

Intentional Living: You Can Make Your Life a Great Story

“Everyone’s life is a story. You determine how great your story is.”
– John C. Maxwell

What action step did you commit to last week? What were the results?

INSIGHT

Directions: Take turns reading the paragraphs below. As you read, underline the ideas that capture your attention. Click [here](#) to watch the video for this lesson.

We all tell a story with our lives; yet few of us write that story intentionally. Instead, many of us just live each day and let the story write itself. John Kotter, author of *Leading Change*, says, “Most people don’t lead their own lives – they accept their lives.”

We don’t have to live that way. We can turn our lives into great stories by engaging in *intentional living*. John C. Maxwell says, “When I talk about intentional living, I’m describing approaching each day with the expectation of making a positive difference in the lives of others and following through with action.” Learning to be intentional has the power to create positive change in the world around you and to help you live a great story of significance.

In his book *Intentional Living*, John C. Maxwell describes how a book he received as a gift many years ago inspired him to become more active in “writing” his own story by living intentionally. The book he received was titled *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. Excited to read something inspiring, John quickly opened it, but discovered the pages were all blank. Inside was a note from the giver that said, “John, your life is before you. Fill these pages with kind acts, good thoughts, and matters of your heart. Write a great story with your life.” For the first time, he embraced the idea that he could be the author of his own life and could create a story of significance with his daily actions.

John goes on to describe his journey of significance that took place over the next several decades. As he has shared his story with millions of people, he has made an important discovery. Most people, regardless of culture, background, or age, take four steps in their significance journey, which are described below. As you read them, see if they connect with you:

1. I Want to Make a Difference. A great story—a story of significance—begins with a heart to help other people. If you have a heart to make a difference in the lives of other people, you always find a way to help people. You always find answers to life’s tough questions. You create solutions. You don’t say, “Something should be done about this.” You say, “I will do something!” That’s when you begin to rewrite your story.

2. Doing Something that Makes a Difference. Do you know what you were put on this earth to do? John C. Maxwell

believes all people have a purpose. They just need to discover it. Next week's lesson will help you explore this topic in depth. Until then, know this: You can make a difference. You don't have to be rich or famous or powerful. You can do something that makes a difference. You just need to help people intentionally every day. A great story of significance is one that makes small differences in the lives of others.

- 3. With People Who Make a Difference.** In his book *The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork*, John writes about the Law of Significance, which says, "One is too small a number to achieve greatness." If you want to make a difference, you must become part of something bigger than yourself. You must attempt something greater than you are. That doesn't mean it has to be earth-shaking. It just needs to be big enough to require a group effort. When people begin working together, there is a multiplying effect.
- 4. At a Time That Makes a Difference.** Today is the only day we have to make a difference. People over-exaggerate yesterday and over-estimate tomorrow. Can you make a difference yesterday? Of course not. Yesterday has already passed. It's gone and won't come back again. Can you make a difference tomorrow? There's no guarantee that we will be here tomorrow. The only time we have any control over is *now*. Every time we choose to make a difference now, we write more of our story of significance.

What do you want your life story to say? You can write it by making choices like the ones John C. Maxwell made. The journey begins with *wanting* to make a difference and believing that you can. It takes form as you take action. In the end, if you become intentional, your story will be your legacy. It will outlive you. Long after you're gone, people will remember the type of person you were, the life you lived, and the impact you made on others. Choose to write your story instead of just reading it. Live it rather than just letting it happen. Make it great. Do that, and significance is yours.

REFLECT AND RESPOND

Choose something you underlined that is important to you. Take one minute to tell everyone what you chose and why it is important to you.

ANSWER THIS QUESTION

Take one or two minutes to share your response to this question:

What story would you like to live and leave as a legacy? If it helps, you may want to think of it this way: At your funeral, what would you like people to say about you and the impact you made on your world?

INTENTIONAL ACTION STEP

Determine which of the four steps describing the significance journey best describes where you are now:

1. I Want to Make a Difference
2. Doing Something That Makes a Difference
3. With People Who Make a Difference
4. At a Time that Makes a Difference

Now, what specific action can you take this week to become intentional, so that your life story changes in the direction you desire? Write down what that action is. Be sure to include who, what, where, how, and when you will take this action.

Take a minute to share with the group what action you intend to take this week.