

Plan of Life

Following Hesiod

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As with any other plan, a plan of life is made to accomplish many goals or possibly just one significant goal. In the case of the "Plan of Life Following Hesiod," the goal is bare survival on the one side and happiness and thriving on the other—for we do not merely wish to live but to live well (as a later Greek philosopher would say). The following plan consists of the most significant Hesiodic goals and practices from the Theogony and the Works and Days.

1. **Be knowledgeable.** Observe. Seek knowledge. Be the one who thinks about everything for yourself, pondering how things will turn out in the end and what will be better.
2. **Seek counsel.** Be won over by good advice. Take to heart what you hear from another. Look to those who demonstrate wisdom and success in their own lives.
3. **Pay attention to signs.** Distinguish the birds of omen, as it were, and every other signal that comes from the divine and the other centers of power and significance in your life. Who or what is speaking to you? What do you hear? What should you do?
4. **Work hard! Follow the path of success.** Embrace work, toiling with abundant effort and a generous spirit. Rise early; do not put things off. Engage in the good strife planted deep in the roots of earth, and avoid the bad. Be willing to sweat for success. Avoid the easy-then-hard way that ends in failure. Walk along the hard-then-easy path to success.
5. **Be well-ordered.** Manage your life well. Arrange your work in due order, accomplishing each task at the right time—the best time—following nature and the divine. Careful attention prospers work. Always be ready by preparing ahead. Safely store all your wealth.
6. **Build wealth slowly.** Sweat to climb the long and steep path of success. Add a little to a little until "only a little" becomes a lot. Do not profit unjustly as such amounts to ruin. Know that a glorious reputation follows upon wealth.
7. **Acknowledge the divine.** Recognize with awe and respect the power that is behind all things. Strong, wise, and just, it has the ability to give and take away, to raise high and lay low. Pray, sacrifice, and pour out libations (as it were). Avoid the wrath of the divine. Be blameless before the immortals, shunning transgressions.
8. **Relate well to others.** Honor your parents. Have affection for your siblings. Value your good spouse. Seek harmony with your friends. Be loyal. Be a good, useful neighbor. On occasion offer your neighbors a spread of food and entertainment. Host strangers (occasionally). Watch your tongue, using speech sparingly.
9. **Seek justice.** Know that justice, what is right and customary, is a divine gift to humans—by far the best thing that has come to be. Justice leads to happiness, peace, and prosperity for individuals and cities. Injustice brings misfortune. Abstain from reckless and needless violence (*hubris*), knowing that he who

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causes harm to another causes harm to himself. Defend the weak, particularly the orphaned child. When it is your turn, rule with justice. Speak the truth.

10. **Share.** Imitate straight-judging men, who, in abundance, distribute every valued thing. Model yourself on the golden race or kind of human beings, who willingly and peacefully allocate the results of their work along with many good and noble things. The reason they do so? Because the earth and fields give without envy.

11. **Relax and enjoy with measure.** Seek satisfaction

relative to how much you have, sometimes in full, at others sparingly. Due measure is the best in all things. Know the most suitable time to feast in the shade.

12. **Sing and celebrate.** Delight the divine mind. Glorify what will be and what was before. Extol greatness, the laws and customs of that which will never die. Imitate the Muses who live in abundance, celebrating with song and dance. Even as the poet-singer does, allow poetry to replace bad things with forgetfulness and cares with rest.

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"Let him hear the advice of Hesiod. . . . The advice of Hesiod is good." — Aristotle

"Lampon . . . greatly honors the sayings of Hesiod, the one he declares and recommends to his sons."
—Pindar

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