

A Guide on the Path

from breakdown to breakthrough

Companion Guide to
Purpose: A Journey from Breakdown to Breakthrough

Introduction

You can certainly read this guide without having read the book *Purpose: A Journey from Breakdown to Breakthrough*. However, I recommend you read the book first to understand the full story and context of the guide. I will however provide as much information and context from the book to make this a meaningful guide for those who read it independently.

My original intent in writing the book was to convey my testimony on how I was saved in a midlife crisis gone bad. This crisis shook me to my core and threatened to destroy my business and personal life. Don't worry, the mistress was a sailboat. The book takes the reader on a journey from building a start up to successful manufacturing company with major customers nationwide. Then the journey goes through a midlife crisis and the recovery to abundant restoration.

What I discovered in writing the book was the value in not only the What of the story but also the Why. The discovery was not only the Why leading to the crisis but also the Why leading to the restoration and beyond. I realized that I had veered away from my true Purpose in life. At the time, I didn't have that well defined. I believe that God worked through family, friends, and even strangers to guide me back to stability and growth.

At the end of the book, I constructed a chapter on Take-a-ways that provide guidance to the readers depending on their personal situation. These supply the reader with some considerations and guidance to avoid the pitfalls and find their Purpose.

This guide is designed to lay out some basic steps to travel the path through recovery and to a purpose driven new life. The guide follows the journey in the book yet provides basic steps that the reader can apply on their journey. Not only do I explain the steps for my journey but lay out some strategies for the reader to assess their own goals and objectives in defining their Purpose.

In this guide, I lay out the following 8 steps or waypoints for your journey:

- **Assess**
- **Seek**
- **Accept**
- **Embrace**
- **Reflect**
- **Define**
- **Commit**
- **Give**

Assess

I have a good friend who used two different quotes that compliment each other. “When you are going through Hell, keep going” and “If you find yourself in a hole, quit digging”. Sometimes it is easier to identify that you are going through Hell than if you are in a hole. The first saying directs you to keep going. This is like the advice that Tom Cruise got from his pit boss played by Robert Duvall in the movie “Days of Thunder”. Duvall’s character advised the race car driver to focus on driving through the crash instead of trying to avoid it. The reason is because the crash is chaos and pushing ahead is the best option. If you are going to get hit, then you will. But if you don’t then you are poised to improve your situation. This led to the driver winning the race. So, if you are in hell keep going and head for the exit.

By contrast, if you find yourself in a hole, stop digging. This means that if you figure out that you are contributing to your own negative situation, stop look and listen. In my case, I knew I was in Hell and that I was the cause of the situation. However, I was not clear on the direction to get out of it. I needed to stop. I needed help. Fortunately, I had a brother who could help me run my business until I could stop panicking and see how to move forward.

So, the first step is to Assess your situation and determine how to move ahead clear of the chaos and disaster. If you don’t see the path ahead, then go to the next step, Seek.

Seek

If you don’t know how to move ahead, Seek help from family, friends, pastor, employer, or doctor. The depth of your hole or the severity of the crisis will determine where you need to go for help. I recommend family or friend first because they can help you contact a professional if that is needed.

In my case, I had exaggerated the trouble my company was in. Oh, I had problem, but my feelings of guilt put me into a state of depression that caused me to see things irrationally. That required professional help for me to get through. My brother provided the support to run the business while I got the medical help I needed. Accepting that help is the next step.

Accept

Accepting help is the next step after asking for it. I like to say that “giving in is not giving up”. My brother told me the story of the monkey and the jar. In this story, the people wanting to capture the monkey put nuts in a jar with holes. The holes are large enough for the monkey to get its paw through but not large enough for the monkey to pull its paw out while holding the nut. Thus, the monkey is captured. To avoid capture, the monkey would just need to let go of the nut. Sometimes we just need to let go of what we are holding on to or quit digging when we find ourselves in the hole.

God often works through other people to provide the help we need to get back on our feet and back in the race. This was my case. If I had not accepted the help, then I would have suffered greater consequences. Ultimately, I was introduced to a stranger, who offered to help me implement a management and incentive system in my business that resulted in a tremendous success. I was receptive to the help of others but also embraced the solutions exhibited in the guidance.

