

Goodbye, 5-, 10-, or 15-year life plan

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When I started seventh grade, I was in a club that asked us what we wanted to be when we grew up. We were told to write our answers down on a piece of paper and keep it somewhere where we'd see it again in several years.

I recently found it again all these years later and I bet you'll be surprised as to what it said.

I wanted to be a lawyer.

Who knew where that came from? Other than maybe I saw my future in leadership and study, and being a lawyer was all I knew that women could do.

I also wanted to be married, have lots of kids, and live in a place near palm trees.

In some ways life has turned out like I hoped and in other ways it simply has not. But isn't this the way life is for all of us?

Who really became what they'd thought they'd be when they were seven, 12, or 17? We can set out at the beginning of our lives to be or do something in particular only to find ourselves 15, 20, or 30 years later holding something different.

Personally, I've always fought against this norm. When I set my mind out to do something, I really want to follow through with it even if the goal is not in my best interest. But lately I've been thinking about the folly of all of this. Not that it is wasted energy to make plans or to have a plan. Not that we shouldn't strive toward fixing big problems.

The stupid part is how much mental, emotional, and spiritual energy we all seem to exert toward particular plans. We wrap our heads around some vision for our lives and then want to settle for nothing less even if our plans make us miserable.

I was sitting with a group of girlfriends over lunch recently and the transcript of the conversation would lead a bystander to believe that each one around the table was

in charge of her own life. Or at least each had the ability to control her life circumstances based on her intellect, determination, and perseverance. Each made a declarative statement:

I'll be pregnant in a year.

I'll have a new job in a city closer to family in six months.

I'll be starting my doctorate in the fall.

While all of these things are beautiful and wonderful goals, I couldn't help but think the entire time, what hubris we human beings are capable of! There is no way to guarantee that anything we want to happen in our lives will.

If you asked me ten years ago if this is where my life would land me in 2014, I would have shook my head. I am most certainly not living the life I planned to live. In many ways my life is so much better than I ever imagined. And in other ways it is much worse.

So, this is my life motto: goodbye, five-, ten-, or 15-year life plans. I can hardly predict or plan what is going to happen in the next six months! (Much less even a year in advance.) So why obsess over what is to come?

And while this way of living goes against every bit of my type-A nature, I am learning to accept it. This season of life has forced me to accept it in this strange land. I must make peace with it.

Because really, who am I? Just a grain of sand in the larger universe. I believe in a Creator that is complete mystery. Who am I really to know what I want or I need? Who am I to ever predict what comes next? All I know to do is wake up every morning and keep living, hoping that as I do—that the particular path for what is next becomes clear. And when in doubt, I also go back to this my [favorite prayer by Thomas Merton](#). Because really in the end, life is not about us anyway.

“My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am

doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.”

Today I’m hoping for you as I’m hoping for me that in due time, all will be well. All manner of things shall be well.

*Originally posted at [Preacher on the Plaza](#)*