

Table of Contents

Who is this Book For?

Self-Improvement: The Truth

Introduction: What Are We Talking About?

Spiritual Health

Chapter 1: It's All About Me

Chapter 2: Starting Well: Ages ~ 13-25

Chapter 3: Starting Well: Ages ~ 26-55

Chapter 4: Starting Well: Ages ~ 56+

Chapter 5: Executing Well: Ages ~ 13-25

Chapter 6: Executing Well: Ages ~ 26-55

Chapter 7: Executing Well: Ages ~ 56+

Chapter 8: Finishing Great: Ages ~ 13-25

Chapter 9: Finishing Great: Ages ~ 26-55

Chapter 10: Finishing Great: Ages ~ 56+

Conclusion

Bibliography

Contributors

About the Author

Publishing Information and Other Books by Michael Bianchi

Who is this Book for?

Regardless of Where You are In Your Life

No Matter What Your Age

Regardless of What You Look Like

No Matter Where You Live

Regardless of How Much Money You Have, or Don't Have

No Matter What Your Ethnicity Is

Regardless of Whether You are Male or Female

No Matter Who Your Parents Are

Regardless of Your Past

No Matter Who Your Favorite Sports Team Is (Go Houston Cougars!)

Regardless of What Others May Say

If You Can Read

This Book can Help You be GREATER THAN ME

Self-Improvement: The Truth

The global self-improvement industry is estimated at \$41 billion (2024) and expected to double in the next 10 years. We want to save our marriages and have better family relationships. We want to save our jobs and move up the corporate ladder. We want to be better students and have high profile entrances into the work place. We want to be better ministers and grow big churches. We want to contribute to society and get re-elected. We want to live in nice homes in nice subdivisions. We want to be free of debt and retire comfortably. We want to have better health and become world-class athletes. There is nothing wrong with desiring to be better people.

We are told and hope that if we read this book or take this class or listen to this audio, we can become better and maybe even achieve our dreams. Such activities can be helpful but, in reality, self-improvement is a process and takes time and dedication and it normally involves many books, classes, audios, experiences, and more.

The self-improvement process also requires balance in our lives. If we sacrifice or compromise one area of our lives to the benefit of another, we are often left with a sense of emptiness or insignificance, even if we are “successful”.

An article in Psychology Today stated, *“Self-help fails because we are not approaching change in the correct way for our current circumstances and underlying personality. We're not doing what works, and we're not in a place to be able to, have other priorities and/or are not ready to hunker down and sort it out. We may be in a state of constant crisis, for instance, or we may be working on a higher-order problem than we need to be, like working toward a promotion when we don't know if we are on a career path that is a good fit, or trying to get serious in a relationship when we don't even know who the person is.”*

The above paragraph is telling us (without saying so) that self-improvement does require balance in our lives, a plan(s), smart decisions, and commitment. The goal of this book is to give you a foundation from which you can become “Greater Than Me” in key areas of your life.

“Success without fulfillment is failure.” ~ Anthony Robbins

Spiritual Health

I understand that not everyone will share my faith. Some will come from a different faith perspective and some will come without any faith perspective. Your faith perspective is respected in this book.

I will be sharing from the perspective of Christian faith, which is the faith I'm most familiar with and practice. I encourage you to take what I share and apply it to your faith. If you don't practice a faith, I encourage to consider the Christian faith as you move forward in your life.

Regardless, having good spiritual health has been proven to be a key component of having healthy emotional health and is actually an important part of a balanced life.

If you have questions about my Christian faith please feel free to contact me.

Introduction: **What Are We Talking About?**

We're talking about life, the stages of life, making good decisions and becoming "Greater Than Me".

We're talking about avoiding and overcoming the challenges and struggles we all will face in our lives.

We're talking about avoiding and overcoming the dumb decisions we all tend to make in our lives.

We're talking about being proactive and preemptive in the most important areas and decisions in our lives.

We're talking about finding our own levels of success in the most important areas of our lives.

Life doesn't have to be a perpetual struggle to survive.

Life doesn't have to be a miserable experience moving from one crisis to another.

Life can be satisfying.

Life can be joyful.

Life can be rewarding.

Life can have meaning and purpose.

You can be "Greater Than Me" in your life.

In this book we will discuss the decisions we make (or need to make) in the most important areas of our lives at different stages in our lives. Zig Ziglar said that we are where we are at in our lives as a result of the decisions we have made up to that point. I believe he is 100% correct except, of course, there may some extenuating circumstances that have helped shape parts of our lives.

For general purposes, I have divided the different stages of our lives into 3 major age groups. These age groups are not exclusive of each other or rigid in their definition. In fact, they will often intersect and overlap and they should build upon each other.

I hope you will not skip any part of this book because your age doesn't fall into that "stage" of life. By reading through the entire book you will find suggestions, advice, and inspiration you can use in your life. Further, you can take that wisdom and share it with others, which is an awesome purpose in all our lives.

I encourage you to go forward and become "Greater Than Me".