Embrace

As the path forward becomes clearer, Embrace the solutions. One of the things that helped me improve my attitude and health was the opportunity to physically train for a cycling event. One of my business partners had been training for a fund raiser cycling event coming up in five months and invited me to participate. I had just recently returned home from the hospital. I was still shaky at work but had been advised to engage in some challenging physical activity.

I had already been an enthusiast of long-range road cycling but was out of shape. Embracing this opportunity gave me a focus other than just work. My wife supported it, so I trained at a gym once a week and rode 40-60 miles on the weekend for the next five months.

The training and exertion improved my physical and mental condition. When I was at work doing my job of management, I was less stressed and more focused.

Embracing the solutions at work and with my health led to rapid recovery and personal growth.

Reflect

Once you are on a good path and in better spirits, it is good to spend some time reflecting on traits and attributes. Most of us have attributes that make us uniquely prepared to succeed and yet some of those attributes can be traits that lead us to fail.

My dad used to say that “if we want succeed, we just need to do the things that lead to success and don’t do the things that lead to failure. The challenge is to define success.” Every entrepreneur I have met has been an opportunist. Seizing on opportunities is the key to developing solutions and satisfying customers. But, where might those opportunities lead? We need to seek and chose the opportunities that fit our mission and our purpose in life.

Reflecting on our attributes and our goals or missions in life is important to moving forward on the right path to get us there. If we haven’t defined those goals and missions, this is a good time to devote some time to it.

Define

For me, defining my goals required me to reflect on my purpose. This took some soul searching which led me back to the most basic of all goals. Jesus taught us the Great Commandment which basically says that first we are to love God with all our heart and mind and soul. Then second, we are to love our neighbor as we love our-self.

Love is certainly an emotion, but it is more appropriately an action. To love as an action, we first must honor the object of our love. Clearly, we must honor God to effectively love him. That means that we must have some understanding of God and how we can relate or build a relationship.

This same concept applies to loving people or our neighbor as required in the Great Commandment. The commandment states that we are to love our neighbor as we love our-selves. Surely, we must love ourselves first to effectively love others. Just like the instruction from the flight attendant before take-off regarding the oxygen masks, we are to take care of ourselves first in order to be able to help someone else with theirs.

In his book, Love Yourself like Your Life Depends on It, Kamal Ravikant shows how practicing and expressing his love for himself built the foundation for his recovery and restoration. He wrote about the significance of this practice, following the breakdown that occurred after losing his business. He wrote,

“I didn’t know how to love myself, but because of the vow, I had to figure it out. So, hiding in my bedroom, day after day and night after night, I worked on myself until I did.”

“This took a man who was deep in failure and hating himself to a man who was loving himself, loving life, and experiencing magic in ways he never knew existed. And years later, still does, even more so. That is the power of a vow. It changes everything.”

Writing his book was a gift to those who have read it. It is an act of love to expose his human frailties and demonstrate how his experience can fulfill a need that we may have. This is an example of loving your neighbor as loving yourself. When I heard him being interviewed on a Glenn Beck podcast, he had sold 500K copies of his book. His love for others resulted in an abundance and opportunity in his new career, writing and speaking.

So, what is meant by loving our neighbors as we do ourselves? Like honoring God, to love our neighbors (other people) we must honor them which means to show them respect and develop a relationship built on mutual respect.

I believe that to love as an action means to be aware of the other person’s needs and to play a part in satisfying those needs. If we are to have a successful marriage, we must first honor and respect our spouse and be sensitive to their needs as you would have them do for you.

In a healthy relationship, which I believe to be interdependent, both parties help fulfill the other’s needs. Those needs could be safety, trust, significance, personal growth, and spiritual development among others.

Beyond family, we should love our boss, our employees, our customers, etc. In this regard we also need to help fulfill their needs with service and/or product. The better we develop and succeed in these relationships, the more successful we will be in our careers.

With this understanding, I defined my Purpose to be following the Great Commandment and projecting that to mean that I would better balance the needs of my wife and family with my needs for adventure in vocation and recreation.

