

## **A Conversation with Michael Hyatt Episode #221**

**Ray:** Well, as you may know we went back to one episode a week recently, on Mondays and that's not changing, except I did tell you that whenever I had a special deep dive conversation that I felt was worth sharing, that I would do so and that's what I have today.

Today I have a great conversation for you, with my friend Michael Hyatt, who has a new book available called '*Living Forward*', which we'll talk about. You'll get so much more out of this conversation, I'm so excited to share it with you. Let's get right to it, Michael Hyatt.

---

### **Feature Presentation – Michael Hyatt**

**Ray:** How are you feeling now that the book is finally out?

**Michael:** I have to say I'm pretty excited. Cautiously optimistic. There's a part of me that doesn't like to get too vested in the numerical outcome, because I am gunning for a spot on the New York Times list, but that list doesn't come out until a week after launch week, so I won't really know.

The thing that really gets me excited is the impact that I believe this will have on people as they begin to design their life, stop drifting, stop being driven and start being intentional and create a life they would love and be proud of. That gets me excited to turn people onto that.

**Ray:** That's an important point. Now I read a lot of books and there are very few that I read twice. This one I've read twice and you can see, we're doing this interview on video, for those of you listening, we have all these little markers in the book about passages that really hit me particularly in a poignant way. I also have my life plan that I've done three drafts of.

**Michael:** Amazing.

**Ray:** I'm wondering if you would mind sharing the story about what you mean by the drift, because this was an idea, a concept that wasn't totally foreign to me, but the way you explained it had a deep impact on me.

**Michael:** Wow! Gail and I, had been married about 10 years and we decided to go on a vacation. The only problem was we were pretty much broke, so we took all our airline miles, since I traveled quite a bit in those days, and we took all of our pennies, dimes and nickels and went to Hawaii. It was the biggest trip we'd ever taken in our lives and definitely the biggest vacation.

When we got there we didn't have much money for entertainment, but we noticed the hotel was giving free snorkeling lessons. We went to the pool, met with our instructor, got checked out and then we went to the reef and were blown away by what we saw under the water. Then we discovered that we could rent snorkeling gear for \$10 for the entire week and we decided to do that. We are going to snorkel every day, this is going to be our thing.

The next morning around 5:00 a.m. we got up, had a quick breakfast and we went to this lagoon that was adjacent to the hotel about 6:00 a.m. without another soul that we could see. The water was like glass, crystal clear, hardly a wave and we put our snorkeling gear on and started paddling around in the lagoon and were mesmerized. We'd never done this before, so we were seeing all these multi-colored fish, the sunlight playing off the seaweed, the beautiful sand and all that. We were completely taken by it.

About 45 minutes later, after being distracted and caught up in this, I looked up and realized that we had been caught in a riptide and now, as I looked at the hotel back on the beach, it looked like a postage stamp. It was so far away and scared me to death. Gail lifted up her head about the same time, she gasped and said what are we going to do? We had this boogie board and I said we just have to hold onto this board and swim for all we're worth and we did. It may have taken us 45 minutes to an hour to get back to the shore.

We were utterly exhausted as we drug ourselves up on the beach and collapsed. Until last fall we never went snorkeling again, because it was such a traumatic experience. But that for me, Ray, became a metaphor for how so often people end up in destinations they didn't choose.

Sometimes they do it in their health, they find themselves sick or with some chronic disease like heart disease, something that would otherwise be preventable, but they just drifted into an unhealthy lifestyle and now they're at a crisis. It happens in marriages, people don't set out to drift or grow apart or lose intimacy, but they drift to that and often drift to separation or divorce or worse. It certainly happens in businesses, we see it happen in our finances, but it's become a metaphor for me for what became the villain in the story for living forward and that's the drift, that's your enemy.

It's not something that I think that explicitly could come at you and take you out, but I think it's more subtle than that. I think it's being distracted and begin caught up in life without any sense of where you're going.

**Ray:** And if you don't know what you're dealing with and you don't know how to deal with it, even that subtle drift that riptide, those take the lives of people every year because they don't understand how to get out of that drift.

**Michael:** Yeah and honestly, it was a miracle that we got out of that riptide because we weren't even smart enough to know at the time that you can't swim against a riptide, you have to swim sideways to get out of it. We didn't know that, so it was a miracle that we even got back to shore.