Chapter 1: **It's All About Me**

In his mega-best-selling and great book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, one of the first thoughts Rick Warren has is “It’s not about you” and he’s 100% correct. But wait a minute! If it’s All About Me, how can Rick Warren’s statement be true ... or is it not really All About Me? They both can’t be right ... can they?

When Rick Warren says “It’s not about you” he is saying that our lives and the focus of our lives should not be self-centered, but Christ centered. However, we can’t take the focus off our lives and place it on Jesus Christ unless we look at ourselves and make intentional decisions to create our lives around Him. It’s All About Me in that it is up to me to become intentional about centering my life around Jesus. That’s why both statements are correct.

Fruits of the Spirit: Galatians 5:22-23

Chapter 2: **Starting Well:** Ages ~ 13-25

“Integrity, Love, Humility, Courage: We’ve built our company around these core values because that’s the way we want to live our lives, and people who share those values are the kind of people we want to be around.”² As you’re starting the rest of your life, whether you are 13 or 25 (or 60) these are core values you should incorporate into everything you do. Interestingly, you will also find them prominently in the Bible. If you truly want to start your future life well, you will study these four core values and seek to embody them into all you do no matter what your age is and no matter what your circumstances entail. You will find that people are attracted to you if you live them out in your daily life whether at home, at school, at work, in the church, or in the community.

If you are 23 and just starting this process, it’s absolutely okay! It’s never too late to start well.

EDUCATION

At this time in our lives, ages 13-25, is when the most emphasis is placed on our education by society in general and rightfully so. While society is placing so much importance on our education during these years, the key is whether we as individuals understand the significance of this time and make education a high priority in our lives. In some cultures great emphasis is placed on education during these years, often to the negligence of other important areas of the student’s life. While the intention may be good, this can lead to an unhealthy imbalance in the life of the student.

Having a balanced life is important throughout our lives, but may be most important for this age group. That being said, much focus should be on education at this time. A person’s career may not play a significant part of their lives at this time and energies that could be directed towards careers can instead be directed towards education while maintaining a good balanced lifestyle in the other four life experiences. Education should be viewed as preparation for the student’s career and for the decades of life experiences to come.

Throughout our lives we should always be seeking to learn.

13-25:

Formative and foundational years. During this time we should have great emphasis on our education as that is the Starting Point or springboard for our careers and we want to Start Well. That being said, university isn't for everyone.

Right out of high school, I was confused and unprepared for university. I was a slightly above average student although I never really focused on my studies and I knew that I was not adequately prepared for university. My high school had school counselors, but I never had any interaction with them. I assumed they were for disciplinary problems and, being the saint that I was (not!), I never had any use for them. The counselors certainly never reached out to me. I don't remember my uncle and aunt and my brothers ever counseling me on my education and future plans. Perhaps they felt that I would not listen to them and they may have been right ... I was a tad rebellious and independent at the time (to my own detriment). I may not have had ears to listen and that's on me.

I took a bookkeeping class in high school and enjoyed it and when a friend of mine enrolled in the accounting course at Massey Business College it appealed to me and so I also enrolled. What appealed to me was that I could get an accounting diploma without taking all the other classes such as math and English, etc.

RELATIONSHIPS

Psychological Science reports that many young adults are lonely. Perhaps this is due to imbalance in their lives and a lack of quality relationships.

Personally, I recall feeling lonely as a young adult and my life was definitely out of balance; my education was a mess, I was ignoring my physical health, I was unprepared for a career, my finances were a disaster, most of my relationships were just surface level, and I really had no spiritual life. So, just what *was* I doing? That's a good question. I was flying by the seat of my pants, living day to day, with no real plans or direction or purpose to my life. Its not hard to figure out that having meaningful relationships under those circumstances would be difficult, at best.

EMOTIONAL & SPIRITUAL HEALTH

“O people, the LORD has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” ~ Micah 6:8

Chapter 3: **STARTING Well:** Ages ~ 26-55

“Prepared leaders stand ready to meet the future. They don’t react and are not easily surprised. This gives them power when it’s time to move.”¹

Chapter 5: **Executing Well:** Ages ~ 13-25

RELATIONSHIPS

In Matthew 15:10-11 Jesus gives us a fundamental lesson about relationships, ***“Listen,” he said, “and try to understand. It’s not what goes into your mouth that defiles you; you are defiled by the words that come out of your mouth.”***

Chapter 6: **Executing Well**: Ages ~ 26-55

“Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock. But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.” ~ Jesus Christ in Matthew 7:24-27

CAREER

“Success without fulfillment is failure.” ~ Anthony Robbins

Daily Prayer Before Starting Work & Ministry

My Heavenly Father, as I enter this day of work & ministry,
I bring Your presence with me.
I speak Your peace, Your grace, Your mercy, and
Your perfect order into this day.
I acknowledge Your power over all that will be spoken, thought,
decided, and done in this day.
Lord, I thank You for all the gifts You have blessed me with.
I commit to using them responsibly in Your honor.
Give me a fresh supply of strength to do my best for You.
Anoint my projects, ideas and energy, so that even my smallest
accomplishment may bring You glory.
Lord, when I am confused, guide me, when I am weary, energize me,
when I am burned out, infuse me with the light of the Holy Spirit.
May the work that I do and the way that I do it bring faith, joy,
and a smile to all that I come in contact with today.
And, oh Lord, when my day is done, give me traveling mercy.
Bless my family and home to be in order when I return.
Lord, I thank You for everything You’ve done, everything You’re doing,
and everything You’re going to do.
In the name of Jesus I pray, with much love and thanksgiving. AMEN!

