

How did you do it?

Bob Young

A response Jan and I often hear when we tell our life story goes something like this: *“You sure have done a lot during your life! You’ve been so many places and have been involved in a lot of different things!”*

How is it possible? What causes one life to be filled and overflowing with lots of different things and another to move along routinely? Many different answers can be given, and I do not know the exact answer for every situation, but I can tell you what I believe has made all the difference in our life. It comes down to one simple question: What are you going to do? This is the question of life. What is your goal? What are your hopes, your dreams, and your desires? What do you want to do with your life? That question is number one.

There are other important questions. How are you going to do it? When, and where? Eventually these questions must be answered. A person must have some idea about how to go about reaching the goals. A person must understand the things that are essential to reaching life’s goals. But number one is the question, “What are you going to do?” This is personal mission, or in our case, our shared understanding of our mission.

Our answer to that question is not profound, but it is revealing. ***We are going to do whatever God leads us to do.*** We are going to follow him wherever he leads us. We will answer unhesitatingly. We will go when we cannot see the way. We will do what is outside our comfort zone. We will prepare and pray and listen and follow.

Along the way, believing that God leads us according to what we desire, according to our gifts, and according to our hopes and dreams, we did a few things on our end. This article is about those things. They are part of our story. They are part of what has happened in our life. Whether you are just starting out, or have been on the journey for a little while (or a long while as we have), I urge you to consider these things.

Prepare a lifetime goals statement

What are you going to do with your life? What do you want to be? What do you want to do? What will your life look like when you come toward the end and look back?

Your goals statement may include some specific things you want to do or accomplish. It will probably also include a number of general things. General ideas will eventually have to be tied to specific activities (#3 in this list).

Prioritize your goals

Most people who make lifetime goals statements have multiple pages filled with hopes and dreams and ambitions—lots of things that are worth doing and lots of things that would be good to do. Some people include lots of things that they would like to experience in order to fill life. Some things on the list are physical, hopefully some are spiritual.

The task of prioritizing your list may be helped by putting your goals into categories—occupational, physical, social, mental, spiritual, economic, family, etc. Then you can choose one or two most important items in each category.

Identify activities that move toward the goals

Each goal must then be tied to specific activities that will help move you toward your goal. What are the activities that will help you progress toward the goal? What are the prerequisites? What are the first steps?

Do those activities first

This seems obvious. If you are serious about your lifetime goals, you must do those activities that move you toward the goals. You must prioritize the activities. The most important things must be first, always at the top of the “to do” list.

Do the “routine tasks” take all my time?

Here is the number one distraction to be avoided. The urgency of the present eats up the time needed for the important. Life can easily be filled with the routine tasks of life, but that approach often eliminates the really important possibilities.

The 80-20 rule

By way of encouragement, especially on those days when emergencies and special needs and special activities seem to take up all of the time, remember the 80-20 rule. That is, 80% of what gets done is the result of 20% of the activity. Or, 80% of what gets done is done by 20% of the people. Or out of my years of experience as a minister, some have suggested that 80% of the contribution is given by 20% of the members. The 80-20 rule comes in several different versions, and the percentages may not be accurate in every case, but the point is this: much of what gets done is the result of doing the little things that contribute to the task.

These are not hard. They are not rocket science. They are a pretty good explanation of “how we did it.”