

Lessons From My Journey

When I left, I was asking God, “How am I going to do this until I’m 80 years old?” How I was living was no longer working. For the first time in my life I didn’t want to go to work. I was asking God what was wrong with me. There was no crisis in my life / no marital or family emergency / no church crisis – new building / great staff / great people / church was growing, yet still I was falling apart inside. “God, what is wrong with me?”

I am here to tell you that God answered those prayers. In fact, over the past 2 months as I got off the tread mill of ministry enough to hear God differently, God has been saying; Hey Dale...How’s that workin’ for you?” Not very well! Let Me show you another way to live. Slowly God is revealing to me critical changes He wants to bring into my life. I don’t come back to you a changed man. I come back to you a man who is changing and who is committed to God’s new course.

There are times God will allow things to not work well in your life so there is pain and discomfort in order to get us to a place where we are moldable and ready to listen to anything He wants to say. As long as we still think we can figure it out He lets us wallow in it until it stinks enough and we are miserable enough to change.

I pray that you can learn from some of the lessons God is teaching me and make applications in your own life. These do not represent everything God is doing in my life, but they do represent some very core changes I will be making. Let me share with you 4 lessons from my journey.

I. I Must Embrace A Lifestyle Of Balance

A. Before the break, my life had become very unbalanced. (explain)

1. There are 4 key areas of every person’s life that requires balance in order to maintain health as a whole person. (Physical / Emotional / Mental / Spiritual)
2. Physically: I was allowing the stress to rob me of sleep and therefore, causing me to be sleep deprived. Sure, I went to the gym, but without proper sleep, my body was beginning to get run down.

Emotionally: My emotions were drained. I was losing my passion / my drive / my energy. I was doing nothing to replace the emotional demands from the ministry. It became difficult to even have fun.

Mentally: I never stopped thinking about the ministry. It became a 24/7 mental obsession. My mind literally never shut off. I would go home physically and not be there emotionally or mentally. I was suffering from mental fatigue.

Spiritually: Although I have always been very disciplined at spending time with God, even this had become stale. It became more like work / routine rather than anything that I truly looked forward to. I am convinced though it was these times that kept my head above water. (Spiritual dry times happen.)

- Maybe some of you have felt like this at times? My life was completely unbalanced. You ever have your dryer when it's on "spin cycle" get out of balance and it starts making loud noises and starts hopping across the room? That's where I was. Spinning 100 MPH out of balance! What do you do with your dryer? Shut it off and reshuffle the load to balance it. This is what God did with me during the last 2 months.

Ecc. 3:1 "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven." (NLT)
I was living in a way that was violating this simple principal. I had become a one dimensional person. The one dimension I constantly lived in was my role as the Pastor.

3. God created us as multi-dimensional. (Physical / Emotional / Mental / Spiritual!)
There should be a time / a priority for each one of these according to God's word.
Neglect this balance, and life can get pretty unpleasant.

- Why is balance so important? I know some of you don't think this is necessary. You're just going to keep pushing through. But listen to what God says!

*Ps. 127:2 "It's **useless** to rise early and go to bed late, and work your worried fingers to the bone. Don't you know he enjoys giving rest to those he loves?" (Message) Balance!!!*

B. A balanced life empowers us with energy to fulfill the purposes of God

1. A balanced life is not some optional goal that we give intellectual agreement to as a nice thing. It is absolutely essential if we want to fulfill the purposes of God even at the most basic level.

- What's the most basic level? Let's look at the greatest command.

Mark 12:30 And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these." (NLT)

2. Notice all 4 areas mentioned: The spiritual command is to love God and others yet the mind / emotions / and body are all involved. How is this command / purpose even possible when life is out of balance? We simply don't have the energy to fulfill it. This purpose will take a tremendous amount of energy to fulfill!
3. How can I love God with all my heart/soul (emotions) when I don't have enough emotions for my spouse? How can I love God with all my mind if I can't even stop thinking about work? How can I love God with all my physical strength if I am living in a way that is physically unhealthy? Answer? I can't!
4. Maybe you've been spending too much time beating yourself up because of your apparent lack of spirituality when the real reason isn't you don't love God, it's the fact that your life is so out of balance you have no energy to love God!
5. You can't fulfill the purposes of God in your personal life, your marriage, with your kids, or at your church. You're too tired and distracted to do anything but survive. Your life is out of balance. You're on the spin cycle!
6. How do we change? I must reject cultural norms and embrace biblical principals. Striving for balance is being an obedient follower of Jesus. So what am I doing?

