

Whether you're a beginner sprint-distance triathlete training 4 to 5 hours a week or an elite training upwards of 25, it's important that the time you spend training isn't wasted and your training-time investment is producing the results you desire.

The few minutes that you're about to spend reviewing this guide to triathlon training programs will pay huge dividends by improving the quality of your decision when choosing what type of plan you'll follow as you invest hundreds of hours in training over the coming seasons. We'll discuss what makes a plan effective, provide you with a framework for evaluating different types of plans, and arm you with key criteria to consider when choosing between them.

We'll also answer many questions that you've probably asked yourself.

- Would a professionally designed training plan benefit me?
- What makes one training plan good and another not so good?
- How can I recognize a quality plan when I see it?
- How much should I expect to pay for quality plan?
- What other considerations are there when choosing a plan or coaching services?

Do any of those sound familiar? Well, let's get started.

### **Simple, Random, and Default Plans**

To the novice athlete, the concept of "physical training" may seem simple. Once they settle their mind on a performance goal, they think that if they want to go further or faster all they need to do is train more and harder. "Just push yourself," they think. They recall the old saying, "No pain. No gain." So, they train with a "little of this and a little of that" random approach...just as long as it produces pain or wears them out.

At first, this simplistic approach seems productive. Obviously, going from little or no sport specific activity to something (anything) will generally deliver the low-hanging fruit of performance improvement just from the increased activity alone. But soon enough, they will reach a performance plateau, experience an injury, or both. It's true that without pain or pushing past our comfort zone, we will not grow. But this does *not* mean that just because we push ourselves or experience pain that we *will* grow or improve. There are plenty of activities that produce pain and exhaust us, yet do not improve our performance. This is where most novice athletes waste countless training hours realizing neither fitness nor performance gains.

The fact is that you will never realize even a fraction of your full potential with a simplistic or random approach to training.

Another fact, that for some is hard to accept, is that we are all on a plan. There's no such thing as not having a plan. You've heard the saying, "If you don't plan to win, then you plan to fail." This is true. With the only constant in this temporal life being change, we are constantly either training or detraining. Individuals who do not engage in physical activity at all are on the default plan—detraining. This plan will produce exactly the results you would think. They will become less and less fit as time goes on.

Hopefully, by the mere fact that you're reading this article, you agree that the "more is better" simplistic plan, the random plan, and the "no plan" detraining plan are not viable options if you truly want to improve your performance and get the most out of your training investment.

## Training Plan Considerations

The objective of physical training is to stimulate *specific* beneficial adaptations that increase your ability to perform as desired. These adaptations occur in the cardiovascular, muscular, and nervous systems and involve both the aerobic and anaerobic energy systems. Adaptations to each of these systems are only realized when and to the extent that the training complies with the physical laws (physiology, physics, biomechanics, and so forth).

Whether or not you *understand* these laws, your body is still *governed* by them.

Some of the specific beneficial adaptations include increased muscular strength, increased connective tissue strength, increased muscle fiber recruitment, enhanced proprioception, neuromuscular facilitation, increased glycogen stores, increased ability to use fat for energy, improved body composition, mitochondria proliferation, and increased capillarization.

Only specific training results in specific adaptations. Random training does not. Specific training involves optimal manipulation of the four basic variables of training: duration (distance or time), frequency, intensity, and sequence.

Proper manipulation of these four variables requires a solid understanding of stimulation thresholds (how much is required), stimuli absorption limits (how much is too much), recovery required (how much and what type is needed), adaptation half-life (how long does it last), and adaptation rate (how much is expected). These are all unique to the specific type of adaptation sought.

Even armed with all of this experience and knowledge of body systems, energy systems, physical laws, training variables, desired adaptations and their attributes, we're not quite ready to put together a training plan. We've also got to consider the starting point.

To apply all of this training knowledge and expertise effectively, you need to fully take into account the athlete's history and present performance and fitness level. This includes age, body composition, gender, developmental stage in each discipline, sport ages in each discipline, performance level in each discipline, intensity or power curves for each discipline, relative performance differences between disciplines, current workload capacity, and so much more.

