

SERIES BOOK 1

GOD'S PLAN

YOUR BREAKTHROUGH

Finding Purpose and Building Resilient Faith
Through Your Darkest Moments



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Simon Rockwell

God's Plan, Your Breakthrough

Finding Purpose and Building
Resilient Faith Through Your
Darkest Moments

Practical Faith-Based Strategies to Overcome
Challenges, Discover Peace, and Thrive

Simon Rockwell

God's Plan, Your Breakthrough: Finding Purpose and Building Resilient Faith Through Your Darkest Moments

First Edition

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Published by JLS Publishers, LLC, 20540 Hwy 46 West, Ste 115-446,
Spring Branch, TX 78070, www.jlspublishers.com

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Developmental and editorial support by the JLS Editorial Team

ISBNs: Paperback: 979-8-9988940-1-5 | Hardback: 979-8-9988940-4-6
| eBook: 979-8-9988940-7-7

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Library of Congress Control Number: [Pending]

Printed in the United States of America

First edition published by JLS Publishers, LLC in 2025

Dear Reader,

Thank you for giving me a few minutes of your time. I know you could be doing a thousand other things right now, but you're here, which tells me you might be carrying something heavy.

Chapter 3 is the hardest chapter I wrote. It's about the night that changed everything for me, a fatal accident in the Caribbean in 1994 that I caused. It's about wrestling with God when He doesn't give you the answers you desperately need. It's about discovering that pain doesn't have to be pointless.

I chose to share this chapter with you for free because it's where the pretending stops. No religious platitudes. No cleaned-up testimony. Just the raw reality about what it's like to carry unbearable guilt and still somehow find God in the wreckage.

You'll meet Job, the real one who cursed the day he was born, not the Sunday School version. You'll sit with me in a Denny's at 2 AM, where a waitress named Dolores taught me more about grief than any sermon ever did. You'll discover why your worst moment doesn't disqualify you from God's grace; it might actually qualify you to help others.

If you're reading this because life has knocked you flat, because you've done something you can't undo, or because you're wondering if God has given up on you, this chapter is for you. And if it helps, the rest of the book is waiting with more tools, more truth, and more hope than you might think possible right now.

Your pain isn't the end of your story. Sometimes it's just the beginning of the one that actually matters.

Still figuring it out myself,

Simon Rockwell

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Chapter 3

Pain with Purpose: Why God Allows Suffering And What It Builds in Us

I still remember the smell of jet fuel mixing with plumeria that night in the Caribbean in mid-1994. Sweet flowers and industrial fumes, paradise and machinery colliding in my nostrils just like life and death had collided on that highway. The rental SUV's keys felt heavier than they should have in my pocket as I stood there on the main island road, watching paramedics work on a man I'd never met but whose face I'd never forget. Dark clothing against dark asphalt. Outside the crosswalk. Those details replay like a broken record, even thirty years later.

The rental was a red SUV from the local car rental company. Cost me forty-seven dollars a day plus insurance, which I'd nearly skipped, thank God I didn't. The irony of thanking God for insurance while someone lay dying because of me wasn't lost, even then. I'd picked it up three days earlier, joking with the counter girl about how these things flip easier than pancakes. She'd laughed and said tourists always wanted something flashier, but ended up settling for whatever was left. "At least it has air conditioning," she'd said, her island accent turning it into music.

The impact wasn't loud. Movies prepare you for crashes to sound like explosions. This was more like dropping a bag of wet cement. A thud that had finality to it. No echo. Just done.

The man, I wouldn't know who he was for another three hours, was wearing a short-sleeve work shirt, light cotton, sweat-darkened at the collar. The fabric looked like it had seen a hundred hot days on the job. One of his hiking boots had been torn off in the impact. It lay nearly twenty feet away, laces still tied, as if the force itself had pulled him straight out of it.

The paramedics moved with practiced efficiency, but I could read the truth in their body language. The way they slowed down

after the initial rush. The subtle shift from urgency to protocol. One of them looked at me, a young guy, probably not much older than I was, and I saw recognition in his eyes. Not of me personally, but of the situation. He'd seen this before. Driver meets pedestrian. Physics wins. Life loses.

His name tag said "Marcus." Had a small scar through his left eyebrow that made him look perpetually skeptical. When he walked over to check on me, standard protocol, make sure the driver isn't having a heart attack, his boots made this sucking sound on the asphalt. The road was still wet from the afternoon rain that comes every day at 4 PM in the Caribbean, like God set a timer.