Don Eckles, co-founder of Scooter's Coffee says, *"I've found over the years that if you like what you do, and you like who you do it with, and you make a good living, that's as good as it gets. We try very hard to be the kind of company that's hard to leave."*²

FINANCES

The Inter-Galactic Businessman

There was a wealthy businessman in the 23rd century who made his fortune trading precious metals between different galaxies. He had 3 grown children whom he loved and the children each had different talents and experience, but all helped in the family business.

The businessman was leaving on a trip to a far galaxy and so he called his 3 children together and told them he would be away for several years but they could always communicate with him. He instructed his children to continue to trade and take care of the family business while he was on his trip. To one child he gave responsibility for part of the company valued at \$1 billion, and to another child he gave responsibility for part of the company valued at \$3 billion, and to the last child he gave responsibility for part of the company valued at \$5 billion.

When the father returned after 10 years in space he found that the child with the \$5 billion responsibility had doubled it to \$10 billion. The father was pleased and gave this child a promotion in the family business. The father was also pleased with the child who had the \$3 billion responsibility, as that child doubled their business to \$6 billion. The father promoted this child with additional responsibility in the family business.

The 3rd child who was left with the \$1 billion responsibility was a different story. When the father returned from his trip, this child was pleased to tell the father that the business was exactly as he had left it, no bigger and no smaller. It was still a \$1 billion part of the family assets and the child explained to the father that they knew he was a wise and tough businessman and so they had preserved this part of the business as it was when the father had left. However, the father was not pleased with this child because they had not continued to trade and grow the business in the father's absence. So, the father took this part of the family business away from the 3rd child and gave it the first. The father reprimanded this 3rd child as being lazy and not a good business person.

The lesson from this parable is that we must take initiative, and some risk, to invest wisely and grow our net worth in order to have a comfortable lifestyle and retirement. Inactivity and aversion to risk will not end well for us. During these years of our lives it is paramount that we execute a wise financial strategy that will carry us through life's challenges and prepare us for a comfortable retirement.

(Matthew 25:14-30)

RELATIONSHIPS

In Matthew 15:10-11 Jesus gives us a fundamental lesson about relationships, ***“Listen,” he said, “and try to understand. It’s not what goes into your mouth that defiles you; you are defiled by the words that come out of your mouth.”***

Psychological Science reports that fewer people report being lonely during these “mid-life” years and part of the reason for that is being in a marriage relationship.

SPIRITUAL/EMOTIONAL

“Problems and happiness have no linkage.” ~ Anthony Robbins

Chapter 7: **Executing Well:** Ages ~ 56+

RELATIONSHIPS

In Matthew 15:10-11 Jesus gives us a fundamental lesson about relationships, “Listen,” he said, “and try to understand. It’s not what goes into your mouth that defiles you; you are defiled by the words that come out of your mouth.”

Psychological Science reports that this age group is the time when people feel the most lonely.

Chapter 8: **Finishing Great:** Ages ~ 13-25

RELATIONSHIPS

“If you want to change the world, go home and love your family.” ~ Mother Teresa

Chapter 9: **Finishing Great:** Ages ~ 26-55

RELATIONSHIPS

“If you want to change the world, go home and love your family.” ~ Mother Teresa

Chapter 10: **Finishing Great:** Ages ~ 56+

John Maxwell, in his comments on Matthew said, “*Effective leadership begins with an emotionally and spiritually healthy leader.*” Maxwell then went on to say “*Inward strength provides the only hope of finishing well (or great).*”¹

RELATIONSHIPS

“*If you want to change the world, go home and love your family.*” ~ Mother Teresa

Bibliography

- 1 Maxwell, John. The Maxwell Leadership Bible. Maxwell Motivation, Inc, 2007.
- 2 Eckles, Don, Journey to Amazing, 25 Years of Building Scooter's Coffee, Walsworth Publishing Co., 2023

The Holy Bible, New King James Version, Thomas Nelson, Inc, 1982

Contributors to this Book

Wadle, Rev. Chris, Omaha, NE

Publishing Information and Other Books by Michael Bianchi

Other Books by Michael Bianchi:

Defeating Satan's Stronghold on our Lives: Five Tools of Victory for Men and Women

Effective & Enduring Leadership: Salvation is Important, But There's More to the Story
(an eight volume series of short books on Christian Leadership and Discipleship)

If you would like copies of these books or have questions or comments please contact Michael Bianchi below:

Michael Bianchi
13027 Nebraska Ave
Omaha, NE 68164
(713) 339-0900
mikebianchi33@gmail.com