Bottom line...unless your performance goals and the time, effort, and money you invest in training have very little value to you, it's always advisable to follow a quality plan. One that's designed specifically for you to ensure that you aren't wasting your time or even detraining yourself.

### Are you ready for a quality plan?

You're ready for a quality plan when you meet two criteria. Both of them are mental—not physical.

1. You've come to the place in your athletic maturation where you have a purpose for training and cognitively realize the value of a quality training program. You realize that without it, you cannot realize your God-given potential. You may experience some temporary "successes" along the way, but in the end you will have suffered avoidable injuries, and have wasted countless hours of effort on useless and even harmful training.

2. You've come to the place where you are willing (joyfully, not reluctantly) to commit to your plan. You clearly see its value. Generally, if you have trouble committing to a plan, one of two things is going on...either you don't understand the need for a plan (#1 above) or you don't believe that the plan presented to you is *your* plan. *Your* plan is the plan that is uniquely created for you, that takes into account not only your triathlon goals, but all of your life's commitments and responsibilities as well. You should view your plan as life saver, focusing all of your training time and energy on what will deliver the most results for you. It eliminates all of the waste. It reduces risk of avoidable injuries. It effectively trains you for the race that is marked out for you.

### Choosing a training program?

Once you're aware of the importance and value of a training plan and decide to get one, you'll quickly find that there is a vast array of "plans" and coaching options available. *All* of them, so they claim, are *just* what you need. But obviously, this can't be true.

Just like a consumer advocacy group might break down its rating of telephone service into separate categories such as up-time, call clarity, customer service, and cost, we'll do the same with training programs. We've established three categories for evaluating the quality of training programs: quality, integration, and cost.

1. **Quality** is the degree of sophistication, relevancy, and specificity present in the plan. Higher quality plans deliver faster and more reliable results with less risk of injury.
2. **Integration** is the degree to which the plan is or can be tied to or supported by training resources and education, race strategies and tools, training groups, and significant causes.
3. **Cost** is the financial investment required for various training programs.

### Quality

Volumes have been written about all that goes into high quality training program design. We won't attempt to cover it here. But we will touch on some of the things that you can look for to be able to recognize a high quality training plan when you see one. We also define training plan quality levels. (Level 0 is lowest and Level 5 is highest.) The descriptions of these levels include checklists and other reference points to help you when choosing a training plan.

The quality of a plan is related to the sophistication, relevancy, and specificity present in the plan. The higher the quality of your plan, the faster and more reliable your training results will be and the less risk of injury you will face.

**Sophistication** is the degree to which a plan effectively manages the four basic training variables (duration, frequency, intensity, and sequence) and employs proven training methods and techniques in workouts to stimulate specific beneficial adaptations.

The first and most basic principle involved in program design is progressive overload—gradually adding duration or intensity to successive workouts. Every plan you find will include this one.

The other basic principle usually included in training plans is intensity variance. The plan will vary the training intensities of weekly workouts to stimulate different adaptations. Applying intensity variance at a rudimentary

level is simple. Higher quality plans will deliver far more results through a much more sophisticated approach to intensity variance and a much deeper understanding of the athlete. Higher sophistication involves how intensity levels are determined and measured; how much and how often various intensity sessions are prescribed; how sets and reps are constructed in individual workout sessions; and so forth. The time and expertise required to accomplish this is great, but so are the results.

Another basic principle found in most training plans is the principle of periodization. Periodization involves breaking up an athlete's training program into blocks of varying durations and strategically ordering them with focused training objectives. Macrocycles can last more than a year and consists of smaller training blocks (in order of decreasing duration) called periods, phases, mesocycles, microcycles, sessions, and units. Each block has a specific purpose that prepares the athlete for the next block.

Most plans you'll find only use simple classical periodization and periodize the swim, bike, and run all in the same way, despite any differences in performance or background in each discipline. You'll often come across plans that specify training blocks as Preparatory, Base, Build, Peak, or Transition. These are references to periodized training blocks.