"You hurt, mon?" he asked, shining a penlight in my eyes.

I wasn't hurt. Not on the outside. But something inside me gave way that night, with the same finality as the man's last breath. Thirty years, three marriages, and more new addresses than I can count haven't patched the crack it left.

You want to know what wrestling with God really looks like? It's not some poetic struggle in a prayer closet with soft lighting and background music. It's standing on the side of a Caribbean road at 9:47 PM (I'll never forget the time), watching someone's last moments while tourists drive by rubbernecking, and trying to understand how a business trip turned into someone's last day on earth. It's flying back to Texas with that weight in your chest, knowing you're going home, but someone else isn't, ever.

The flight home was on one of the major airlines' Flight 1247, departing from Dallas and stopping in Miami. I was in the middle seat because I'd booked it last-minute after the police released me. The woman next to me was reading a Danielle Steel novel. The guy in the aisle was snoring before we left the gate. And I sat there, still wearing the same polo shirt that had his blood on the sleeve, just a few drops I didn't notice until the plane's bathroom mirror showed me, trying to understand how everyone could act so normal when the world had fundamentally changed.

The Questions That Haunt

In those first months after, I couldn't look at my reflection without seeing a killer. That's the word that echoed in my head during those 3 AM wakeups when the ceiling became my confessor and the darkness my only companion. I'd trace the popcorn texture of my apartment ceiling with my eyes, following the same pattern night after night, like maybe if I traced it enough times, I'd find God's explanation hidden in the randomness.

My apartment in Houston's Montrose district, \$625 a month for 750 square feet, which was a good deal even in 1994. The bedroom faced east, which meant sunrise came through the blinds like an interrogation light. I'd taken to taping aluminum foil over the windows, and I told people it was to keep the apartment cool. Really, I just couldn't stand the light. Light felt like judgment. Darkness felt honest.

The couple upstairs worked different shifts. She left at 5 AM for her hospital admin job. I could hear her heels clicking across their floor. He came home at 2 AM from bartending, constantly dropping his keys by the door, in the same spot every night. Their routine became my clock. Her heels meant I'd survived another night. His keys meant I had three more hours to wrestle with God before dawn.

"Why do You let good people die and guilty people live?"

That question became my nightly prayer, if you can call an accusation a prayer. I'd throw it at the ceiling, at the sky, at the God I'd grown up believing was both all-powerful and all-loving. The math didn't work. If He's omnipotent, He could have prevented it, made me leave the hotel thirty seconds later, made the man cross thirty seconds earlier, made the streetlight brighter, made something, anything, different. If He's all-loving, He would have prevented it. So, either God wasn't who I thought He was, or I was missing something fundamental about how He operates.

I did the math obsessively. If I'd left the restaurant thirty seconds later. If I'd stopped to tie my shoe. If I'd taken a different

route. Thirty seconds. That's all. The length of a commercial. Half a stoplight. The time it takes to wash your hands properly (happy birthday sung twice, according to my mother).

The victim would be alive for thirty seconds.

The silence that answered me was deafening. But somewhere in that silence, after weeks of sleepless nights and days that blurred together like watercolors in rain, I started hearing something else. Not a voice, I want to be clear about that, because people always think God speaks in dramatic ways. More like a presence. Like when my mother used to sit on my bed when I was sick as a kid back in La Porte, not saying anything, just being there. Her weight on the mattress edge, creating a little valley that I'd roll toward. That's what God's presence felt like, a subtle weight in the room, creating a gravity that pulled me toward something I couldn't name.

The Lie We Tell About Faith and Suffering

Let me save you some disappointment right now. If you picked up this book thinking I'd tell you how to avoid pain through prayer, you grabbed the wrong one. If you want a testimony about how faith makes life easier, how following Jesus means smooth sailing, how enough belief equals enough protection, return this book now. Get your money back. Buy something else. It took me decades to learn that faith does not prevent suffering. It transforms it.

I learned this first from Mrs. Rodriguez at the elementary school in La Porte. Her son David was born with cerebral palsy. She'd bring him to school sometimes when his aide was sick. David, in his wheelchair that cost more than her teacher's monthly salary, typing on a communication board with one finger, each word a victory against muscles that wouldn't cooperate.