It's much easier to stay on course or choose a destination and then intentionally and incrementally work toward it, rather than drift to something that now you may not be able to get back, you may never be able to recover.

**Ray:** I think of myself as a pretty directed person. I'm a proponent of setting and tracking goals, keeping track of my progress and I've had much success doing that, but reading this book and reading about the drift and then reflecting on it... one of the great things

about this book is it's not just a read it kind of book, it's a do it kind of book. It's short, which is great, because most people don't have the time or the attention to read really long books, it's entertaining as well as educational and I think it really helps us understand.

You have a whole section on the consequences of the drift and what it leads to, things that you can lose. You can experience confusion and you lose opportunities and it leads to pain and so forth, but I love the fact that there are exercises we actually go through and one of them is a bit grim. It's grim to think of your own demise, but can you talk a little about why that's such a big part of this?

**Michael:** Yes. One of the things about how we organize the book is that we say, creating a life plan, which is the antidote to the drift, and being really intentional with your life, begins when you ask and answer three powerful questions.

### **One is how do you want to be remembered?**

This is a forbidden subject in our culture. People don't want to face the fact that they're mortal, that they're going to die, but you and I were talking about the fact that I was speaking at a university on Friday and there were 13k students in the audience and so I asked an actuary, (someone who doesn't have the personality to be an accountant), of these 13k college students, what do the mortality tables tell us? He said here's what they tell us. One of these students will be dead in 90 days. Three of them will be dead within 12 months and 18 of them will be dead in five years.

As I spoke to these students I said I know what you're thinking; it's not you, right? But it could be and this is a difficult subject to contemplate but this is one appointment we're all going to keep. We may be late to other appointments but we'll be right on time for death.

I also told these students I wanted to lighten up the conversation, because it's so heavy so I did my research and Googled funny tombstone epitaphs. One of the first ones I found was one that said, '*I told you I was sick.*' Another one said, '*Well, this sucks.*' Another one was in Boot Hill Cemetery in Tombstone, Arizona and it said, '*Here lies Lester Moore, 4 slugs from a 44, no less no more.*' My

most favorite one that I found says, '*Here lies an atheist, all dressed up and no place to go.*'

So contemplating our death is important and I realized when my father-in-law died in 2005, what a significant and important event this is, in terms of us contemplating what our life means and the fact that we can really influence the legacy that we have. He was a full colonel in the Air Force. He worked at the Pentagon for a number of years and this was back in 2005, when they still let the Air Force do flyovers. I remember the jets coming over and the 21 gun salute and all that. It was amazing, but what was even more amazing was the conversations that took place after that event.

We went back to a friend's house. We had all the family and friends there. We had all these picture books and we were telling stories about my father-in-law, crying, laughing and I thought this was a really good man that had an impact with his life that impacts now and will ripple on, echo into eternity. I said, I want a life like that and that's the value of doing this exercise that we have in the book, of writing your own eulogy, in essence.

If it's possible that you could inform those conversations so that people think about the meaning of your life and the impact on them, what would you want them to say? Assume for a minute that all the people alive today would be attending your funeral whenever that happens, it could be 70 years from now or even tomorrow, but what would you want those people to say about you? What would you want your spouse to say about you? What would you want your kids or your friends or even your online followers/readers, to say about you? We really can inform that conversation by the way we live today and the deposits we make into people's lives.

That's where we start. Stephen Covey said, '*Start with the end in mind*' and that's what we do here.

**Ray:** That's the very end. What was interesting for me, having gone through the exercise and written out what I would have all these different, important people in my life say was, it was a mixed result for me because I realize some of this they would say and some of it they would not, because I'm not that person, yet. It was really powerful. It got my attention and made me sit up and realize...

We're leaving a legacy, whether we intend to or not and the question I think your book raises and the work you're doing is, am I being conscious about the life I'm living and what I'm leaving behind?

**Michael:** You make a good point. Whether or not you leave a legacy is not the question, because it's inescapable you're going to leave a legacy and it's not just for Abraham Lincoln or Bill Clinton or whomever, some famous person. Yes, they leave legacies and we tend to think of it for famous people but for us, we also leave a legacy and the only question is what kind of legacy are we going to leave and are we going to influence it so we leave a positive impact in the world?