Low sophistication training plans with basic progressive overload, rudimentary intensity variance, and simple periodization are easy to come by and cost very little. Some are actually "free". The only thing you pay for is lack of results.

So what makes a plan more sophisticated and have a higher quality? We'll discuss that more in a moment. First, we need to realize that a plan's sophistication is limited by its relevancy factor.

**Relevancy** is the degree to which your plan is based on *your* individual attributes.

People often associate plan quality with the credentials of the plan designer. The education, experience, and results achieved by the plan designer only indicate the *potential* for a quality plan.

The quality of the plans they design depends on how intimately they know and consider you and your individual attributes...your current fitness and performance level, age, gender, background, developmental stage, genetic makeup, body composition, relative performance differences and backgrounds of the disciplines, current training volume, and much more.

Consideration of each one of these variables allows your training plan to become several times more effective. Prescribing training is like prescribing medicine—the more complete the assessment or examination is, the more sound the resulting diagnosis and prescription. You wouldn't take medicine prescribed by a doctor that measured only your height, weight, and temperature and performed no further examination. I hope you'd insist that he or she learn a little more about your actual medical history, symptoms, and current physical condition before making a diagnosis and prescription.

Extremely low relevancy plans are the generic one-size-fits-all plans that you find on the internet. Only slightly better are the pre-packaged "first-timer," "beginner," "intermediate," or "advanced" plans. Or, the "bike-focused" or "run-focused" plans. These plans attempt to be more relevant by generically altering the training plan with respect to one or two variables. But, they do so in a vague and subjective manor that could apply to masses of people while still ignoring many other critical factors.

Is a “beginner” plan for those who are truly just beginning in the sport? What if they are new, but have a long athletic background and can podium in their age group? What if they’ve been participating in the sport for a decade but their performance places them at the back of the pack? Beginner? Intermediate? You just can’t make these broad classifications and arbitrary assumptions and expect to end up with an effective training plan.

With more intimate knowledge of you, an expert plan designer can only then actually apply their knowledge and experience to develop a sophisticated, high quality plan that goes beyond generic training plan basics that may or may not be relevant to you.

A sophisticated plan will employ training principles and methods including progressive overload, specificity of adaptation, reversibility, muscle activation and recruitment, habituation, potentiation, functional threshold determination, testing, recovery optimization, and much more. It will also have the potential to use advanced periodization strategies (such as staggered, reverse, and crisscross) that are extremely beneficial for athletes that have limited time (can’t do high volume in all three disciplines at the same time) or already have a strong background in one or more of the three disciplines.

You can often recognize a sophisticated plan by its specificity. (See the examples of plan specificity on the next page.)

**Specificity** is the degree to which the plan provides specific training instructions for workouts. A highly specific plan includes specific drills and warm ups. It prescribes specific intensities (paces and/or heart rate zones) for each workout. Workout sessions are broken down into sets with specified intervals and rest durations between each. Each workout has a specific objective and is based on your individual attributes. Not all sessions require a high degree of specificity. But key sessions (aka “quality” sessions) almost always do.

*Beware the highly specific plan that isn't based on you.* Just like you wouldn't take someone else's medical prescription, don't accept their training prescription either. Below are a few plan examples showing different levels of specificity.

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Bike – 20 miles	Swim – 2500 yards	Bike – 40 miles	Run – 5 miles
		Run – 2 miles	

**Example 1: Low specificity indicating both low sophistication and relevancy**

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Bike – 20 miles at Zone 4	Swim – warm up with 200 yards drills then 2500 yards - slow	Long bike – 40 miles in Zone 2	Easy run – 5 miles at easy pace (zone 2)
		Brick run – 2 miles at moderate pace (zone 3 or below)	