Some mom at a PTA meeting once said, "God never gives us more than we can handle." Mrs. Rodriguez looked at her dead in the eye and said, "Then God must think I'm a lot stronger than I am, because I can't handle this. I just show up anyway."

David died when I was in fifth grade. Pneumonia. At his funeral,

Mrs. Rodriguez didn't say any of those platitudes we throw around like confetti at tragedy. She said, "David suffered. I suffered watching him suffer. God suffered watching us both. That's the reality. The miracle isn't that suffering ends. The miracle is that love persists anyway."

I learned this while watching my parents' marriage fall apart when I was ten. I'd lie on the top bunk, crying into my pillow, listening to them fight downstairs about money and all the little things couples fight about when love slips into routine and routine slips into resentment. Their voices would carry up through the heating vents, muffled but unmistakable. Dad's low rumble of frustration. Mom's higher pitch of disappointment.

The worst fight was about a boat. Dad had bought a used bass boat without telling Mom. \$3,200 that we didn't have. Mom found out when the check bounced, and the grocery store called. I can still hear her voice: "A boat, Robert? A BOAT? We can't afford milk that doesn't come from powder, and you bought a BOAT?"

Dad defended it as an investment. Take clients fishing. Business development. Mom threw a plate. It shattered against the kitchen wall, left a dent we painted over but never fixed. You could still see it if the light hits right. A scar in the sheetrock that matched the one in their marriage.

I'd pray the prayers kids pray: "God, please make them stop fighting. Please make them love each other again. I'll be good. I'll clean my room. I'll stop lying about brushing my teeth. I'll do anything."

But the fights continued. The marriage ended. And I learned my first lesson about suffering: sometimes it just happens, regardless of how hard you pray or how good you try to be.

Biblical Heroes Weren't Immune

You know what really irritates me? Sanitized Sunday School versions of biblical heroes. I remember sitting in that little Episcopal church in La Porte as a kid, watching flannel board

presentations of Job smiling while losing everything. The teacher would move the felt pieces around, Job's sheep, gone. Job's camels, gone. Job's children, gone. And felt-Job just stood there with the same serene smile, like someone had told him his Netflix subscription had expired, not that his entire family had been killed.

Mrs. Patterson, our Sunday school teacher, had this way of making Bible stories sound like episodes of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood." Everything was beautiful in God's neighborhood. She'd move those felt pieces around the board with her arthritic fingers, humming "Trust and Obey" under her breath.

"And Job never complained," she'd say, adjusting felt-Job's felt-smile. "He just trusted God."

Even at eight years old, I knew that was garbage. My goldfish died and I cried for three days. Job lost ten kids, and he just smiled? Come on.

The real Job? He wanted to die. He cursed the day he was born. That's in chapter 3, folks. Look it up. The man literally said, "May the day of my birth perish, and the night that said, 'A boy is conceived!' That day, may it turn to darkness; may God above not care about it; may no light shine on it" (Job 3:3-4, NIV).

That's not patient suffering. That's a man in so much pain he wishes he'd never existed. That's a man who's lost ten children, not in some abstract theological exercise, but actual human beings he'd raised and loved and watched grow. Dead. All of them. In one day. And he sat in ashes, covered in boils that he scraped with broken pottery, and basically told God, "I wish You'd never made me."

I finally understood Job when I met Harold at the Dallas VA hospital in 2016. Harold lost three sons. Two in Iraq, 2004 and 2007. One in Afghanistan, 2011. Different wars, same flag-draped coffins.

We were sitting in the world's most depressing cafeteria, fluorescent lights making the green Jell-O look radioactive. Harold was stirring his coffee with a plastic spoon that kept bending.

“People keep telling me about Job,” Harold said. “Like that’s supposed to help. You know what? [expletive] Job. At least his kids all died at once. I had to go through it three times. Three times watching my wife pick out caskets. Three times hearing ‘Taps’ played. Three times folding a flag into a triangle that’s supposed to somehow represent a life.”

Harold’s honesty was more biblical than any flannel board could ever be.

That’s honest faith. That’s what it looks like when everything breaks and you’re too exhausted to pretend it’s okay.

But here’s what grabbed me, what kept me reading Job during my worst nights. In the middle of his rant, while he’s still oozing pus and grief, while his friends are telling him he must have sinned to deserve this, while his wife is telling him to curse God and die, Job says: “I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God” (Job 19:25-26, NIV).