I think it's the ultimate stewardship, our life.

**Ray:** I agree. I've been talking to a lot of people in my life about the book. In fact, I ordered 10 copies of the book and I ordered those for my team and then as I went through the book a second time I realized I needed to get these for my family and friends, so I'm ordering another 10 today.

**Michael:** Wow! You are such a good friend. Thank you.

**Ray:** It is partly out of friendship, but it's also out of value. To be honest, I've had friends who've written books and I haven't bought 10 copies of their book.

**Michael:** Thank you, I feel very honored by that.

**Ray:** One of the things that really struck me is that I have people in my life, who are not into goal setting, life planning, it's not their thing. I feel like this is an opportunity for me to speak into their life and get them to pay attention to something that I feel is so important, whether you think you're a goal setter or an achiever or not, I think this is so important.

There's a quote, one of my favorite of all time, and I smiled from ear to ear when I saw this in the book in Chapter 3. It starts out with this quote from Thomas Carlyle; The Man without a Purpose is Like a Ship without a Rudder.

That's true for everybody, whether you think you're an achiever or not, right?

**Michael:** Absolutely, because the alternative to being intentional and creating a plan for your life is to be passive and let other people create their agenda, their plan for your life, but here's the thing I learned from the drift also. Nobody ever drifts to a destination they would have chosen. So if you don't be intentional against the drift then you'll end up at a place you don't like. It's true spiritually, intellectually. It's true with your family, in your career, in your finances and that's why this is an absolute necessity if you're going to have a life that's well lived, a life where you get to experience satisfaction, happiness, contribution and service, you have to be intentional.

**Ray:** So what do I get out of creating a life plan? If I'm the kind of person who doesn't normally do this sort of thing or maybe I'm the kind of person who does thing all the time and I've done dozens of different plans and nothing really seems to have stuck. Maybe I have the feeling where it's another one of those things I'm going to fill out and put in a drawer.

### **What do you think the benefits are of creating a real life plan?**

**Michael:** In the book we talk about six of them specifically and I won't go into them all, but let me give you a couple of them. The second question of those three questions that we asked people to answer is, what's important to you? We typically know what's important to our spouse or our children or our boss or our parents and even other external forces, but we're asking the question what's important to you? This is really a question about priorities.

Priorities are critically important, because we live in a world where we can't do everything. The myth or lie of the world is that you can have everything and do everything, but the truth is and I don't know if this was Greg McEwen who said this originally or someone that was further back and that is... *You can have anything you want you just can't have everything you want.*

So you have to decide what you want and be able to say no to the things that aren't important and a life plan becomes that filter, when you ask that question, when you take the various domains of your

life and then rank those and say, here's what comes first and second and so forth.

Back during the recession around 2009, I was the CEO of Thomas Nelson Publishers and like every other business that serves retail and was dependent upon consumer confidence, our business was struggling. We were down in sales by 20%. We'd laid off 20% of our workforce. We were working 10-12 hour days, sometimes six and seven days a week just trying to keep the ship afloat and provide for our employees and for their families.

Finally, I had a vacation on my calendar. I talked to the board about it, that I'm going to be on this vacation, that Gail and I were going to Colorado. They said great, fine, and I needed it not only for the sake of my health but I needed it for the sake of my marriage because I felt disconnected from Gail. So we left Nashville on a Friday afternoon on our way to Colorado. We stopped in Dallas to catch a connection there. As I hit the ground I saw an email pop up from the chairman of the board of Thomas Nelson.

He was in New York. He said look, we have to come to Nashville on Monday, there are some issues we have to sort through and it's really important that we do that. My heart sank, I thought this vacation that I'm packed for, ready to go on and Gail's excited about, now it looks like it's all scuttled. I showed it to Gail and she said look, you do whatever you think you need to do I'll totally support you. I know this is not easy.

I said let me tell you something. I said based on my priorities and what's important for me, it's God first, then self-care, taking care of me so I can be of use to somebody else and then third is Gail. About number six on the list is my job, even an important job. So I wrote him back and said look, as I told you I'm on my way to a vacation. I'm still going to do that and I said, I would really be grateful if we could postpone this meeting, I don't know that it's so critical we do it on Monday. If you feel like you have to have it, my staff is happy to answer any questions that you have in my absence, but I'm going to Colorado.

