

It has been a little over 4 months since I left the corporate world and began working in ministry.

Below are 7 things that I have learned so far:

1). Leaving the past behind wasn't easy

We are creatures of habit, and what I had been doing was comfortable, even if I didn't enjoy every minute of it.

My entire adult lifetime had been spent with one company, in one location. Normal was getting up each morning, getting dressed and going downtown – leaving at a certain time, taking the same route, parking in the same place, eating the same foods for lunch, working with the same people, coming home at the same time, etc. I largely knew what to expect and “had it all figured out”.

Then, God started working in me and speaking to me in a multitude of ways, with increasing frequency and intensity, and everything in my life started to change.

God's call into something new is a journey into the uncomfortable; we are to take up our cross and follow Him. In Luke 9:23-25, Jesus said to the crowd, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed?”

Money and vocational status were idols for me, in that I was relying upon them instead of relying on God. In Matthew 6:24, Jesus warned against this when He said, “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.”

The first commandment in Exodus 20:3 instructs us “You must not have any other god but me.”

My security had been in the size of my bank account and the return on my investment portfolio. I had two masters, and money had become a god. It was time to make a change and truly put God first.

Was leaving easy? Absolutely not. Was leaving the right decision? Without a doubt.

2). There is more freedom than what I expected, but there are moments when I want to go back

Until I stripped away the daily burdens from my career completely, I did not realize how much my career controlled me, instead of me controlling my career.

I would regularly take the stress and heaviness from my job home at night, wouldn't be able to sleep at night because I was trying to solve a problem, and would not be completely emotionally present for my family.

Being willing to walk away broke me free from those chains. I was able to put my attention and mental energy toward what I wanted, instead of the pull of a demanding career.

However, there are things that I miss about the job that give me, on occasion, a sense of longing for what I once had. Obviously, the pay isn't the same as what I had previously. There are people that I don't see as much as I used to but long to converse with about the football game over the weekend. There were places to eat nearby that are no longer convenient to visit.

The Israelites in the wilderness between Egypt and the promised land wanted to go back to slavery in Egypt instead of eating the manna from God every day in the wilderness. There are temptations to go back on a regular basis. There is that lingering doubt, fueled by the enemy, that asks "Did God really say that you were supposed to do that? Are you sure?" When those doubts come, I remind myself to not look back but instead look forward to the good promises of God that He wants what is best for me.

I am encouraged by Philippians 3:13-14, "Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us."

3). Relationships will change; make the effort to stay in touch with those who are meaningful to you

I had the honor of working with some tremendous people at Nationwide, and I miss seeing them every day. The team that I led was together for several years, and we had a great sense of teamwork and cohesion.

One of the greatest joys that I have in this season is when someone from my former team reaches out and wants to get together for coffee, lunch, etc. Those discussions bring a sense of purpose to the time that I spent in the corporate world.

But those relationships have shifted. No longer do those people need to meet with me as part of their job. Our interactions are now driven more by a sense of friendship than teamwork.

I still think about and pray for that team on a regular basis, and spending time with them, albeit in a different context, is very rewarding.

Just because I left the company doesn't mean that I must cease the relationship altogether. Even though getting together is more difficult, it's worth the extra effort to do so.

4). Spiritual warfare is real, but we have the power to overcome

The enemy knows your weak spots and will try to prevent you from giving your all to God. We experienced many significant tests within the first couple months of the transition into ministry.

For instance, every one of our cars had some kind of repair needed – brakes, nail in a tire, dead battery, etc. On top of that, my wife was in a minor car accident, and we needed to get the collision damage repaired.

Our kitchen went through a season where every one of our appliances needed some sort of repair. We had a dishwasher that leaked, causing damage to our hardwood floors. Our oven stopped working properly. Our stovetop had an issue with one of the burners. Our refrigerator had a broken part.

Our washing machine also had an error code and needed repair.

A tree fell on our fence during a windstorm.

It seemed that everything was going wrong.

While we were trying to prepare our house to sell, everything was breaking down.

The stress of the transition, coupled with the feeling that the universe was working against us, caused friction in our marriage.

Satan knew how to attack us and was trying to keep us from fulfilling the call that God had for us.

We are encouraged by James 1:2-4, "Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing."

We have the power to overcome spiritual warfare through prayer & scripture, as Jesus modeled when he was tempted in the desert. When I sensed spiritual warfare, I prayed specifically about that situation, and relief was near.

5). God will provide & will bless you in ways that you cannot imagine

When I decided to walk away from my corporate job, I had developed a rough idea of how I thought that everything was going to come together to provide for my wife & family.

Through several delays in payments that I had expected to come right away, there were moments where I found myself truly dependent on God to find a way to work things out.

Every single time, God delivered, as he provided the ram to Abraham on Mount Moriah in Genesis 22.

There have been situations where people have given me coupons in line at a store, seemingly for no reason.

I received a discount for one of our auto repairs because the computer in the store was not working properly at the time to check out.

Out of the blue, a friend notified me that we had unclaimed funds at the state.

My wife received an unexpected bonus at her teaching job.

God has provided in unexpected ways.

None of this happened while I was still trying to provide for myself; only God could have worked through these situations.

Praise God that He is our provider, just as He provided manna for the Israelites in the wilderness.

6). God is in control. You will not know God's entire plan; take the first step anyway.

There have been many times in this transition that we have tried to figure out in our minds how God was working. Most of the time, it didn't turn out like we anticipated.

This is good because as the Lord said in Isaiah 55:8-9, "My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts, and my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts."

Proverbs 19:21 states, "You can make many plans, but the Lord's purpose will prevail."

God wants us to take steps of obedience, and He will reveal how He is working.

I don't need to understand how something will turn out; I only need to trust that He is good.

Romans 8:28 encourages us, "And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."

7). Continue to seek Him. Keep God first. Don't stop praying.

I was tempted to think after all the transition that has happened already that God was done working and that I could take a breath and stop where I was. However, I have found that God still wants me to seek Him and that He is not done with me yet.

As it states in Matthew 6:33, "Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need."

Jeremiah 29:11-14 is an instructive passage. "'For I know the plans I have for you,' says the Lord. 'They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. I will be found by you,' says the Lord. 'I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and will bring you home again to your own land.'"

Verse 11 is a very popular and encouraging passage. It is often quoted and well known.

However, the message doesn't stop there. The promise is even greater than what we see in verse 11.

In the following verses, we learn that He will hear our prayers when we call on Him.

We will seek Him and find Him if we seek Him with all our heart.

He will restore His people from captivity and exile.

It's easy to stop short of the full promise that God had for us.

Press into the full power of God.

Be bold in prayer.

Our God can do it. With God all things are possible. We need to ask.

As Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Never stop praying."