He said that with sores covering his body. With his children’s graves still fresh. With friends accusing him of secret sin. That’s not cleaned-up faith. That’s faith with blood under its fingernails, dirt in its hair, and tears cutting tracks through the ashes on its face.

Paul’s Thorn and Our Thorns

Paul’s another one we’ve sanitized. When I was in Malta on business in 2011, I stood where tradition says Paul was shipwrecked. The Mediterranean was violent that day, waves crashing against the rocks with the kind of force that makes you understand how ships become splinters. I thought about him writing from actual dungeons, not metaphorical prisons, not spiritual challenges. Real chains. Real guards. Real rats. Real possibility of execution at any moment.

St. Paul’s Bay in Malta is a tourist trap now. Fifteen euros for a beer. Twenty-five for fish and chips that taste like cardboard soaked in grease. But if you walk past the souvenir shops selling “I Got

Shipwrecked in Malta” t-shirts, past the tour buses full of cruise passengers on a three-hour Biblical excursion, you get to the actual rocks.

Standing there, watching the Mediterranean try to destroy the coastline one wave at a time, I thought about Paul. Not apostle Paul. Not Saint Paul. Just Paul. A guy chained to a Roman guard, puking his guts out from seasickness, watching the boat that was supposed to take him to trial become driftwood.

Yet from those cells, he writes: “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want” (Philippians 4:12, NIV).

What secret, Paul? Tell me. Because I’m drowning here, and contentment feels like a foreign language I’ll never learn to speak.

I bought a replica Roman coin from a street vendor that day. Five euros for a fake piece of history. The vendor, an old guy missing his front teeth, said, “You know Paul was a prisoner here? Chains and everything. Still preached. Crazy man.”

Crazy man. Maybe that’s what faith looks like from the outside. Insanity. Finding joy in chains. Peace in storms. Purpose in pain.

The secret wasn’t avoiding suffering. It was finding Christ in the middle of it. Not around it. Not over it. Through it.

Paul had what he called a “thorn in the flesh.” Scholars have debated for centuries what it was, eye problems, epilepsy, chronic pain, persistent temptation. But here’s what we know: he begged God three times to remove it. Three times. This is the apostle Paul, the guy who raised the dead, who survived shipwrecks and stonings, who saw the third heaven. And God said no.

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9, NIV).

Not “I’ll fix it.” Not “It’ll get better.” Not “Here’s why this is

happening.” Just “My grace is sufficient.”

I've prayed that prayer, Paul's prayer, more times than I can count. “Take this away.” The guilt. The memories. The 3 AM replays. The weight that sits on my chest like a stone. Take it away.

The answer's always the same. Not audible. Not dramatic. Just this quiet knowing that the thorn stays, but the grace increases. Like interest on an investment I didn't make, dividends on suffering I didn't choose.

Some days, that has to be enough. Some days, it's all we get.

The Framework That Actually Works

After years of spectacular failures, two divorces, a life-altering tragedy, and more geographic and denominational moves than a military family, I've developed what I call the Faithful Navigation Framework. Not because I'm some guru. Because I've crashed enough times to recognize the patterns, like a pilot who's studied every black box recording, learning what makes planes fall from the sky.

I actually wrote this framework on a napkin first. Waffle House on I-45 North, somewhere between Houston and Dallas. 3 AM, because that's when all great theology happens, when you're too tired to intellectualize and too awake to ignore the truth. The waitress, Brenda, according to her name tag, which was held on with medical tape, kept refilling my coffee without asking. Seventh cup. At some point, caffeine stops being a stimulant and becomes a sacrament.

The napkin's still in my Bible, with a brown ring from where I set my coffee mug on it. Five steps written in ballpoint pen that skips, so some words are only half there. Like my faith most days, partially visible, requiring imagination to fill in the gaps.

Step 1: Acknowledge the Pain

Three months after that night in the Caribbean, I was sitting in a

Denny's at 2 AM, pushing eggs around my plate like they were puzzle pieces that might reveal God's plan if I arranged them right. The waitress, probably in her 60s with that particular exhaustion that comes from too many night shifts and too many broken dreams, refilled my coffee and said, "Honey, whatever it is, pretending it ain't there won't make it go away."