I didn't regret it for a second. It was the right decision and this crisis meeting that he felt we had to have on Monday, he did come and



met with my staff and they were like, this is stuff we could have done via email and it wasn't that important. So if my priorities hadn't been clear, I could have scuttled a week that I needed to rejuvenate so I could be at my best when I got back to the office and it definitely wouldn't have been good for my marriage. So that's one of the benefits of having a life plan, is the clarity you get around your priorities and the ability to have a filter so you can say yes to what matters most and no to the things that just aren't that essential.

**Ray:** You had to have courage to give that answer to your boss and you may not have had it if you didn't know those priorities.

**Michael:** You're making a good point, because I think the first question, how do you want to be remembered, gives you clarity. I think the second question, what's important to you, gives you courage. By the way, courage and confidence are two different things, and we've talked about this before. They look the same on the outside, as one of my coaches, Dan Sullivan, points out, but the difference is how you feel on the inside.

- Courage is when you still feel scared but you do what's right anyway.
- Confidence is when you do what's right, but you feel better about it. Maybe you've done it before and you have the confidence to do it.

That was a courageous moment for me because I didn't know, he and the board certainly had the power to send me packing, so in essence I guess it was courageous, but I think again that's what priorities do for you when you get them clear.

**Ray:** I think you're right and I also think growth comes from courage, it doesn't necessarily come from confidence.

**Michael:** It doesn't and the cool thing is, once you exercise that muscle and you're courageous, then you develop a new capability so next time you get clarity about something that requires even more. Now all of a sudden you have more confidence, it's easier to step up because look, I made that decision before, I did something courageous and it turned out okay, so I'm willing to do it again.

**Ray:** That is such a great point, because I think what happens for a lot of us is we wait until we have a huge challenge come up in our life and if you think of it as a rock or a stone, we have a boulder that we're trying to move now and we've done no practicing with smaller stones. It's not a good place to have to start to have to come up with all that strength. Start with pushing the boulder, you should start with making courageous steps or pushing against the resistance at lower levels and building up. It takes these movements of growth.

I think you've said many times that all significant growth comes outside your comfort zone.

**Michael:** It does, absolutely and I'm as uncomfortable as anyone else is when outside my comfort zone, but I constantly remind myself to reframe that and seed those discomfort signals, if you will, fear uncertainty and doubt as welcome things. Like when I was speaking at the university on Friday.

Stepping up on the stage with 13k students, I was way outside my comfort zone because I thought what if I trip? What if I stutter or forget where I am, because I was going up with no notes. All that stuff is going on in my mind... fear, uncertainty and doubt... and I thought to myself, this is exactly where I want to be, because this is where the important stuff is going to happen. This is where I'm going to grow. This is where I'm going to make my greatest contribution.

In the early days, when I would step in front of an audience at large and this is the third time I've spoken to that same audience, it was almost a panic attack, because I didn't understand the value of it and I let it almost derail me and get in the way.

**Ray:** I've heard the story, and I don't know if it's true or if it's apocryphal, but I like to believe it's true; that Henry Fonda to the last days of his acting career before he stepped on stage, would be physically sick to his stomach.

**Michael:** I've heard that too.

**Ray:** A master of the craft and yet, there's something about that... I think it's an awareness that what you're doing makes a difference.

**Michael:** Yes, there's gravity to it. I never feel fear, uncertainty and doubt when I go shopping or when I watch my favorite TV show or even curl up with a book. All that is inside my comfort zone and frankly, much of it has to be done and that's fine, but occasionally and intentionally, we have to strive to do things that put us in that place of discomfort.

Like, I worked out this morning with my trainer and we were working upper body stuff, and he was pushing me on the weights, more reps and more weight than I've ever done which is what I pay him to do, but it was uncomfortable. I was doing push-ups at the end of my routine and I was already fatigued and I just couldn't push my body up and get the number of reps that he wanted. Yet that's how you grow. You go to the place where you stretch the muscle and that's what causes it to grow. It rips a little bit and then heals back and you're that much stronger.

