

# REDESIGN LIFE

Finding Purpose and Balance  
Amidst Chaos and Uncertainty

By

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# Dedication

To the two most amazing women in my life. To my mother, Sharon, who encouraged and raised me to love people and who demonstrated the impact of a life of service. She modeled beyond-human strength, faithfulness and love battling physical pain no one should have to endure. Mom, I love and miss you very much.

And to my wife Kelly, the only person I have accidentally called "mom" because of the strength, kindness, and encouragement you and my mom share. Kelly, I love you more than words can say and to whom "Thank you" is wholly inadequate for the love and encouragement you have shown me through our years together. I love you very much.

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## CHAPTER 15

# Mr. Green in the Billiard Room with the Candlestick

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*“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”*

— African Proverb

### **Life Experiences - Evaluation**

A word of caution is appropriate before you read this chapter. Some people have found it helpful to go through these exercises with a trusted friend, spouse or counselor. If you've experienced trauma or abuse, please proceed at your discretion. If you feel it would be helpful, please seek the assistance of a qualified and trusted professional.

### **Three Internal Factors**

In the last chapter we mapped out our life through the lens of our significant emotional events. In this chapter we build on that by looking at two additional internal components, our thoughts and beliefs. Combined with emotions, these three significantly affect how we experience life. Emotions, thoughts and beliefs form the fabric of our personal internal environment. There are many external factors that affect our life as well, such

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as people, environment, culture and communities. But we won't be able to extract the nutrients from the things around us until we make our internal environment healthy for growth.

### **Thoughts**

Did you know the person you hear from the most each day is you? Your internal thought life is comparable to the 90% of an iceberg that lies beneath the surface. The visual and verbal messages we take in from the outside comprise the other 10%.

This can be good news or bad news. On one hand it means that we have great potential to change. If we can change the script on how we communicate with ourselves, this could have a huge impact on our lives. On the other hand, it means that we are more responsible for the way we are than we realize.

Since 90% of the content you hear comes from within and the other 10% is within our ability to take them captive and determine the power they have in our life, this means we are 100% responsible for managing our internal state. As sobering as that is, the good news is that we have the power to change the script for how we talk, including the words spoken internally.

### **What did you say?**

"As a man thinks, so he is."

Our thoughts create a narrated text thread of our internal consciousness. This internal dialog impacts where our thoughts lead, our focus and our experiences.

How would you react if I asked you, "Wow, are those new clothes? You're looking good. Nah, I didn't really mean that." Or how about if I said, "Hey, good job today! Oh, I'm just kidding." Let's be honest, you would probably call me a jerk or something worse. And you'd be right.

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Yet that is exactly how many people talk to themselves. Someone compliments you on your clothes but internally you say, "Nah, they didn't really mean that." Or someone says, "Hey, good job today!" and you add, "Yeah, they weren't serious. They didn't really mean that."

Our mind perceives and remembers things the same way, regardless whether they were experienced in the real world through our senses or if they were imagined. Our memory of what was said to us plus what we imagine and add internally are remembered as one. When most of us recall a memory, there is a feeling attached to it. Within the files of our memory bank, there's not much to distinguish the end of what someone else says and the beginning of how we completed the conversation internally. Our experience and memory of that experience is a blend of the sensory communication coming at us, our perception of it, and how we understand and interpret it. Much of this interpretation involves the internal dialogue that edits the experience.

There is a hard truth I need to communicate. Please forgive my bluntness, but some things, like taking a band-aid off slowly, only prolong the pain. Some of you are your own worst enemy. No one needs to put you down; if they did they'd have to interrupt you because you're already putting yourself down. For everyone's sake, please stop. Please hear me say this with as much gentleness as I can muster; speaking down to yourself is not humility, it's self-mutilation of the soul and it's tearing down what your Creator has called good.

The truth is all of us need to make some adjustments to our internal dialogue. Batting away a compliment does more than just neutralize it. It takes something positive and turns it into a criticism, a net negative. By virtue of what we add or twist internally, we can turn something helpful into something harmful. If someone talked to your best friend that way, you would likely



jump to their defense and give that jerk a piece of your mind. So who is jumping to your defense from you. Make a decision to not talk to yourself that way. Start being a good friend to yourself.

### **Interpretation**

Thomas Edison famously said that he never failed, he just found 10,000 ways not to make a light bulb. His perspective and interpretation positioned him for further exploration and discovery. Unlike Edison, most others would have stopped and interpreted the work done to that point as a massive failure.

Events can be interpreted and experienced in a variety of ways and our interpretation impacts how we experience them and what we are likely to do in response. It's important to see this link and connection between our interpretation and our behavior. This implies, at least in part, that our experiences and results in life are influenced by our interpretation of what's in front of us.

John Maxwell, who has authored several books on leadership, says in *Failing Forward*, “The difference between average people and achieving people is their perception of and response to...failure.”