I already had defined business goals and well-established Value and Mission statements. If you need to revisit these, the next section in the guide covers Mapping Your World.

Commit

Committing yourself to your Purpose is key and I believe this means that we should write it down and share it with our spouse and family members. They will be the best sponsors to hold us accountable. Commitments are a big deal to me. My wife and I just celebrated our fiftieth anniversary.

I attended a conference some years ago that included a talk by Stephen Covey. He is the author who wrote “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People”. In his talk, he recommended that we all write out a mission statement for our goal in all our relationships. Mine included, husband, dad, son, brother, employer, and friend. The idea was that if we had a mission statement that this would lead to actions to

nurture those relationships. Then we had to plan to manage out time to maintain those relationships. Mr. Covey just happened to supply some time management calendars that accommodated scheduling for that purpose.

After writing my mission statements out and reviewing them with my wife, I committed to dedicate the time required. I did not always follow through as well as I would have liked but I thought about them in planning my weeks and months. This commitment strengthened all the relationships I have.

Give

Giving falls into two categories for me; giving praise and giving back. To some extent, writing down and speaking my testimony on how God's Grace saved me is my giving praise. Acknowledging that God provided for me and my family honors and strengthens that relationship.

Giving back includes volunteering and serving wherever I can do the most good. When I sold my company and ultimately retired, I looked for ways that I could use my skills and gifts to the greatest positive effect.

Because I had benefitted from Junior Achievement, I volunteered to teach some courses at High School. I started out teaching Entrepreneurship and later added Preparing for a Career. I loved working with youth as I had in church and had credibility to teach entrepreneurship. Having hired and managed so many people over the years, I could pass on good perspectives on what young people needed to bring to their first job.

I also mentor at the Center for Entrepreneurship at the University of Houston and am now providing services as a Business Coach. The business coaching isn't free, but it is a high value to business leaders and entrepreneurs who need a fresh perspective or guidance in uncharted waters.

Take inventory of your skills and life experience to determine what you have to offer as a volunteer or paid coach or mentor. There is no sense letting that value go to waste and you may find serving in some way as rewarding as I have.

Mapping Your World

I recently listened to a podcast by Karl Bryan who was speaking about business coaching. He was addressing how he gained an understanding of his perspective client's goal and objectives. He referenced Tony Robbins advice that we must first establish our Map of the World. This is how we see our world and our story playing out in it.

Mr. Bryan said that the first step in his process is to determine what motivates his clients. What do they want to achieve?

- **Certainty**
- **Uncertainty**
- **Loving Connections**
- **Significance**
- **Values of the soul**
- **Growth**
- **Contribution**

He said that he first asks them what they want. Surprisingly, many would tell him first what they don't want. He related a story of signing up for an advanced driving course. The course was laid out with red cones to define the route through with twists and turns. The first time out the drivers focus on avoiding the cones and end up hitting half of them.

The lesson is that in trying to avoid the cones and focusing on them, they fixated on the cones rather than the course or path through. By focusing on the path and not the cones, the drivers quickly are able to double their speed and greatly reduce hitting the cones.

When I took motorcycle training course, the instructor called it target fixation. I practiced quickly focusing on the safest route rather than what I wanted to avoid. Think of a metal part or truck tire tread laying in the road.

Well this works for what your goals are. Chose what you want not what you want to avoid. What we want to avoid are usually associated with fear. In the book, I reference a quote by Chip Gaines of Fixer Upper fame, "The moment we're willing to say that we're not afraid to fail, fear dissipates, and it loses it's power over us". The lesson is that we will achieve more by focusing on success rather than avoiding risks.

What motivates us should be and usually aligns with our core values. Spend some time thinking of what your core values are. Then identify the relationships that are most important for you to nurture. With those established, define your goals or mission statements relating to those values and relationships. Central to those mission statements are your Purpose.

Excerpts from the book, *Purpose: A Journey from Breakdown to Breakthrough*

Purpose

Dedication, Acknowledgement, Commitment

Dedication:

I dedicate this book to my brother who was there when I needed him and suggested that I share my testimony.

Acknowledgement:

I acknowledge that my very survival and resulting opportunities have been realized in the Grace of God.