- I have committed to a more rhythmic lifestyle balancing times of intensity with times of recovery physically, emotionally, and mentally. (I like intensity...that's not changing!)
- Recovery times work much like a physical workout. (explain) I need to do this mentally and emotionally. This is whatever activity pours back into your life. For me it is the outdoors, especially fishing. (Fishing with Jeff couple weeks ago – “Jeff, this makes us better men!” “Look how excited we are? Look at the energy we have?” – Explain.
- A lifestyle of balance makes us better people! Maybe you need some balance in your life? The Lord enjoys giving rest to those He loves!

II. I Must Stay On Course Following God's Purpose

Col. 1:28-29 “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. **For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.**” (NASB) The Apostle Paul was a man who never lost sight of His purpose no matter what was going in his life. This is what enabled Him to stay on course his entire life. I must be able to do the same.

A. Before the break I was need driven rather than purpose driven

1. Becoming need driven saps your energy. Purpose is what fuels your life with passion! I had allowed my role to become one where I simply ran from one need to the next every day.
 2. I was no longer empowered by purpose. I rolled out of bed every morning wondering what issue / problem I had to deal with today. My activities no longer propelled me towards a destination, they became a list of maintenance items .
 3. The needs of the church became bigger in my mind than the destination God was calling me towards. As a result, my passion for ministry and even other aspects of life, were being drained. I was slipping off course.
- What's the big deal about purpose anyway? Most people are need driven...so what?

B. A purpose driven life empowers our lives for impact in the Kingdom of God

1. Purpose is what fuels us with passion / energy / drive for everything we do. It is the WHY question for all our earthly activities. Without purpose we merely exist. With purpose we truly live!
2. During my time off, God allowed me to rediscover my purpose, and as a result, my passion for life itself. I refuse to be need driven any longer. I am going to live the purpose for which I was created.
3. If you have never developed a purpose statement for your life, it is a great exercise to go through. (This was one of the exercises the Lord helped me through). Knowing why you exist is empowering. Knowing why you exist gives you the reason and the motivation to change your life.
4. Some of you struggle with finding motivation for life change because you have never answered the WHY question. This is often the reason we have so many failed

attempts. Purpose empowers our lives to be something more!

- When a purpose captures you, it empowers you to succeed . Some of you altered your lives to finish your education – my daughter - share / start a business / found the motivation to stop smoking when you discovered you were pregnant. (Purpose = motivation for life change!)

God knew I just couldn't go back into ministry without a clearer understanding of my purpose and the motivation to live differently. Here's mine!

Life Purpose: The reason I exist is to serve the purposes of God in my personal life, my marriage and family, at Foothills church, and in the greater Kingdom of God; the best I can, for as long as I can, with the most energy I can, having the greatest impact I can, while having the most fun I can.

4. You can see the 4 areas where I want to serve God's purposes.

- God's purpose for me personally
- God's purpose for me in relationship to my wife and family
- God's purpose for me as the Pastor of Foothills
- God's purpose for me in the greater Kingdom of God

5. I also have specific steps that go along with this purpose statement to keep me on course. I also start each day by reading through this!

- Maybe it's time to rediscover your purpose in order to have more passion for life?

III. I Must Live My Design

A. Before the break I had lost sight of how God made me

1. This is the natural result of becoming need driven. Once you lose sight of your purpose you naturally stop living your design. Look at the priority each person in the body of Christ should give to living their unique design.

Eph. 4:16 "He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love." (NLT)

2. I was not doing my own special work God called me to do, I was simply doing everything I saw that needed to be done! Need driven.
3. It's God's will that each person in the body of Christ function around their unique God given design...even the Pastor. I was living in a way that I wasn't designed for. When we live in a way we were not designed for, we will experience unfulfilled lives /frustration / even a sadness.
4. Design determines function. Everything in life works this way. If you use a tool contrary to design, the job doesn't get done as well and you risk breaking the tool. How many knives do I have where the tip is broken because I used it as a screwdriver? We operate no different!

