

The 3 Things I Know To Be True by John C. Maxwell

Successful is not synonymous with dollar signs and status. Here are the things I've learned that make a life most meaningful. - John C. Maxwell

"I would rather have it said 'He lived usefully' than 'He died rich.'" —Ben Franklin

More than just words, it was how Ben Franklin lived his life. Instead of seeing success in terms of how much money he could make, Franklin saw it in terms of how many people he could help. To him, being useful was its own reward.

Wealth and status as forms of fulfillment? I've figured out they're just an illusion. And like Franklin, I don't want my life to be measured by dollars and cents. No, I want to live out a different version of success, a more meaningful one, one where I consistently improve myself and always positively influence other people. *I want to live a life that counts.* And with each day that passes, I feel more and more urgency to make sure my time and energy are invested in doing just that.

But what is a life that counts? And how do you *live* it?

In my experience, I believe a life that counts is determined by three things:

1. The Relationships You Form

Relationships help us define who we are and what we can become. I consider relationships to be my greatest treasures in life and an immense source of joy.

Most people can trace their failures or successes to pivotal relationships. That's because all relationships involve transference. When we interact with other people, we exchange energy, emotions, ideas and values. Some relationships reinforce our values and uplift us, while others undercut our convictions and drain us. We can't choose every association in our lives, but we *can* choose who's closest to us.

Make sure you know these relationship rules:

- **Get along with yourself:** The one relationship you will have until you die is yourself.
- **Value people:** You cannot make another person feel important if you secretly feel that they are a nobody.
- **Make an effort to form relationships:** The result of a person who has never served others? Loneliness.
- **Understand the reciprocity rule:** Over time people come to share mutual attitudes toward each other.
- **Follow the Golden Rule:** It's a timeless principle. Treat others the way you want to be treated.

2. The Decisions You Make

Good decisions sometimes reap benefits years into the future, while bad decisions have a way of haunting us.

Legendary basketball coach John Wooden encourages us to “make every day a masterpiece.” Two ingredients are necessary to do this: decisions and discipline. I like to think of decisions as goal-setting and discipline as goal-getting.

The two cannot be separated because one is worthless without the other:

Good decisions - daily discipline = a plan without payoff

Daily discipline - good decisions = regimentation without reward

Good decisions + daily discipline = a masterpiece of success

3. The Experiences You Encounter

Our lives are also shaped by pivotal experiences—whether they’re triumphs *or* tragedies. Maybe we receive a long-awaited promotion, or we’re suddenly let go from a job. Perhaps a loved one passes away, or a newborn baby enters our lives. These experiences immerse us in emotions and challenge our convictions. They might even reveal our purpose in life.

Oftentimes we’re defined not so much in the moment of experience itself as in our response to it. Do we quit or rebound? Do we harbor bitterness or choose to forgive? Do we blame or improve? Whatever the case, the experiences in our lives profoundly touch us.

What we encounter can be broad and varied, but here are a few brief pointers on gaining the most from each experience:

- **Evaluate it:** Experience isn’t the best teacher—evaluated experience is. Learn from mistakes and victories alike. Draw upon experiences to grow and gain wisdom.
- **Manage the emotional aspects of experience:** Pivotal moments come with a flood of emotions—at times positive and other times negative. Teach yourself to counteract negative feelings and learn to harness the momentum of positive emotions.
- **Share them through storytelling:** Make a habit of sharing the lessons learned from the experiences that have shaped your life and your leadership.