My inspiration for writing this book came from listening to an interview with Kamal Ravikant on a Glenn Beck Podcast. Mr. Ravikant authored a book "Love Yourself Like Your Life Depends on It". (1)

Commitment:

My commitment is that any and all proceeds from the sale of this book will be used to help those with special needs in our communities. I am dedicated to supporting parents and helping young adults to have the opportunity for meaningful employment and a life with dignity. For more information on our church's Special Needs Ministry go to www.siennaranchspecialneeds.org

Introduction

Have you discovered your Purpose? I believe mine was always there but not clearly defined. I began to write about, how I struggled with a midlife crisis and was blessed with redemption and an abundant restoration. That was the simple testimony. Reliving it, to write this book, I discovered the Why and not just the What in the story.

My hope is that by reading this book you will gain a perspective on your life that will help you get through the greatest challenges and achieve your full potential. My prayer is that you will consider taking a breath, connecting with your purpose, and looking around you for those who may be inspired to bless you.

Montana

I awoke to the alarm with my wife Miriam at 4am on the last day of the Montana Aids Ride. She had volunteered to be on the bike rack team for this event. This meant starting at 4am every day and finishing after the last riders came in each day. The event is a bicycle trek across Montana set up as a fund raiser to develop drugs to save Aids Victims. The ride is almost 700 miles over seven days, starting in Missoula and ending in Billings, Montana. I am one of the 600 riders.

My friend and business partner, Rick and his wife Margrett are riding as well. In fact, Rick and Margrett are the ones who encouraged me to join them on this ride and others since early 2001. I had been riding aggressively since 1991. I completed my first MS150 from Houston to Austin, TX that year. That ride is 98 miles on day one and about 65 miles on day two. In my peak years in the 90's, I would ride 2-3 100 mile per day rides each year.

However, to prepare for this ride I had to get back in shape after suffering the most severe personal Crisis of my life. I had to focus on restoration physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Adventuresome

My adventures seem to have been run in phases starting with Boy Scouts. In the Navy I was stationed at a base in the Philippines located on the coast of the South China Sea. My free time was consumed with Karate, surfing, and scuba diving.

When I got married, I bought a dirt bike and tried out motocross. None of my injuries were too serious but there were too many of them, so my wife put her foot down when we had a baby.

Then I got us into camping and later canoeing which included camping. We took 12 to 15 weekend trips a year. This led me into kayaking which I got more into when my wife and son got tired of camping and canoeing.

I developed some skills at kayaking in Texas Rivers like the Guadalupe, which had some nice rapids but nothing too challenging. Then one of my buddies invited me to go on a wilderness canoe trip for a week on the Pecos River. On this trip we experienced 6 days without seeing another human but those in our group. We survived even after running out of purified water and alcoholic beverages.

Later a bunch of us went to North Carolina for kayak training camp that took us on many different rivers including the Chattooga in norther Georgia, that part of the movie “Deliverance” was filmed on. Our family took some vacations in Colorado where I got to kayak on the Delores and Arkansas rivers.

Later adventure phases have included long distance cycling, offshore sailboat racing, and later motorcycle touring. These phases sometimes overlapped and lasted from 5 to 10 years. Over the years, I was pretty good at compartmentalizing play from work. However, my biggest adventure was working with my dad to build a successful manufacturing company.

The Family Business

Our business was started by my dad in 1965. In '65, I was seventeen. Hey, aren't those lyrics from the song by Jackson Browne “Running on Empty”? Well, my dad wasn't running on empty, but he was stepping out with a lick and a prayer like most entrepreneurs.

He had been a salesman in the corrugated box industry for several years until some customers and investors approached him about starting a new company that he would manage. This company, Houston Corrugated Box Co., was set up with my dad as President and was successful enough in gaining major customers. Eventually, a major competitor made an offer to the board that they couldn't refuse.

My dad made some money out of the deal and spent some time thinking about how he wanted to move forward. He felt that he had a few options including going to work for someone else in sales, buying a franchise or starting his own small business. I remember his looking at a few franchises that he could afford like car washes and gas stations. He was concerned about getting into a bad deal.