B. Living our design is the most fulfilling way to live

1. I needed to redefine and prioritize my role as the lead Pastor of Foothills according to my design: my gifts, my passion and my calling rather than according to the needs of the church.
2. So what am I designed to do? God has designed me to focus on 5 priorities. Teaching / Preaching / Praying / Developing leaders / Leading = Casting vision
3. I am designed by God to do these things! I have fun doing these things. I roll out of bed in the mornings looking forward to these things. I am gifted, called and empowered by God to do these things! I find my greatest fulfillment doing these things! Living our design is the most fulfilling way to live!
4. If you're struggling with fulfillment, maybe you're living contrary to your design. Maybe it's time to give some attention to your design not just to what you're doing. Form / Design determines function! Proper function determines fulfillment!

IV. I Must Learn From The Wisdom of Others

Prov. 11:14 "Where there is no guidance the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory." (NASB)

Prov. 24:6 "So don't go to war without wise guidance; victory depends on having many advisers." (NLT)

- God is very clear about our need to learn from the wisdom of others.
 - A. Before the break I was very isolated from input outside of Molalla
 1. Now please don't take this the wrong way. I love living in Molalla! I love this community. I am committed to it. I love the fact that I can't go into a store without knowing someone. I love the small town feel / love the sign on 211 warning you of cows crossing the road / love that I can catch salmon and steelhead minutes from my house / hunt deer and elk / Molalla is a great place to live!
 2. But as great as Molalla is, I need input from those outside of Molalla. There is nothing like Foothills in Molalla. Foothills is unique to this community but it is not unique outside this area.
 3. I had become professionally isolated from other ministries and leaders who could provide valuable input to this growing ministry. There were normal frustrations I was feeling with a growing church that I needed answers for that were not going to be found in Molalla. (Sometimes we must move outside the normal sphere...)
 - B. Learning from others is how we gain wisdom and develop skills for the Kingdom of God
 1. During this break, I began to meet with other leaders and visit other churches. This was extremely fun and energizing for me. It was so beneficial being a visitor not having a clue what to expect. Observing other ministries. (explain some churches)
 2. All this did was continue to confirm what God is doing at Foothills is something very special. I received some great ideas and some fresh perspective from these visits.
 3. Meeting with other spiritual leaders outside of Molalla was life changing. God just had me at a place where I felt like a dried out sponge and their input was like

refreshing water. I soaked it up!

4. I had one pastor during our meeting say, “Here’s a book that changed my life. I’m giving it to you. You read it.” I literally devoured it! The wisdom and skills I received from these meetings is changing my life.
 5. The result from all this is that I must continue to meet with other key Pastors / leaders outside of Foothills and Molalla for wisdom and insight. Meeting with the Pastors of this area will still be a priority, but there is wisdom outside this area that I need.
 6. There may be wisdom you need for your life as well. Maybe it’s time to broaden the sphere of who you’re seeking wisdom from. Your close circle of friends provide wonderful support, but they may not have the insight you need. This takes humility and courage to move outside this, but it will change your life!
 7. You could make an appointment with someone on staff / talk to one of our spiritual leaders at Foothills / schedule a time with a professional counselor – that’s money well spent.
- When I met with other pastors, I developed 10 key questions I had about life and ministry. I was very specific and intentional. You could do the same. Do you have questions about your marriage / parenting / purpose / job / finances / life
 - Develop your questions and then find someone who you believe knows more than you do and demonstrates more skills in this area. Muster up your courage and make an appointment. Spend some time with these people and become a sponge! Soak up what they have to offer. You’ll never be the same.
 - It is our isolation that hinders our lives from becoming who God wants us to be. There are people out there who will help you in this journey. You must make the first step!

Let me ask you the 4 questions I have been asking myself? Are you living a balanced life? Are you on course following God’s purpose? Are you living your design? Are you learning from the wisdom of others? These are my commitments that God has etched into my life. These principals represent the retooling that God has done in my life the past 2 months.

I feel as if I barely scratched the surface of what God has done and is doing in my life. How can I summarize two months in one message? I guess you’ll just have to observe what God is continuing to do in my life in the months and years to come. I can never thank you enough for your love and support during this time. Please know how much I love you all. It is truly great to be back! I can’t wait to continue this amazing journey with all of you!