Her name was Dolores; I know this because I became a regular at the Denny's on Westheimer. She had this way of knowing who needed to talk and who needed silence. For three months, I got silence and coffee. That night, apparently, I graduated to intervention.

"You've been coming here twelve nights in a row," she said, settling into the booth across from me with her own cup. "Same booth. Same order. Two eggs over easy, wheat toast, and hash browns. You eat maybe three bites. That's not hunger bringing you here."

She was right. It was the need to be around life at the deadest hour of night. To hear silverware clinking, proof that normal people were doing normal things while I sat there trying to understand how I'd become someone who'd ended someone.

I hadn't said a word to her about anything. She just knew. Maybe it was the way I was sitting. Maybe it was the untouched food. Maybe it was the look that every sufferer recognizes in another sufferer, that hollow-eyed stare of someone carrying invisible weight.

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:4, NIV). Not "blessed are those who stuff it down and soldier on." Not "blessed are those who put on a happy face." Blessed are those who mourn. Present tense. Active grieving.

When Mom finally told me about her first husband, John, and their baby dying in that crash outside Fredericksburg, I was forty-five when she shared the whole story; she didn't pretty it up. We were sitting at her kitchen table, the same one where she'd made me

countless peanut butter sandwiches as a kid, where I'd done homework while she cooked dinner, where we'd had a thousand ordinary moments that suddenly felt sacred in light of what she was sharing.

The table was Formica, that indestructible 1960s kind with the metal trim. Aqua blue with gold specks, like someone had tried to make the ocean fancy. One corner was chipped, where Dad had dropped a wrench while trying to fix the ceiling fan at the table, because Mom said he was making a mess in the garage.

"The luggage in the back crushed the baby on impact," she said, her voice steady but her hands shaking slightly as she held her coffee mug. Same mug she'd had since 1987 "World's Best Mom" in letters that had mostly worn off, so it read "W ld's B st M m." "John's neck snapped when we hit the bottom of the ravine. The doctor said he didn't suffer, but how would they know? How does anyone know what those last seconds feel like?"

She let me see her tears, fifty-three years after the fact. That's acknowledgment. That's refusing to let time diminish the weight of loss.

Step 2: Reflect on Scripture (But Really Wrestle)

Don't throw verses at pain like band-aids. Wrestle with them. Fight them. Argue with them. God can handle your honesty; He put Job and Ecclesiastes and half the Psalms in the Bible, after all.

My Bible from those years looks like a crime scene. NIV Study Bible, the one with the navy-blue hardcover. Bought it at Mardel Christian Store for \$47.99, thinking a new Bible would mean a new start. Within six months, it looked like I'd been performing surgery on it.

Coffee stains on Genesis through Deuteronomy, that's from the all-nighter trying to understand why God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Was free will real or not? Tear stains on Psalms, especially Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus said that on the cross. If Jesus felt forsaken, what chance did I have?

My NIV Study Bible looks like a war zone. I am horrible with a coffee cup, as I have stains throughout my Bible. Tear stains on Romans 8. Margins full of arguments with God, questions, doubts, and occasionally, breakthroughs. Next to Psalm 88:13, I wrote in red ink: “REALLY?? This is supposed to help??”

Because Psalm 88 ends with darkness. No resolution. No happy ending. Just: “darkness is my closest friend” (v. 18, NIV). Sometimes that’s where you are. And God included that in His Word for a reason because He knows that sometimes faith looks like sitting in darkness and still calling out to a God you can’t see or feel.

I took that Bible to a men’s retreat once. A guy named Chuck saw it during small group, all marked up and worn out. “Brother, you need a new Bible,” he said.

“No,” I told him. “I need this one. It’s got my fight with God in it. You don’t throw away the ring after a wrestling match just because it’s got blood on it.”

The Psalms saved my sanity. David was a train wreck who happened to write songs. “How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?” (Psalm 13:1, NIV). That’s in the Bible. The man after God’s own heart, asking if God has forgotten him. If someone that close to God can feel that distant from God, maybe my own distance doesn’t disqualify me.

Step 3: Engage in Prayer (Even When It’s Just Showing Up)

Prayer isn’t performance. Sometimes it’s just showing up, like going to a job you hate because you need the paycheck. Sometimes prayer is just breathing in God’s direction.