His biggest asset was his knowledge of the packaging industry and the customer base in the Gulf coast region of the US. He had spent almost 20 years calling on the chemical and food industries in Texas and Louisiana.

The Spark

The spark that got us on a track to manufacturing our own products was grounded in the branding that we developed as the “Innovative Solutions Company”. Basically, if a customer or prospect had a unique packaging problem, we would work to develop a solution using the resources we had or could find.

What developed was the concept that if we could not find a vendor that was capable or desired to provide the product or service solution that our customers needed that maybe we could set up to provide it on our own.

The first opportunity that we felt we could handle was a demand for a built-up corrugated padding to be used for rail-car dunnage (cushioning between loads). This solution combined corrugated sheets from the corrugator and adhesive from one of our vendors plus labor from me and contract labor.

Initial Product Development

The first real product with relatively unlimited potential was developed to solve a problem that plastic resin producers were having with contamination of product shipping in rail hopper cars. Basically, the hatches on top that were used to load the hoppers had to be open to load and to inspect and then sealed for transportation. The shippers had been using plastic film to cover the openings and then close the lid on the plastic film sheet. The problem was that the film would not stay in place in the wind or fall into the opening. They had tried using tape but that had to be removed and cleaned at the other end.

The solution was to attach an elastic band on the perimeter of the plastic circle to form a large shower cap to slip over the opening. This allowed easy installation and removal with the added benefit of being able to inspect the load by opening the hatch and the cover staying in place.

Adding to Organizational Overhead

By the early 80's we were up to three million in annual revenue and with a relatively low overhead. We had a full-time customer service person and a bookkeeper. We needed to hire an outside salesperson. In the shop we had two supervisors and shipping/receiving guy.

The old building, we were in was fine for a struggling start up but was old and inefficient. We had grown to where we needed more space and ended up on multiple floors requiring use of a freight elevator. We needed to be in a better location to attract office employees and to make us look better to customers.

We found a great metal building with good production and administrative offices in a nicer part of town near major freeways. This helped us with hiring admin and salespeople as well as being able to hire my wife to help me part time.

It is common to have incentives for outside salespeople, with many variations. The system we were most comfortable with was a base plus commission for increasing sales. In 1984, we had an outside salesman and an inside salesperson supporting sales and performing customer service. We also paid a bonus to this position based upon increased sales revenue.

As we had incentives for some of the production department and the sales group, we would get questions from other employees about how they could have incentives. Our solution was to provide a

profit-sharing bonus that was weighted based upon compensation. Basically, we paid out 10% of profits based upon each employee's individual compensation as a percentage of total payroll.

Management Challenges

We now had gross sales of over 10M per year and had grown to over 150 employees and 100 thousand square feet of facility. Our management structure was made up of production leads, department supervisors, production management, customer service and sales management, and another layer of senior management. There were a lot of meetings, accounting, budgets, feedback, etc. but also a lot of challenges to manage the organization.

Both divisions of our business were successful and growing and seemed to be scalable to new markets for Industrial and Commercial/Retail markets. We just had to manage this organization to be profitable. Historically, we had only made from 1 to 3%. Amazingly, we always made some money.

Y2K (Year 2000)

At approximately 9pm on September 4th in 1999, two words changed by life. My wife and I were attending the wedding of our friend's daughter Kathy. My wife was talking to Anne, and I with Kevin when he asked me a question "I am planning to race my sailboat to Veracruz next June, would you like to join me?" I told him that I had better ask Miriam and proceeded to do so. I don't know if it was the champagne or the reception frivolity, but she answered quickly "why not?"

The problem that occurred in the year 2000, was the inability to maintain the separation between my work and my passion about sailing. The race to Veracruz was as much an escape as it was an adventure. I did not realize it at the time, but I was really burned out at work. I had somehow lost the priority focus on running the business that I had always had in the past.

Somewhere in those months, something snapped. It was like noticing cracks in the drywall and worrying about the foundation.

I remember one night that I woke up at 3am and was so distressed and anxious that I laid on the living-room floor and stiffened up writhing in painful mental anguish. I didn't feel like eating and began to lose weight quickly. Ultimately, I lost over 30lbs in about 6 weeks. I did not realize that I was suffering from clinical depression.