**Ray:** Now we've spent a lot of time making people realize how painful this is going to be. We should talk about the other side of it, like in the metaphor that you were just talking about, exercise. The other side of it is you build more muscle, you lose fat, become healthier in your cardiovascular system and your life improves in every way, and I think it's the same way with creating a life plan. I'm not sure we ever got to question three though, so let's go there.

**Michael:** That is, how do you get from here to there? It's the GPS question. A life plan is like a GPS in your life. With a GPS system you have to know where you're going, so you have to plug in the destination. You have to know where you are, and once you know those two things then a GPS can plot the fastest, safest path to get you from where you are to where you want to be.

For most people they've never decided where it is they want to be. So, one of the fun things about the book, one of the most exciting parts of it for me is crafting these envisioned future statements about each of the major areas of your life. To be able to state, this is what I want my marriage to look like at some point in the distant future, to imagine the ideal state or imagine the ideal state with your health and plug that in to the GPS of your life plan and say this is where I want to end up.

But lets' be honest, here's where I am right now and it may not be where you want to be, it probably isn't, but can I give you an example?

**Ray:** Please.

**Michael:** I'm going to give you an example and this is right out of my life plan. This is where I want to be with my marriage. Here's how I envision my future with Gail. By the way, I state this in the present tense, as though it were my current reality. That gives it more power, makes it more present to you and makes it feel more real. Here's what I say about Gail...

*My love for Gail grows daily. She is my best friend, my intimate ally, my partner and my lover. There is no one I would rather spend time with than her. We share with one another our deepest dreams, our secret fears and our most profound experiences. We are always learning new things together. Though not perfect, our marriage is a model and encouragement to others.*

That's just an example and I'll give you one more here. This is an example about my friends. One of the things I realized a few years ago is how important friends are, and the fact that I didn't have very many outside of work. I wanted to be more intentional about cultivating friends. Here's what I said in my envisioned future about friends.

*I have an inner circle about wise Christian friends. Since I professional work with world-class authors and speakers, I have the unique ability to become friends with any I choose. These friends love me for who I am and constantly challenge me to become all that God has called me to be. I proactively plan my time with my friends, and as a result, we spend quality time together on a regular basis.*

Again, I'm just plugging into the GPS system of my life where I want to end up in these major areas, whether it's my health, my marriage or finances and I have envisioned future statements for each of those, but then comes the work of saying, where am I? The current reality for that friends account, and we think of these as life accounts, the current reality was, I really don't have any friends

outside of work. I have acquaintances, but not people that I've really cultivated and this was five years ago when I first realized this. I made huge improvements since.

I think that's the reason I have made improvement, is because I did the life plan, because I set the destination, I was honest about where I was and I said okay if that's reality, then what am I going to do to get from here to there and that's where the fun comes into play. Then I started making specific commitments about what I was going to do. In this case, with friends, I identified three people that I wanted to really not, for them to become good friends to me, but how could I be a better friend to them? I identified them and then set out some steps about how I could be intentional about that.

**Ray:** That is a beautiful thing. I was looking at my own life plan as you were sharing some examples from yours, and thank you for doing that by the way, because I know how personal this is.

**Michael:** You're welcome.

**Ray:** One of the exercises I've done is after the initial draft of my life plan that I made after reading the book, which again is *Living Forward*, A Proven Plan to Stop Drifting and Get the Life You Want, in case you've lost track of the book title. By the way, I'm okay with getting the life I want, I don't think there's anything selfish about that. I actually think it's constructively selfish, because when we get the life we want then we become the person God created us to be. That's my opinion.

One of the things I've done is to go back and look at my entire life plan and every part after I wrote it I said, how can I 10X this? How could I be more excited about it? It's revolutionized some of the goals I have for myself and I did this exercise... it was a shorter with less explanation set of instructions about how to create a life plan, and that's one of the things I've used as a guide and this is so much better.

**Michael:** Thank you.

**Ray:** One of the things it does is, I believe, it allows us to attain things in our life that we thought were impossible.

In my life account that has to do with my physical health, I had some health challenges come up nearly 5 years ago, part of my life plan was centered around the future statements about my health, about what my health was going to be. I wrote these statements and completely left out the health challenges I was having and talked about how I wanted to be and I just came back from a doctor's visit where we did this extensive blood panel and this huge exam.