In my Kowloon apartment, on the 27th floor, unit 2706, I remembered it because I was 27 when I first got married, and it ended in ‘06. The universe has a cruel way of joking. There was this spot by the window, just a square of floor where the morning sun broke through. Every day at 5 AM, I sat there with a cup of instant

coffee from 7-Eleven, bitter enough to taste like regret.

Some mornings I prayed with words that almost sounded polished. Most mornings, I just stared at Lion Rock through the smog and asked a single word: "Help."

Anne Lamott says there are really only three prayers: "Help," "Thanks," and "Wow." During that season, I was stuck on "Help." Just "Help" on repeat, like a skipping record. Help me understand. Help me carry this. Help me believe You're still there. Help me want to keep living. Help.

I never met Anne Lamott, but her book *Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers* (Lamott, 2012) reshaped my prayer life. She once said that sometimes the shortest prayers are the only ones that make it through the ceiling. That line stuck with me because it felt true, raw, simple, and enough.

Step 4: Find Community Support (This Is Non-Negotiable)

This might be the hardest step for guys like me who think we should handle everything solo, who were raised to believe that real men don't need help, that weakness is something to hide rather than share.

After my second divorce, I found a men's group that met at a hole-in-the-wall diner in Miami. Thursday mornings, 6 AM. Terrible coffee that tasted like cigarette ashes. Fluorescent lighting that made everyone look slightly green. Life-changing conversations that made none of that matter.

Life can feel like a roadside diner long past its prime. The health certificate is yellowed and forgotten, the booths are patched with duct tape, and the jukebox only works if you smack it just right. Everything looks worn down, barely holding together. Yet even there, in places that seem overlooked and broken, God still shows up.

Our group: Me. Mike, former Army Ranger with a Purple Heart and PTSD that made him jump whenever someone dropped a fork.

Tony, recovering alcoholic who'd been sober seven years but still introduced himself as an alcoholic because "forgetting what you are is the first step to becoming it again." Eduardo, construction foreman whose wife left him after their daughter died of leukemia. And Tom, the giant former NFL prospect I mentioned earlier.

We called ourselves the Thursday Morning Failures Club. Not officially. That's just what Mike wrote on his coffee cup one morning, and it stuck.

One morning, after six months of showing up but never really sharing, I finally told them about the Caribbean. The accident. The guilt that felt like a physical weight on my chest. The way I couldn't drive at dusk without my hands shaking. You know what happened? Three other guys had similar stories:

Mike had killed someone in Iraq, friendly fire incident that was nobody's fault but haunted him every day. Tony had caused a drunk driving accident twenty years earlier that killed a mother of three. Eduardo's construction site accident had claimed a worker's life due to a decision he'd made about safety equipment.

Mike was the first to speak after I shared. "Rockwell," he always used last names, military habit, "you know what the difference is between us and everybody else?" He pointed around the diner at the normal people eating normal breakfasts. "We know what it costs. Every breath we take was paid for by someone else's last one. That knowledge either destroys you or transforms you. No middle ground."

We weren't alone. We were a brotherhood of men carrying invisible corpses, and somehow, sharing the weight made it bearable.

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2, NIV). The early church didn't have programs or buildings or worship bands. They had each other. We've complicated something that was meant to be simple: showing up for each other.

Step 5: Pursue Purpose in Pain

This is where it gets interesting. Not comfortable. Not easy. Interesting.

March 2015. Hong Kong. My friend Natalya had been bugging me for weeks to meet this girl from her church. I was 43, twice divorced, carrying enough baggage to fill a cargo plane. But I went to a church gathering to make Natalya stop asking.

The gathering was in someone's apartment in Wan Chai. Thirty-second floor, view of the harbor that would cost you seven figures in Manhattan. Belonged to some Russian oligarch's kid who'd found Jesus and was trying to spend daddy's money on something meaningful.

I wore my best shirt, the one clean enough to pass at first glance. But I still felt out of place, like I'd wandered in from the wrong side of town. Everyone else looked like they'd been handpicked for Beautiful Christians Monthly.

I finally met her. Stefaniya wasn't like anyone else I'd ever known. Within two weeks, I was spilling everything. We were in a cramped ramen shop in Causeway Bay, the kind where you buy your ticket from a vending machine and sit shoulder-to-shoulder with strangers. I sat there crying into my bowl, telling a woman I barely knew my darkest moments, and she just listened. No fixing. No clichés. Just the grace of someone willing to hold my pain.

She said, "So God's not finished with you yet."