One thing I remember was looking at a chart on the wall of the discharge room that listed the stages of depression. It was quite a revelation to see all the phases that I had gone through. I guess my case wasn't unique.

Have you ever heard the story of the man who saw his life as footprints on the beach? There were two sets of prints for a while and then only one for a while. The man asked God, why did you abandon me in my time of need? God responded those single footprints were mine while I was carrying you.

Giving in is not giving up, it is just putting trust in God that there will be mercy and grace.

In the past I had gotten to be like the guy in the circus who attempted to keep all the plates spinning on the poles. Every time they would start to wobble, he would run back to spin them up and then move to the next plate. I could see that I had been managing myself and my business like this, rushing around solving problems.

Tom seemed like a straight-forward guy and low key compared to consultants I had met and worked with in the past. After getting to know each other over lunch, Tom looked at Ron and I and said, "I will work with you on two conditions, one is that you will have to embrace and champion this implementation with enthusiasm." I smiled and nodded acceptance. "The second condition is that if you try to pay me or even mention payment to me, I will walk out." Ron looked at Tom and then me in surprise. I smiled and exclaimed "well that's an offer that I can't refuse".

9-Eleven (The Challenge)

We were having a pretty good year in 2001 with a projected profit of about 5% of sales. Our projected sales were 14 million and we thought we might make it, until September 11. When the terrorist attack in New York and DC occurred, that changed any plans that Americans had.

The Plan

In December, we introduced the new budget and incentive program to all the departments. This presentation included target costs as a percentage of revenue in the budget along with examples of the potential bonuses for hitting the target costs. Target costs were the lowest historic costs for each cost category in their department.

Examples of costs to be measured were; department wages/salaries, supplies, equipment rental, phone, utilities, maintenance, and space lease allocated to the department. For sales, this would include; travel expense, and advertising.

There was general enthusiasm for the plan by all departments. I am sure this was partly due to having a plan with goals and incentives to reach them. Having a lower expectation for revenue was not only realistic, given the general economic challenges of the time, but also fair for the incentives.

Normally cutting costs would be like pulling teeth, but with opportunities for bonuses this was embraced more readily by department managers and staff.

Ten-Fold

The Brokerage company did a great job of finding several interested parties who were competing for the opportunity to make a reasonable deal. The whole process took over a year and included a lot of meetings, tours, and due diligence in inspecting our viability and financial performance.

Ultimately, we chose the best offer which was higher than we had expected. The offer included a substantial cash payment plus a note and required investment by me and the two VPs. My minimum upfront cash requirement was achieved and then some. The value of the deal was ten times what I could have hoped for in the year 2000, when I had broken down.

I don't know if this sale of our business is part of the Blessing, but it isn't a stretch to count it so. My wife and I can comfortably live off the income from our investments while keeping the principal assets as part of our estate that we will pass on to our son and his family.

The Blessings

I cannot explain the life change I have experienced other than by the Grace of God (3). Was admitting that I could not do it on my own the key to the change in fortunes? My financial partners could have lost confidence in me and taken a much more adversarial position, when I was down. My brother and I had a decent relationship even though we had experienced a healthy amount of sibling rivalry over the years. How did he have the time to take a break from managing his company to cover for me? The outpouring of love and support were overwhelming.

Why would Tom, who was retired and wealthy, be willing to consult our company and mentor me to implement the incentive system and refuse to accept any compensation? Was it just coincidence that Chris was available to help us achieve a lean manufacturing culture?

Clearly, there could have been substantial negative consequences from the troubles I had encountered in the year 2000. Yet, the reversal of fortunes six years later was equally if not more dramatic.

Purpose

The truth was revealed to me from listening to that talk by Abu Murray, who spoke at the Wilberforce Conference. He indicated that truth and purpose lead to true freedom. Yet, purpose is the boundary on freedom. Beyond that boundary the consequences take over.

“Our purpose is to be where we are needed, performing our duty, responding to our calling. Depending on what stage of life, this is usually our vocation. Our vocation is how we use our gifts and skills to provide for our families”.

For more information on the book go to <http://www.purposeajourney.com>

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