He said, this is interesting because the health challenges I've had are chronic and they tell me that it's only going to get worse. He said this is hard to believe, but all your numbers are better. You're actually healthier than you were a year ago.

**Michael:** I love that.

**Ray:** I told him that's because I intended to be.

**Michael:** That's the thing about it, I think sometimes we forget the power of incremental change over time. I think some people and probably rightly so, there are some things in life where we have to apply massive action, you know, we just have to get the ox out of the ditch and do whatever it takes or is necessary to do that, but I don't think that's how most of life is.

I think most of life looks like refusing to eat that desert or choosing to go to the gym or choosing to spend 30 minutes talking to my wife at the end of the day and asking her questions to find out what transpired. It's making those investments but it's not like any one of those will be transformative, but the cumulative power of all of them is transformative.

I've watched you and your weight loss goals and see amazing results to see what's happened to your business, but all that, wouldn't you agree has been, not any big thing you did but a lot of little things strung together?

**Ray:** Absolutely. That's one of the distinctions I've gotten deep in my cells over the last few years is that I have been swinging for the homerun all my life, thinking I'm going to get this big lottery win that will change everything, when what was really needed was to hit a lot of

singles, in using the baseball metaphor. It's funny, because I'm not really a baseball fan.

**Michael:** I'm not either, but that's perfect.

**Ray:** It's like you said it's the small incremental changes over time and they make a huge difference. There's a saying in the marketing business, 'little hinges swing big doors', and that's what we're really talking about is putting these little hinges to work in our lives.

**Michael:** That's right. Can I go back to one of the things you were saying that I thought was profound, about getting the life you want is not a selfish thing?

**Ray:** Yes.

**Michael:** I know you have the spiritual foundations segment on your podcast, one of the things that's been amazing to me as I read the Gospels is how many times Jesus asked people as the Son of God, asked people what do you want me to do? Sometimes in situations that are so patently obvious that there's no way He couldn't know what they needed and yet He says, what do you want me to do?

So evidently, the people to whom He was sent and to whom He was ministering, it was critically important that they got clarity about what they wanted. I've thought about this so many times. If you were to ask a person, if God were just to grant your prayer, what's the answer to that prayer? I think some people become so attached to their problems and issues, because maybe it gives them a sense of significance. They get so comfortable with them that they're unwilling to get clearer about what life would look like if they didn't have that and their life was really moving forward.

If anyone is listening that's in that situation now, but it may be that you're resisting planning or being intentional because you've gotten too attached to your problems. I think the lesson from the Gospels and Jesus, what do you want God to do for you? What would you want God to do in your health? What would you want Him to do in your marriage? What would you want Him to do in your finances? To be bold and answer that question, it's worthy of our most serious consideration.

**Ray:** That's powerful and profound. I encourage anyone who's in that situation to really give that some deep thought, meditate on it and think about what you really want really, secretly, that you wouldn't share with anyone because you'd be afraid to get your hopes up. That's deep inside all of us I know for sure.

So we've talked about the questions and this exercise of beginning with the end in mind and there's probably a lot of people listening whose hearts are saying yes, I would like to have a plan that makes my life better, but this sounds like it's going to take forever.

**Michael:** Yes and here's the cool thing. Back in the corporate world, I've led a lot of strategic retreats and love strategic planning, but I've taken as many as 70 people to an off site where we've spent three days, crafting an elaborate strategic plan that's 4" thick, white binder with detailed time tables, GANT charts and resource lists and all the rest. That is not what we're talking about with the life plan. Nine times out of ten, people get back to the office, put it on the shelf and never look at it again. It's a wasted exercise.

We're not talking about that. When we're talking about creating a life plan we're talking about a brief document that's 8-15 pages. It's something written by you, for you and it's something that can be tweaked over time. So nobody's ever going to see it, unless you show it to them. You aren't graded on it. You won't turn it in, it's something that's so brief you can review it on a regular basis and it can really become the rudder for your ship.

The thing that Daniel and I encourage you to do, one chapter is dedicated to this and that is to dedicate one day, set aside one day to unplug, go away and we run you through the exact process step by step. If you follow our process, our promise is to you and we've taken tens of thousands of people through this process that you'll come out the other end of the shoot with a written life plan that will absolutely utterly, change the trajectory of your life, guaranteed.