**Example 2: Moderate specificity**

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Bike – 1:00 Threshold Intervals  Warm Up: 5-10 minutes @ Zone 2 including 4 x 30" (30") spinups  Main Set: 3 x 10' @ Zone 4 with 2' rest between each interval;  Stay in Zone 2 for the rest of the 1:00 workout	Swim – :45  Warm Up: 200 swim at Slow; 200 drill progression A; 2 x 50 swim golf  Main Set: 3 x 300 (15' rest) as 150 Fast and 150 Threshold; rest 1' 5 x 200 (10' rest) @ Threshold as 100 pull and 100 swim  Cool Down: 200 @ Slow	Long bike – 2:00  Warm Up: 10-15' @ Zone 2 with 4 x 30" (30") spinups and 4 x 1' (1') @ Zone 4  Main Set: 2 x 10' (5') @ Zone 4  Reminder of ride stay in Zone 2.	Easy run – :50  Warm Up: 10' @ Easy (9:45/mile)  Main Set: 4 miles @ 8:30/mile pace  Cool Down: .5 mile easy jog and light stretching.  Immediately after run, start recovery drink and elevate feet for 4'.
		Brick run – :20 8:30/mile out and 8:00/mile back	

**Example 3: High specificity indicating high sophistication and relevancy.**

## Training Plan Quality Levels

The following chart graphically represents six different plan quality levels. Low quality plans have low sophistication and relevancy. The highest quality plans are highly sophisticated and highly relevant.



### Level 0 Plans

These are the super-simplistic, more is better, random training, and default plans. They are both unsophisticated and irrelevant. Their effectiveness is limited to what is achieved by engaging in *some* activity rather than *no* activity. Their costs are high due to risk of injury, lack of fitness and performance results.

### Level 1 & 2 Plans

These plans are marginally better than level 0 plans. They may be designed by industry experts and employ highly sophisticated training techniques and methodologies. However, if they were designed with the consideration of only a few variables while ignoring dozens of others, all of the expertise is for naught.

Sampling is a plan acquisition practice that many novice athletes do to attempt to get a high quality plan without paying for it. Sampling is simply implementing someone else's plan. It could be the plan of a training partner, one found in a magazine, or one from the internet that a pro uses. In any case, sampling plans fall into the Level 1 or Level 2 quality category. Despite how similar your current performance level might be to someone else,

each of us is vastly different and we all have very different training histories. These differences usually require substantially different plans.

## Level 3 & 4 Plans

These plans are custom built for each athlete. The quality of the plan is based on the expertise and experience of the plan designer and the amount of information considered when building the plan. Expertise, experience, and education are easy to research as they are usually included in the designer's bio. When evaluating experience, look for both the designer's personal experience in the sport *and* their experience training others.

Regarding relevancy, use the checklist below to get an idea of the type of information that a high-quality plan should consider.

### Training Plan Input Variables (partial list)

- Age
- Gender
- Body composition
- Race distance
- Competitive level
- Competitive goal
- Available time to train
- Training phase
- Training phase duration (weeks)
- Race venue climate and terrain specifics
- Years in triathlon
- Years training or competing in each discipline
- Current long sessions for each discipline
- Current weekly training volume for each discipline
- Current performance level in each discipline based on specific assessments
- Performance-level differentials between disciplines
- Current threshold heart rates, paces, and power as applicable for each discipline

Professional creation of a training plan based on these and other criteria will result in a highly effective plan that has the following characteristics:

- Discipline independent – Programming for each discipline is determined based on athlete's performance in that discipline rather than programming for "beginner," "intermediate," or "advanced" across the board.
- Discipline focus optimized – Training focus is adjusted proportionately to address performance-level disparities between disciplines.
- Developmental-phase appropriate – Training volume and intensity are prescribed relative not only to performance level but to developmental phase as well. Training is more productive with less risk of injury.
- Volume (workload) max- or minimized – Based on athlete's developmental phase, performance level, and pre-plan training volume, combo workouts, split sessions, and complex periodization techniques can be employed to increase workload capacity and/or minimize training time requirements.

- Form and fitness inclusive – Programming includes cohesive blend of form (technique and mechanics) and fitness training and addresses specific performance limiters.
- Repeat/rest-level specific – Quality sessions include optimized intervals indicating set- and rep-level intensities and recovery periods based on athlete’s individual performance level.
- Terrain, climate, competition specific – Unique to each venue and event.
- And much more...

