a few things." - Too many good concepts will be overwhelming and you will soon discard it.
2. "Your life-list should consist of only the most important things." - It's not a to-do list of mundane things like cleaning your teeth or paying your bills. Instead, it's based on practices that will bring fulfillment and growth.
3. "Your life-list should reflect your values." - Famous basketball coach John Wooden carried around a life-list with seven items: "Be true to yourself. Make each day your masterpiece. Help others. Drink deeply from good books. Make friendship a fine art. Build shelter against a rainy day. Pray for guidance and give thanks for your blessings every day."³
4. "Your life-list should be your life-list." - It shouldn't be the goals of your spouse, your grandfather, or the preacher—just yours and yours alone. That is why it will take you more than a few days to develop such a list; it may take years.



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LIFE-LIST IDEAS

Here are some ideas to think about as you make your life-list.

Take care of myself. If you want to be a whole and healthy person, your greatest job is to take care of yourself first. That is what the flight attendant says to you when the oxygen mask falls down: look after yourself first and then your children. As you think about your life-list, ask



"Life is not the way it's supposed to be. It's the way it is. The way you cope with it is what makes the difference."

VIRGINIA SATIR

yourself: Am I getting enough exercise? Am I eating my five servings of vegetables each day? What emotions am I experiencing today?

Value those around me. If you want to appreciate others, make an effort to treat everyone as an A+ person. Am I giving others a word of encouragement when I can? Did I add value to someone today, and how did I

add that value? Did I display the love of God through my life?

Live generously. If you want to be a giving person, ask yourself how you can change your habits. Am I planning to give to the church and various causes as I make my monthly budget? Am I thinking of myself or others as I manage my money, my time, my energy, and my resources?

Resources

1. www.johnmaxwell.com/blog/creating-a-life-list
2. www.success.com/article/john-c-maxwell-why-john-woodens-teams-won
3. insightsonsuccess.com/?tag=decision-making&paged=2
4. White, Ellen G. *Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 3*. Boise, Id: Pacific Press, p. 497.
5. www.brainyquote.com/quotes/william_pollard_125715

ADD "MAKE GREAT DECISIONS" TO YOUR LIST

I want to take an in-depth look at a goal that many of us have: make great decisions. I hope you can get a few ideas for your life-list from the following suggestions:

1. Don't rush into anything. How many times have you been pressured into purchasing an item because the deal won't be available later? Salespeople use this technique all the time. It may be true in a few situations, but

more often than not, the same item will be for sale later. The best strategy is to get a good night's rest or, as an old saying goes, "sleep on it." With a refreshed mind, you may see the solution from a different perspective.

2. Do your homework. The best choice is often the one that has been weighed and selected from a wide array of potential options and possibilities. One option may be not to do