**Ray:** I stand by that statement because I know it's been true for me and one thing I'd like to point out is that you don't have to get it perfect the first try through.

**Michael:** That's right. I'm still tweaking mine.



**Ray:** Exactly, and that's something you make a real point of explaining is that this is a document you're going to work on the rest of your life.

**Michael:** Yes, and really what it is, is a way for you to become intentional and to be thoughtful and to begin to stop drifting, stop being driven and to begin living forward, to engage with life. We're all going to go through different seasons.

I remember my life plan when I first started this back in 2000, which was, I had five daughters at home and that was a different life. I was working in the corporate world as an executive and today, 16 years later when I have no kids at home, they're all grown and I own my own business. It's a different season and the different seasons require adjustments in our life plan so that we can be good stewards over those seasons.

**Ray:** So you're just taking one day. You have a step-by-step process to go through. You can craft a life plan, is this something that couples should do together?

**Michael:** I love this question. Yes and no. Here's what Daniel, my co-author and I recommend. That couples do it individually so that they really get clear without reference to their spouse what it is they want. I think one of the things that can happen over time if you're not careful is that you get enmeshed in each other's worlds and you kind of lose the boundaries. You no longer really know what you want and where you begin and your partner ends.

I get that the two shall become one and there's a part of that that's really good and healthy, but a part of it can really be co-dependent and enmeshed and not healthy. So I would suggest you do it individually. Then, come together to talk about it and this is what Gail and I have done. This is what Daniel and his wife, Sherry do. This is where all the couples we coach do the exact same process.

Here's what's going to be really fun, is when you do come together and this is assuming you have a more or less healthy marriage, it doesn't have to be perfect, you'll discover places where you're in total alignment and you're going to celebrate those things and go I had no idea you wanted that, I want that too. The two of us together working on that, we can make huge progress.

Then you'll find places where you're not in alignment and you'll go, well, you can't do that if I'm going to do this, which creates great conversation. The most important thing is that when you come together that you seek first to understand, again a Stephen Covey principle, your spouse's perspective and to ask that second or third question without criticism. So if they say they want something that sounds outrageous, like maybe they want to run a ballooning operation and take people on balloon rides and you're thinking that's nuts.

That may be your first inclination is to say that, but what I want you to do is ask the first question and say okay, what is it about that that you find interesting or is important to you? Then just let them talk. Then to drill down further on that, what's important on that? To keep pushing it, you're trying to understand and so many times it gives us a different perspective, and new appreciation but be curious about your spouse.

I've been married for 37 years, Ray, and I'm still fascinated by Gail. I'm fascinated by choice. I've decided that I'm going to spend the rest of my life trying to excavate her heart and discover all the treasures that are there. She's made that same commitment to me.

**Ray:** Wow! I feel the same about my wife and this is such an insightful piece of advice you've given. I think so often we're listening to our spouse and we're thinking about how we're going to counter what they just said, how we're going to show them that they're mistaken so I've had to discipline and by choice, learn to be curious, open and to keep listening til we reach a point where we both realize we have a light bulb moment, and we see how this could work for what you and I both want, together or in a different way than either of us have thought of.

I think the reason it's hard is because it makes us vulnerable to somebody else's desires.

**Michael:** It does, and I know a lot of people from traditional religious backgrounds want to jump to the passage in Ephesians 5 where it talks about the wife submitting to the husband, and they forget the first part of that chapter which says, be filled with the Holy Spirit, submitting yourselves to one another.

I'm not disparaging difference in roles, but it's easy if you're not careful to disparage the fact that love calls us to this mutual submission, where I'm really there to serve my wife and to love her and I have to know what it is she wants. So right now, even in my life with Gail, I'm loving learning what she wants and I'm asking, how can I help her get that? How can I resource that? How can I make it easier for her and help her get what she wants so she can reach her potential and become all that God created her to be.

**Ray:** That's important and powerful, especially if you're in a place where your marriage is not everything that you hope it could be. This is a great way to really get some of that richness that you're looking for.

So we take a day, work on crafting our life plan and it looks good on paper. Then what happens?