### **Level 5 Plans**

Like level 3 & 4 plans, these plans are custom built for each athlete and the quality is based on the expertise and experience of the plan designer and the amount of information considered when building the plan.

The difference between a level 4 and a level 5 plan is the amount of ongoing interaction between the coach and athlete. Level 5 plans require that the coach continually analyze training data, supervise workouts, conduct assessments in the field, and solicit feedback from the athlete. As they do this, they use this information to modify the plan accordingly. Level 4 plans can be just as sophisticated and relevant as a level 5 plan at the time of creation. However, the relevance of level 5 plans is maintained and increased through ongoing interaction.

This additional interaction also allows the coach to craft training sessions around athlete injuries and scheduling conflicts.

Level 5 plans are typically deployed for training blocks of no more than one or two weeks at a time. Be careful not to evaluate the level of interaction by considering the frequency with which the coach distributes training blocks. Rather, consider how frequently and comprehensively they collect and analyze information from you and use it to enhance your training plan.

### **Integration**

Integration is the degree to which a training plan is tied to or supported by training resources, education, race strategies, progressions, training groups. Additional, depending on your purpose for competing, a programs affiliation can have value and or meaning.

Highly integrated training plans will come with much of the following:

- Educational resources (articles and videos)
- Training tools (training zone calculators, nutrition calculators or guides)
- Local training groups
- Online communities
- Race guides (pacing and nutrition)
- Coaching services
- Greater-than-self causes, awareness campaigns, and fundraisers

## Cost

The first thing to realize is there is no such thing as a “free” plan. If you go into training, what you don’t pay for up front, you will pay for in the end. It’s true that there are training “plans” you can find on the internet that you don’t have to purchase. You can make up your own training as you go. And you can just try to follow a plan that was created for someone else. But these are far from free. You won’t pay for them when you acquire them. But you will pay.

The biggest investment you make in your triathlon training is your time and energy. Whether you spend 20 or 80 hours per month training, this is your greatest expenditure. Your training program is what ensures that this greatest expenditure is optimized and not largely wasted or worse yet leads to injury possibly sending your race fee, travel expenses, and equipment investments down the drain.

When you acquire a plan or coaching, you’re paying for the expertise of the program designer, the time they invest in building your plan, and their ongoing coaching time. Below is a simple chart that shows the approximate cost ranges for the different plan quality levels.

Plan Level	Description	Monetary Cost	Other Costs
Level 0	Simple, Random	“free”	High risk of injury, lack of results, wasted time
Level 1	One-Size-Fits-All	\$50-\$99	High risk of injury, lack of results, wasted time
Level 2	Off-the-Shelf (beginner, intermediate, advanced)	\$99 - \$250	Moderate risk of injury, lack of results, wasted time
Level 3	Moderate-Quality Custom	\$175 - \$300	Less effective than high-quality plan, significantly less effective than ongoing coach involvement
Level 4	High-Quality Custom	\$250 - \$400	Less effective than ongoing coach involvement
Level 5	High-Quality Custom (with ongoing coach involvement)	\$150 - \$500 per month	

**Table 1: Training plan cost ranges by plan quality level**

Hint: Coaches are not going to promote their custom plans as “one-size-fits-all” or “moderate-quality.” You’ll have to make that evaluation yourself based on their credentials and the amount and type of data they collect from you. Also, the categories listed above are not comprehensive. For example, you could get a low quality plan with a high-level of coach interaction.

## Tri4Him's Custom Training Plans

It wouldn't be prudent to conclude this article without mentioning Tri4Him's training plan offerings and inviting you to check them out.

### Level 4 Quality

Tri4Him not only specializes in custom training plans, it's the only type of plan we offer. You'll find no one-size-fits-all, generic plans in our organization. We believe that all plans should be purposeful and personal.

Tri4Him's custom plans employ all of the sophisticated techniques and methods mentioned in this document (and more), as appropriate to the individual athlete, using the TriDot System (patents pending).