If we can somehow understand how we think and interpret past and present events in our life, we can begin to recognize patterns of thought that may be healthy and good versus toxic thoughts that can lead to failed results. We have had many of our patterns of thought for so long that they become automatic knee jerk reactions. We are often unaware of what is driving us because whatever the "it" is, is "normal" to us. After all, it's not like we have a giant screen displaying our thoughts and interpretations to see. If we did, it would be easier to spot where things have gone wrong. Come to think of it, having a giant screen filled with our thoughts would be terrifyingly embarrassing and ugly.

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Our thought patterns are as familiar to us as a couch that has been in our living room forever. But we know that if that sofa is filled with mold, it's gotta go. We can't expect to create a healthy environment inside while holding on to a familiar, but toxic, source and influence. We need some thought-life mold remediation.

Someone I spoke with recently had some mold remediation done on their home and let me tell you, that process is no joke. People wearing all kinds of protective gear who literally cut out walls, remove and throw away furniture and dispose of anything that has been infected. Then they spray something that kills whatever is left that may be unseen. We can't exactly follow that physical process, but there are some things we can do to start removing moldy furniture that we recognize is causing us harm.

### **Beliefs**

If thoughts are like footprints in the sand, then beliefs are like footprints in hardened clay. Beliefs are thoughts that have become codified as a rule to be followed. Sometimes we attribute virtue, giving them even more powerful influence. From religion to relationships, monsters to money, we all have beliefs about different things. I'm not trying to make light of beliefs, religious or otherwise. To the contrary, we all believe in something. I've heard it said that faith and fear are both beliefs in what you cannot see.

For our purposes here, we're not talking about religious beliefs but more general beliefs that come from the conclusions we make from our circumstances and experiences. As we try to make sense of life, beliefs are the conclusions we make from what we think and feel long after a circumstance or experience has passed. Beliefs typically affect us for a longer period of time and

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can make a mostly subtle and silent impact.

Years ago I was talking about the concept of beliefs with a friend from Africa. He said his culture's idea of beliefs are very different than the Western world. In his African country, to believe is to do. There is no distinction between doing and believing. There was not even a word in his language to differentiate believing and doing; they were linguistically joined. In American culture, the concept of believing is equated to a cerebral mental agreement separate from and independent of any presence or action reflecting that belief being evident in the person's life. In African culture, to believe is to do. Plain and simple.

I really like the congruence and authenticity of how his country understands and approaches beliefs. I think their definition of believing is more closely aligned to what true beliefs are, even if it challenges some of our convenient excuses or rationalizations.

What do you call someone who says one thing and does another? A hypocrite, right? So, at least when we're talking about someone else, we agree with the African definition of belief. The uncomfortable truth is that when we look in the mirror and get real honest, there are things we say we believe that are not our present-day realities. Perhaps we don't believe them as much as we want to think we do. I'm sorry if that stings a bit. It hurt me as well. We all have work to do and, thankfully, there are more chapters of our life to be written. Before we worry about the things we don't believe fully, let's take a look at what we really do believe.

Let's use the African concept of authentic beliefs as the ones that have an influence in our present-day reality. We may or may not be aware of all of them, but beliefs have an influence on how we think, feel or act. Though subtle and often subconscious,

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beliefs have a remarkable impact on shaping how we see and interact with the world around us. They are intertwined with the reality of how we view ourselves and others.

As significant emotional events occur in our life, they can create new beliefs or reinforce existing ones. As we draw conclusions from these events we're not always aware of the changes that are taking place or how they are affecting us. Sometimes we believe things that are incomplete, skewed, misinterpreted or taken out of context. Sometimes we believe things that are simply untrue.

Even though what we believe tends to be more permanent, some beliefs can change over time. As we go through experiences and seasons of life, our beliefs and perspectives in most any area of our life can either grow stronger or break down. As we each try to better understand ourselves and the beliefs that may be influencing us, it's important to examine those that were formed when we experienced significant emotional events. The combination of elevated emotions and the influential power that beliefs can wield, make a powerful place where lies can have a disproportionately significant effect.

### **Time Lapse Recording**

My daughter recently showed me a science experiment that she performed with a group of her classmates. They decided to do the experiment as instructed, but they added one thing: record it with time lapse photography. The small experiment was conducted during a five-minute period and captured as a 30-second time lapse video. It was only when they looked at the time lapse footage that they were able to observe changes they had missed in real time. This was only a five-minute period but even with the students collectively observing the experiment, some

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changes were still slow enough to go unnoticed in real time. If this is true when we are intentionally observing something for only five minutes, can you imagine what we have missed during our lifetime? There are likely numerous beliefs we hold that we are completely unaware of.

If you are part of a Challenge, Online Course or Live Event, you'll be filling out a separate exercise worksheet that is designed to be a time lapse of your life. By writing down and capturing snapshots of our life, we will be able to view, for the first time, changes and patterns within our thoughts and beliefs. The goal of the exercise is to see our personal history in a new way and view things not visible to us in real time.

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## **REDESIGN QUESTIONS**

What three words would best describe how you talk to yourself?

If your friends heard what you say to yourself, how would they react?

What “moldy furniture” do you have that needs to get tossed?