**Michael:** Then it all turns out fine.

**Ray:** Great. That's what I wanted to hear.

**Michael:** The last third of the book talks about how to implement this and keep it alive. We give some best practices there, including how you review it, what you do with your calendar when you realize that you're committed to all these things that don't square up with your new life plan. We talk about how to triage your calendar, how to say yes to what you should which is now congruent with your life plan, how you unbuckle or get rid of the things you should have said no to and how do you say no going forward, and how to set up a structure for your life so that you're reviewing this and implementing it on an ongoing basis.

We get into that in the last third of the book because execution, as it turns out, is the most important part of planning. You get to plan, now what? Now you have to execute it.

**Ray:** That's true, because information with implementation does not lead to transformation.

**Michael:** Is that an original from you?

**Ray:** No, that's a Paul B Evans.

**Michael:** I love Paul, but that is a great quote.

**Ray:** That man is full of profound wisdom, it just falls out of his lips, usually in a way that's funny and later you realize how brilliant it was.

**Michael:** I know, he's one of my favorite people.

**Ray:** One of mine as well. Everybody knows, especially if you've been listening, how much I think you need to get this book. It not only gives you the reasons why you need a life plan. It gives you the instructions on how to create one and how to implement it and maintain it going forward, so you continue to have that incremental improvement in your life.

Are there resources available after they finish the book to keep the momentum going?

**Michael:** Yes. At [LivingForwardBook.com](http://LivingForwardBook.com) we have a ton of resources. We have templates for the life plan. We've got a couple other tools having to do with your calendar. We have a life profile assessment, which I'm really excited about, that gives you a sense of where you are in the major domains of life. We talk about nine of those in the book, what it means and how it can inform your life planning.

So all those resources we'll continue to add to in the months ahead.

**Ray:** I just took the life assessment and it's amazing.

**Michael:** Good!

**Ray:** It's quick and gives you a great snapshot of where you are and where you stand in each of these areas and what do you really need to work on. I've taken a lot of assessments and this one is deceptively simple, because when I finished it I realized, believe it or not I still have a couple things to work on.

**Michael:** That's great. It measures your passion and progress in each of the nine areas of life and our premise is that you have to feel passionate and a sense of progress if you're going to be fulfilled, so let's measure that and see where we are.

**Ray:** I have a totally off track question that I've been dying to ask you, how was the process of writing with another author, working together on a book?

**Michael:** Well, I dreaded it at first, I don't like to do things on my own and the thought of someone else having veto power on what I said, but here was the cool thing. Daniel isn't a writer and he had written one book before, so we got together in Florida and we did a brain dump. We said everything we wanted to about every part of this book and we caught all that. We recorded it, then I went off for a month and wrote the first draft.

Then I gave it to Daniel, who went in and inserted all kinds of illustrations, challenged things I had said, fine-tuned and polished it and then we took what he did and we gave it to our editor, Joel Miller and Joel's task was to mesh that into one voice so that it had some coherence to it. It was definitely not painful.

**Ray:** That's fascinating. I appreciate you sharing that. That was purely a selfish question I wanted the answer to. I don't know if my audience was interested but I was.

There's a ton of motivational books available, and a ton of esoteric theoretical books of how the brain works and the neuroscience of achievement, which I also love, but I think the most useful books, the ones that yield the results in our lives are instruction manuals that tell us why to do something, how to do it and then how to maintain the change. *Living Forward* is that kind of book. So I think you and Daniel, for creating this book for us.

**Michael:** Thanks Ray

---

**Ray:** The book is *Living Forward*, which is available now. You'll get all kinds of resources and bonuses when you buy it, so get your copy at [LivingForwardBook.com](http://LivingForwardBook.com)

Until the next time I pray that God continues to bless you and that he does more for you than you can ask or even imagine.

All right, you can find the show notes for this episode, including a transcript by going to [RayEdwards.com/221](http://RayEdwards.com/221).

If you received value from this show, please consider subscribing using the Apple podcast app and if you're feeling extra generous, give us a rating and writing a quick review in iTunes. That would be really awesome.

---

Transcripts of these podcasts are available by clicking the link in the show notes. Transcripts are provided by our friends at [SuccessTranscripts.com](http://SuccessTranscripts.com), a great solution if you need your podcasts, webinars, interviews, workshops, sermons, teleseminars or other audio/video transcribed.