The TriDot System is an integrated training and racing system. It incorporates advanced training methodologies and techniques, delivers training education on mechanics and training principles, delivers plans with highly detailed daily workouts, includes pacing and nutrition guidance, establishes training intensity zones, and explores the TriLife Metaphor facilitating both physical and spiritual growth. The TriDot System was designed by Tri4Him founder, Jeff Booher, a USA Triathlon Level 2 Coach, USA Track & Field Level 1 Coach, and USA Cycling Level 3 Coach whose coaching experience includes sprint to iron-distance programs for beginners to elite triathletes.

### Integration

The level of integration offered through Tri4Him has our level 4 plans broaching into level-5 territory through our extensive self-coaching resources and tools that include the following:

- Training zone/pace calculator that allows you to update your training zones and paces based on periodic assessment in the plan
- Numerous succinct training articles to help you understand the "why" behind training principles and methods
- Race-day pace guides that use specific performance and training data to establish your optimal race-day pacing
- Training plan supplemental documentation to guide you through adapting your weekly schedule for schedule conflicts and incorporation of lower priority or training races
- Race-day nutrition guides and education
- Just-in-time training education and advice through weekly emails
- Race -distance progression guides with specific time trial thresholds to achieve prior to moving to a longer event
- Last on the list, but certainly not least in importance, Tri4Him integrates physical training with spiritual training and creates an environment through which members can grow in their faith and share the love of Christ with others.

### Cost

Through Tri4Him's unique Performance Membership model, we are able to offer these high-quality custom plans for a low monthly fee, about 1/3 the typical cost.

*For more information and testimonials about Tri4Him's custom training plans developed through the TriDot System and its Performance Memberships, please visit [www.tri4him.com](http://www.tri4him.com).*

## TriLife Eternal: What's Your Plan for Eternity

“Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.”

— 1 Corinthians 9:25-26

As we run our spiritual race, we face with many of the same options and considerations as when choosing a plan to follow when training for triathlons. Many people live their lives following the “if it feels good, do it” plan or the “more is better” plan. But just like the simple and random training options common to so many novice triathletes, those that follow these plans will experience some temporary pleasures and “successes” along the way. But the destination at the end of these plans is death.

Just like the physical laws that govern our bodies and how we are physically transformed through purposeful training, there are spiritual laws that govern us spiritually, including our spiritual transformation. And as with physical laws, our level of understanding or agreement with spiritual laws does not change the fact that they govern us.

The entire Bible is full of spiritual wisdom and details about who God is and how much He loves us. Certainly, we cannot cover everything here. However, below are some of the fundamental spiritual laws that the Bible teaches that give us some context for finding purpose in our life and choosing a plan to follow. (For a slightly broader list along with scripture references, please see Appendix A.)

1. There is a God; and we are not Him.
2. God is perfect, holy, and just.
3. We are all sinful people, and our sin separates us from God.
4. The penalty and consequence of sin is death.
5. God loves us very much and desires a relationship with us.
6. God sent Jesus to pay the penalty for our sin through His death and resurrection.
7. By turning from our sin, accepting His forgiveness, and making Jesus Christ the Lord of our life, we can be forgiven of our sins and restored to an eternal relationship with God.

Obviously, a list of 7 spiritual laws cannot fully communicate the essence of God and His will for your life. That's what your plan is for. He desires to reveal Himself to you as you journey through life with Him. How much does He desire this?

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

— Romans 5:8

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

— John 3:16-17

God has a plan specifically for you. It's a fully integrated Level 5 plan with ongoing coaching included!

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

— Ephesians 2:8-9

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

— Hebrews 12:1

## TriLife Eternal: What's Your Plan for Eternity (continued)

How do you know that His plan is sophisticated?

“In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.”

— John 1:1-4

How do you know that His plan is relevant to you?

“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.

My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was made in the secret place.  
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,  
your eyes saw my unformed body.  
All the days ordained for me  
were written in your book  
before one of them came to be.”

— Psalm 139:14-16

There is no more educated, qualified, or experienced plan designer. The God that made the universe and all the laws that govern it also made you! He knows you inside and out. And that's not a figure of speech. He desires an intimate and highly interactive relationship with you.

