

Published based on [How Can You Maximize Your Life?](#)

How Can You Maximize Your Life?



It's often been said that life is a great teacher, but perhaps the greater truth is that life has the potential to be a great teacher. Life is composed of both good and bad days, wonderful and terrible seasons. Potentially we can learn from everything from everyday, every experience. However, often we fail to really gain all that is potentially ours.

We sometimes speak of how we suppose we didn't get a particular lesson on the first go-round so we have found ourselves going around again.

Those of us who are Christians often offer that example referring to the children of Israel who wandered around in the wilderness for forty years because of their unbelief. Around and around the same mountain they went. But in reality, the Israelites who didn't believe, died in the wilderness and never entered the Promised Land. It was the new generation who were allowed to enter.

We would all agree that we don't want to be the generation who never learned, or who learned too late to make a difference.

So how do we maximize our lives? How do we learn? Here are a few ways that I am learning and have learned – and I hope to keep learning because I want to be all I can be. I want to maximize my life for the glory of God.

1. Deal with the cards in your hand. There are certain things, problems, issues, that we “get”. We didn't choose them, but nonetheless, we find them in our hand. Deal with them. They are part of your story. They don't have to freeze you forever.

For example, I didn't choose to experience the results of being raised in an alcoholic home, but I was. When I began to realize the effect that it had on me emotionally, relationally, I faced what I was learning and asked for God's grace to change. I sought out help from others. I opened my eyes and my heart to the opportunity to grow. It hasn't always been easy and it certainly hasn't been linear, but it has been painfully good.

2. Seek spiritual direction from another. God often crosses our paths with those who can “see” and give direction to us in areas where we need help.

Life is meant to be lived in relationship, in community. None of us are an island to ourselves. God has destined us to learn from others and to receive from those who can strengthen us (and we can offer ourselves to others as well). This interdependence, this interrelatedness, protects us, humbles us, and grows us.

No “spiritual director” will be perfect so we don't blindly follow, but look for and ask for God connections to others who can shore you up, so to speak, in your weak areas. We should look for those who will challenge us in healthy ways to grow.

3. Make time to reflect. Pay attention to your spirit. Reflection, meditation, mindfulness – these disciplines allow us to learn to hear God more clearly.

A productive way that I have found to do this is something like this: I sit quietly, inviting the ministry of the Holy Spirit. I try to quiet my mind to all other thoughts. (I keep a notebook to write down thoughts that distract me. For example, while I am meditating I think of what I have to do later that day. I jot that down in my notebook so that I know I will think of it again later and by doing so, I put that thought aside and allow myself to focus on hearing God.)

God often brings things to my mind during this time. He shows me things that He has for me to do. He shows me sin that I need to deal with. He reveals His love to me. He shows me things I need to learn from. He reminds me of others who need love and encouragement.

This reflection is a type of prayer because I am communicating with God and He is communicating with me. Oftentimes it serves to center me, making me more aware of my own heart and the heart of God. Failing to take time to reflect is failure to receive. Failure to maximize. It is one of the paradoxes of God. Giving up time to “do” and making time to “be” with God actually maximizes our lives. I used to say that we can actually get more done in each day when we make this time each morning (best for me) but now I just say that it is a more healthy, holy, whole way to live. God is not always as concerned about my “to do” list as I am :) He is concerned about me.

4. Pay attention to your emotions. Although we are not to be ruled by our emotions in negative destructive ways, they can be wonderful signals to us. Signals that we are violating our conscience. Signals that we have allowed our God-destined boundaries to be violated. Signals that we are too tired. Signals that we have sinned.

God gave us emotions. When we fail to pay attention to them, we are neglecting part of our humanity. Remember, God made us body, soul, and spirit. All three are to work together. Yesterday, I spent some time reflecting with my husband because I just haven't been able to write anything lately. As I processed with him, God reminded me that I had been through a lot emotionally as of late. I watched my husband almost die. Yet I had not really taken time to cry, to process, to feel what my heart was saying. I felt the dots connect.

5. In the same way, pay attention to your physical body. I remember going through one season of my life when my stress level was so high. I ignored, or rather, denied, my emotions, and my physical body was screaming at me. The end result was dangerously high blood pressure. My body was speaking to me and I failed to listen. Although I had never had high blood pressure before, my lack of attention to my emotions and my physical body- and my spirit- lit the fuse of my genetic disposition to high blood pressure.

There are many other truths that I could offer about how to learn all you can from your life and perhaps I will continue on that another day. But for today, will you stop long enough to ask God if any of these five points need some attention in your life?

Do you need to deal with what is in your hand?

Do you need to receive spiritual direction from another?

Do you need to make time to reflect?

Do you need to check your emotions? Your physical body?

God is speaking. May we ever grow in our ability and desire to hear and learn and value His voice and the voice of our own heart.

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