That floored me. Not "You're broken." Not "You need therapy" (though I did). Not "I can fix you." Just acknowledgment that I was still under construction, that the story wasn't over, that God was still writing.

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Romans 8:28, NIV). I used to hate that verse. How is killing someone "good"? How are failed marriages "good"? How is depression that makes you want to stop existing "good"?

But maybe, just maybe, it's not saying the things themselves are good. Maybe it's saying God can work through anything, even our worst moments, to create something meaningful. Not meaningful enough to justify the pain, but meaningful enough to redeem it.

The Hidden Cost of Unprocessed Pain

Here's something I wish someone had told me in that Caribbean police station: every day you don't deal with your pain costs you weeks, months, maybe years down the road. It's like compound interest, but in reverse. The longer you let it sit, the more expensive it becomes.

I did the actual math once. Sitting in an airport lounge in Dubai, delayed flight, nothing to do but think. Twenty years of running from pain. Of course, there are variations of this cost, but it could look like this:

- Therapy avoided: $\$200/\text{week} \times 52 \text{ weeks} \times 20 \text{ years} = \$208,000$
- Alcohol to numb: $\$50/\text{week} \times 52 \text{ weeks} \times 20 \text{ years} = \$52,000$
- Failed relationships: Two divorces at roughly \$30,000 each = \$60,000
- Miles flown running from stillness: 2.7 million miles at average cost of \$0.40/mile = \$1,080,000
- Actual therapy when I finally broke: $\$300/\text{week}$ for two years = \$31,200

Total cost of avoiding \$208,000 worth of processing: \$1,223,200

That's not counting the intangibles. The relationships that died from neglect. The opportunities missed while I was busy running. The decades of sleep lost to 3 AM guilt sessions.

I spent approximately 15,000 hours, that's nearly two full years

of wake time, running from pain I could have faced in a month. Flying between continents, building businesses as distractions, creating elaborate life structures to avoid one simple truth: I needed to grieve. I needed to mourn not just the man who died, but the version of myself that died that night, too, the innocent one who'd never been responsible for ending a life.

Every hour you invest in processing pain today saves you days of dysfunction tomorrow. That's kingdom economics right there.

Living It Out: The Daily Grind of Faith Through Pain

Tuesday morning, 6:47 AM. Alex is having a meltdown because his brother Evan looked at his waffle wrong. My two-year-old Olivia is painting the wall with yogurt, organic, of course, because even our messes are high-quality. Stefaniya's trying to get everyone ready for school while maintaining the patience of a saint. And I'm standing there, coffee in hand, thinking about that family in the Caribbean.

The waffle in question had syrup in every single square. Alex's particular about syrup distribution. Takes him ten minutes to fill each square precisely. Evan looked at it and said, "That's weird."

Nuclear meltdown. DEFCON 1. The neighbors probably think we're torturing someone.

I couldn't stop thinking about who he might have left behind. Maybe a wife, maybe a child, or maybe no one at all. Somewhere a kitchen light could still be burning, dinner sitting cold on the table, waiting for a man who never walked through the door. The night around me was heavy and still, broken only by the hum of insects, and none of it offered an answer.

Did they have mornings like this? Chaos and waffles and life happening all at once? Did that man have children who argued over breakfast? A wife who juggled too many things? A normal Tuesday that he assumed would be followed by a normal Wednesday.

The guilt doesn't vanish because you find faith. Let me be crystal

clear about that. It transforms, but it doesn't disappear. It becomes a reminder of grace. Of the weight of our choices. Of our desperate need for something bigger than ourselves. Of the fact that life is fragile and precious and can end in an instant.

But somehow, and this is the mystery of faith, God uses even our worst moments. Not causes them. Not celebrates them. But uses them. Redeems them. Transforms them from pure pain into purposeful pain.

Last week, a guy at church asked me to talk to his son. Kid's nineteen, just caused a car accident that paralyzed someone. Can't stop replaying it. Can't sleep. Can't eat. Can't understand how God could let it happen.

We met in a noisy café, the hiss of steam and clatter of cups filling the air. He asked only for water. And sitting there, I remembered how often God uses the simplest things to quench what we really thirst for. I recognized the look, that thousand-yard stare of someone whose life has been bifurcated into before and after.

"Does it get better?" he asked.

"No," I said. "It gets different. The weight doesn't go away, but you get stronger. And eventually, God shows you how to use that strength to help others carry their weight."