How can you accept His plan and enjoy eternity with Him? You can do it by accepting three basic things regarding the person of Jesus Christ.

- 1) We accept Jesus Christ as the owner of our entire life (physically and spiritually) and acknowledge the supreme authority of Jesus Christ in every aspect of it.
- 2) We accept Jesus Christ as the only Savior of our soul. The forgiveness of our sins and our eternal life are due to His loving sacrifice (death on the cross and resurrection)—not on our good works or intentions.
- 3) We accept a committed personal relationship with God, through Jesus Christ. God does not want us to be “affiliated” with Him in name only nor does He want our mere intellectual acquiescence regarding certain facts about Him. He wants us to have a maturing relationship with Him.

Sometimes, when people come to the point in their lives when they understand and accept these three things, they find it meaningful to pray to God verbalizing their acceptance of these things and their desire to have a relationship with Him and to receive the gift of eternal life. God is our only Judge, and He knows our hearts and minds whether or not we verbalize their contents.

Once we accept His plan for our life and establish a relationship with God, there are several important things that we can begin to do to grow and mature spiritually.

- 1) Read the Bible and pray. Talk to God and let Him talk to you. The book of Matthew is a great place to start reading. Ask God to reveal Himself to you through His Word. This is how you learn of His plan for you and continue the ongoing interactive relationship with Him.
- 2) Join a local Bible-based church for worship, Bible study, and Christian relationships. This is part of His integrated plan. He created us for an eternal relationship with Him and other believers.

Are you ready to accept His plan for your life? In whose plan will you trust your life and your eternity? Just as iron rusts, so too, do Ironmen die. Invest your life in something that will last—an eternal relationship with Jesus Christ.

If I don't see you before then, I hope to see you at this life's finish line.

## Appendix A

The categorized summary below lists many items that are important to know and understand in order to accept choose God's plan for our life. If you don't have a Bible handy, you can look up all of these passages and read them in context at [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com).

### God

- God created the universe and everything in it. (Genesis 1:1, 1 Chronicles 29:11, Psalms 100:3)
- God deeply loves us. (John 3:16, 1 John 4:9)
- God is perfect, holy, and just. He punishes evil and does not allow it in His presence. (Numbers 14:18, Matthew 5:48)

### Us

- We were created in God's image to have a relationship with Him. (Genesis 1:27, Revelation 21:3)
- We rebelled and turned away from God. (Isaiah 53:6, Romans 3:23)
- Sin (rebellion and disobedience) separates from God. (Isaiah 59:2)
- The penalty for sin is death—both physical and spiritual. (Romans 6:23)
- We can never do enough good to pay the penalty for our sins or restore our relationship with God. Eternal life is a free gift that we cannot earn. (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 6:23)

### Jesus Christ

- God became a human being in the person of Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for our sins and restore our relationship with Him. (John 1:14)
- Jesus Christ lived a sinless life and died on the cross to pay the penalty for sins. Only through His sacrifice can we be forgiven for our sins. (Isaiah 53:5-6, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Colossians 1:19-20, Romans 5:8)
- Jesus Christ rose again on the third day that we also might be raised to eternal life with God. (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Romans 6:5)

### My Response

- I must confess my sins and repent, turning away from a life of rebellion and disobedience. (Isaiah 55:7, Matthew 4:17)
- I must believe in what God has done for me through Jesus Christ. (John 1:12)
- I must personally receive Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and accept a committed maturing relationship with Him. (Revelation 3:20)
- After accepting His invitation, I gain a new relationship with other believers. Part of this new relationship involves being baptized into the Christian community and becoming active in the family of God, His Church. (Acts 2:38-47, Mark 3:35)

### God's Cost

- He allowed His Son Jesus Christ to be crucified for our sake. (John 3:16-17)

### My Cost

- Nothing. My relationship with God and my eternal life are free. (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- Everything. I must give my entire self to Jesus Christ and desire to obey Him. (Romans 12:1-2)