

10 Tips for How to Live Successfully

As a Beatle, Paul McCartney wrote and sang “When I’m 64.” It appeared on what many believe is one of the greatest and most creative albums of all time, *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Today Sir Paul is 71 years of age. Don’t wince, but rather identify with one of the closing lines from his song: “You’ll be older too!”

As I reach this song title’s age within two weeks, I thank God for granting me 41 years of fruitful ministry and 37 years of fulfilling marriage. I encourage you to join me in claiming these verses:

- “The Lord blessed the latter years of Job’s life more than the former part” (Job 42:12, NIV).
- “The end of a matter is better than its beginning” (Eccl. 7:8).
- “The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day” (Prov. 4:18).

Lessons learned?

Let me pass along my top 10 but preface them with the overarching commitment that undergirds them all: Follow faithfully the Bible—the Manufacturer’s Handbook. This is easy to affirm but essential to adhere to if one is to honor God and enjoy success with lasting fruit. Scores blow it right here.

I’ll never forget the day I “bumped” into Billy Graham in the lobby of the Sheraton Hotel in Washington, D.C., when I was just a young minister. I talked to him, and then he looked at me with his piercing blue eyes, held up his Bible, pointed to

it and said emphatically, “Stay in the Book. Just stay in this Book!”

Yes, sir.

At the same time my calendar registers my next milestone, Irv Gordon has one too—his Volvo hits the 3-million-mile mark!

What does he say is his secret?

“I read the owner’s manual, and I service the car just the way the book calls for it. I figured the people who wrote the book are the people who built the car, and they should know.”

Now contrast this with a quote from a minister featured on the front page of our Tennessean newspaper on Sunday. While I commend him for his civil rights work over the decades, I take strong issue with his philosophy: “Gandhi read the Bible from cover to cover. He thought a lot of that was nonsense—a lot of us would agree with that. Anyone who peruses the Scriptures over time will agree there’s a lot of it we don’t agree with.”

Sorry, Rev. I and millions across this nation reject that approach to God’s Word, and we believe success comes when we are faithful to the Manufacturer’s Handbook.

Having stated this foundational truth, here’s the deal regarding my top 10 life lessons:

1. Enjoy Jesus. Eternal life, according to our Lord, focuses not on a place but a Person (John 17:3). Keep this relationship fresh by spending time daily with Him.

2. Pursue your God-ordained destiny. In spite of setbacks that are inevitable along the way, let nothing deter you from continuing your pursuit of God’s unique plan for your life (Ps. 139:13-16). Turn your trials into triumphs, your stumbling blocks into stepping-stones, and your tests into testimonies. I may sound a little like Joel Osteen here, but it’s truth!

In my earlier years, I led a ministry called People of Destiny where I repeatedly heralded, “Destiny is a matter of choice, not chance! Go for it!”

3. Keep cultivating friendships. I believe it was John Maxwell who said there are four categories of friends:

- Just friends (social);
- Rust friends (older ones—some keep and let some go);
- Trust friends (confidants and counselors);
- Must friends (circle of lifelong gifts from God).

Remember what George Washington said: “Associate with men of good quality if you esteem your own reputation, for it is better to be alone than in bad company.”

4. Stay in your calling. God told Israel, “I will establish your borders” (Ex. 23:31). Radically resist distractions and “good things” that keep you busy yet unfruitful.

5. Adjust with seasons. Remember Ecclesiastes 3:1-5. It begins, “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven” (ESV). A while back, I transitioned from running to speed-walking; power-lifting to dumbbells and toning. Why? Every season requires Spirit-led adjustments if we are going to finish well.

After over 3 1/2 decades of church planting, evangelism and training of leaders, God redirected me into further writing projects and serving as a cultural commentator due to the perilous times and our desperate need for an awakening. I also entrusted my local church into my younger son’s hands, which was difficult but necessary to go into my next season. What might God be saying to you about pruning for greater fruitfulness and peace in your personal life, family and ministry?

6. Give generously. David was “young and then old” but knew experientially, not theoretically, “a generous person will

prosper" (Prov. 11:24-25, NIV). Be a "hilarious" giver every day as you store up treasures in heaven.

When we come into this world, we come with fists clenched as a baby. When we die, we leave with hands open as a corpse. The tragedy is that it takes many people a lifetime to learn to let go.

7. Guard your health. Don't wait for a wake-up call. Follow God's rhythms of life for rest, recreation and relaxation. Eat wisely; sleep soundly. Minimize stress. Exercise consistently.

Arnold Schwarzenegger was asked if he exercised regularly, and he said he did because he was challenged by the late Pope John Paul II. Whenever he was tempted to excuse himself and forget exercise with the lame excuse, "I just don't have enough time," he'd remind himself that the pope said he awoke before dawn daily for his exercise. The "Terminator" said he would ponder the pontiff cranking out crunches and push-ups in the Vatican while leading the Catholics of the world, and it quickly got him off his duff!

8. Be deliberate with communication. With your spouse, children, friends or associates, don't drift here or you'll pay the price. Be intentional, plus follow promptings God gives you (that's why I had a spontaneous date night with my wife this week).

9. Express love daily. This really is the genuine proof of our Christianity. I've had a plaque in my study for decades that says, "I will pass through this world but once. Therefore any good I can do, any kindness I can show, let me do it now and not defer or neglect it—for I shall not pass this way again." My personal mantra is a simple acrostic: HOPE (Helping Other People Every day).

10. Share the gospel. Seize divine appointments to build a bridge and plant a seed in your daily life. Say His name. Give a personal testimony track. Tell your story. Herein lies the

hope of humanity, and you are His ambassador. What an honor it is to be intentionally sharing the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ with people every day!

Whether you're 24, 34, 44, 54 or joining Sir Paul and me in moving up the ladder, let's remember the biblical wisdom of Moses, a man who was about 120 when he said, "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Ps. 90:12).

Larry Tomczak is a best-selling author and cultural commentator with over 40 years of trusted ministry experience. His passion is to bring perspective, analysis and insight from a biblical worldview. He loves people and loves awakening them to today's cultural realities and the responses needed for the bride of Christ—His church—to become influential in all spheres of life once again.