He started crying. Right there in the café, with hipsters typing novels and moms discussing school drama. And I let him. Because sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is cry in a café.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Set aside one hour this week, just one, to honestly face something you've been avoiding. Write it out in detail. Not the version you've been telling people. The real version. The ugly version. The version that makes you question God's goodness.

Then find one person, a counselor, a pastor, a trusted friend, and

God's Plan, Your Breakthrough

share it. The real version. Watch what happens when you stop carrying alone what was never meant to be carried alone.

Here's what will actually happen: you'll schedule the hour, then find seventeen things that suddenly need doing. The garage needs organizing. The car needs washing. Your sock drawer requires immediate attention.

Do it anyway. Set a timer. Sixty minutes. Write until the timer goes off or until you run out of tears, whichever comes first.

Then make the call. Send the text. Schedule the appointment. The anticipation will be worse than the actual sharing. It always is.

Remember: your pain isn't punishment. Your suffering isn't meaningless. Your worst moment might become the foundation for your greatest ministry. But first, you have to stop running and start processing.

One hour today saves countless hours tomorrow. Your pain, processed and surrendered, becomes someone else's hope. That's the economy of the Kingdom. That's how God writes redemption stories.

Even yours. Especially yours.

Simon Rockwell

Thank You for Reading

Thank you so much for making it this far.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Simon Rockwell writes from the ragged edge of failure and faith, where true change ignites. In 1994, a Caribbean accident claimed a pedestrian's life and shattered his world, hurling him into three decades of guilt's long shadow. That night could've ended it all. Instead, it cracked open the broken place where light seeps in.

Born two months premature in La Porte, Texas, Simon's story has always been one of improbable endurance. Two divorces schooled him in love's pitfalls. Shifts through Episcopal, LDS, and non-denominational circles revealed a God unbound by our tidy labels. Ventures built and buried across six continents hammered home the truth: no empire redeems what grace alone can heal.

Three years post-crash, in a Hong Kong coffee shop, Simon scrawled his rawest prayer on a tear-soaked napkin: "God, if you're still there after what I did..." That fragile scrap birthed God's Plan, Your Breakthrough.

Today, from his Texas home, Simon shares life with his wife, Stefaniya, whom he met at a Slavic Christian gathering in Hong Kong, their three kids, who dub Daddy's work "staring at screens and spilling his secrets," and who occasionally crash his 4 AM writing sessions with demands for 'emergency story time.'

From boardrooms to therapy couches, his resume boasts a business degree, decades in global consulting, sessions wrestling anxiety and PTSD, and midnight hotel-room grapples with the divine. But his deepest qualification: living proof that grace outlasts your gravest fall.

Simon's no guru who's nailed it. Last week: a Target meltdown. Yesterday: a frustrated snap at the kids, then a tearful make-up hug. This morning: fresh doubts about Caribbean forgiveness. Yet here he stands, uncovering how your darkest hour might spark another's dawn.

For media queries, breakthrough tales, or your own napkin-prayer share, connect at www.jlspublishers.com.

GOD'S PLAN YOUR BREAKTHROUGH

Finding Purpose and Building Resilient Faith
Through Your Darkest Moments

What if your greatest breakthrough is already in motion—right in the middle of your struggle?

After a tragic accident changed everything, Simon Rockwell spent decades running from God across six continents, through two failed marriages, and into spiritual wilderness. But grace kept pursuing him—from a Caribbean police station to Hong Kong streets, from Jerusalem's ancient walls to a Texas church where healing finally began.

In *God's Plan, Your Breakthrough*, Rockwell shares powerful stories of everyday people who found strength, clarity, and peace through faith during life's darkest moments. This inspiring guide blends raw testimony with practical, scripture-based wisdom.

Whether you're facing uncertainty, weariness, or spiritual stagnation, this book will help you:

Align your steps with God's divine plan

- Find meaning and purpose in adversity
- Build lasting spiritual resilience
- Take confident, faith-rooted action

Grounded in timeless biblical truths and inspired by believers worldwide—from underground churches to digital ministries—*God's Plan, Your Breakthrough* is a hopeful reminder that you're not alone, and your breakthrough might be closer than you think.

For readers of The Purpose Driven Life, Jesus Calling, and Unshakable Faith who crave authentic faith for life's real struggles.

