

Testimony: A Second Life - How Do You Measure Your Life?

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I'm very grateful to be here. I'm also very humbled by this. I've never been to this conference before and the quality of the people here and their experience is just amazing. It's kind of like a kids' game, which one of the people doesn't look like the others?

That would be me. But I am grateful to be here and I'm grateful to respond to the requests I got, which is to talk about my experience. It's awkward to talk about your own experiences, but I haven't had any other experiences. So what I'd like to do is talk to you about what happened to me on August 14, 2014. I was walking across the street on a business trip in Tucson, Arizona [a State in the US Southwest, bordering Mexico] and I got run over

by a truck. It was a very bad deal. I had brain bleed, many cracked vertebrae, collapsed lungs, broken ribs, lots of broken bones. So I was out for quite a while.

I woke up in the University of Arizona Trauma Center and looked up. I'm not Catholic, but there was a Catholic priest hanging over me looking down. I thought, Oh crap! I'm on the other side and this didn't work out the way I thought, or he's here to give me last rites [prayers and ministrations by a priest just before death]. Either way you looked at it, it wasn't a good thing.

At that time I was the owner and co-founder of a pretty good-sized finance company and I was making a lot of money and I was very happy with my life, but I ended up having an opportunity to lay in bed for a couple of months and think about what all of this meant. The meaning to me came that for some people, God whispers in their ear, and in other cases when they don't listen he does more dramatic things. So what was the message? The message was: You are done with business. I said, okay, I can accept that. If I'm done on that side, what's on the other side?

How do you measure your life?

I reflected back on a couple of books that I'd read, one about twenty years earlier by a friend named Bob Buford, who had written a book called, *Half-time*, which was on how do you assess your life when you are in the middle of it? "How do you start moving from success to significance?" Those were the words he used. Another book I read was one that was written just a few years ago, by a dear friend by the name of Clay Christiansen, who was a Harvard business professor. *Forbes* called him the most significant business thinker in the world at one time. Clay wrote a book entitled, *How Will You Measure Your Life?*

So that's what I did. I tried to figure out how to measure my life. I would like to read just a brief paragraph from this book, which is a great book. I suggest maybe everybody ought to take a look at it, no matter where you are in your career. Clay said, "You should work out what you think the purpose of your life is going to be. Everything you do in your career and personal life, where you volunteer your time, falls out of an understanding of this question."

I added to this three of my favorite scriptures. One is in I Corinthians [13:3], "though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." The second scripture is in James 1, which talks about the definition of pure religion, undefiled before God and the Father. It is this: "To visit the Father,

listen with those in their affliction." [James 1:27]. The final scripture is the one we are all familiar with in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, where the Savior teaches this parable and says in rapid succession, I was hungry and thirsty, I was a stranger, I was naked, I was sick, I was in prison, and what did you do about it? [Matthew 25:34–46] Those are good questions.

Self-analysis

As a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the common procedure for adult couples is to throw your hat in the ring and go on a mission somewhere when the church calls you to go. My sister, parenthetically, is leaving to spend two years in Croatia this Saturday. She is retired, she and her husband.

My wife and I did a little inventory of our resources. I don't mean money. I mean our capital resources, human resources, relationships and life experiences and thought to ourselves, What can we do? This was a business analysis basically. What can we do to maximize the return on this set of resources? So, praying, we wrote a formal mission call for ourselves, consisting of a dozen different things. I had a big retirement party for myself. (Nobody else seemed to want to throw it, so I threw the retirement party.) I gave all of my kids a copy of this mission paper and said, Here it is. This is what your mother and I are going to do for the rest of our lives. We want you to hold us to it. We are going to give you an annual report each year on how we are doing.

Giving others a second chance in life

So we started off down the track. The mission paper that we wrote up had several things on it. I'm not going to talk about all of them. I'd love to talk to you for three or four days, but I only have a few minutes. One of them was mentoring, for those who would like to be mentored, institutionally and individually. It is hard to mentor people who don't want to be mentored. But I have gotten into that business. I am particularly involved with a prison entrepreneurship program, a certificate in entrepreneurship given by Baylor University to felons in the Texas prison system, which has marvelous results -- extraordinarily lower recidivism rates because prisoners learn how to make money and not steal it.

Secondly, I formed the DFW Alliance for Religious Freedom [DFW: Dallas and Fort Worth, two adjacent cities in the US State of Texas] with two members of the group who are here from Dallas, Texas. We started holding big summit meetings at SMU [Southern Methodist University] and we have reached out to hundreds of faith leaders, legal leaders, civic leaders, on how we can move the cultural needle as it relates to human dignity and religious freedom. These are actually big issues in the United States of America, not just internationally, where I am now on the executive committee -- I'm on an international board for religious freedom.

Home to 17.7 percent of the globe's population

The thing I'd like to talk to you about is the fact that I have been going to India for about thirty-five years. I have seen a lot happen in India in that period of time. But I'd like to tell you about one thing that has happened. In 1974 a woman by the name of Chandra Prasad and her husband (he is a doctor) began taking in [homeless] street kids. When my friend Bill Satterfield, a lawyer for [a prominent Indian family], met Doctor Prasad, they had about a dozen street kids sleeping on the floor of their medical practice at night.

Bill came back to Connecticut, where he lived, and said, "We need to help this person." So beginning in 1988, we began helping him. The first thing we did was to build an orphanage in the middle of downtown Chennai. We took into the orphanage about seventy-five handicapped kids. A real defining moment came for me when the Indian government started a program called "cradle babies." The older I get, the more emotional I become, so I'm going to have a hard time talking about this. The idea was that Indians, with this Hindu reincarnation mindset, were abandoning and destroying their infant children if they were severely handicapped, mentally or physically, particularly if the children were girls, because they were a

real drain on the family.

Street corner cradles

So the government put cradles on street corners and people could discard their unwanted children. Can you imagine that? We began picking up these children. That was a defining moment in my life; I realized we can do a lot there. It's a big country with lots of people, but everyone counts. So we raised some additional money, bought a sixty-eight acre farm and over the course of about two years we built a village, with dormitories, a school, a hospital, farm facilities and so forth, so that we could house another couple of hundred kids and begin offering therapeutic facilities to handicapped adults. We built vocational facilities, a furniture factory, a bakery, a press. We started employing handicapped people on the farm. By the way, we have gotten to the point now where we grow most of our own food.

So when I had my little meeting... What happened was I decided that these things are just more important than business. They were the purpose of life in many regards. I'm not suggesting to anybody here that it's time for you to do any sort of switch. What I'm suggesting is these are things to think about. At times in our lives an opportunity comes to start switching around the work-life balance and doing other things with our lives.

I became the president of Pathway [Pathway India, a charitable umbrella group] and since then we have started some other things. We started an arrangement with a hospital group in South India, outside of Chennai, where instead of now just offering medical services to handicapped kids in thirteen surrounding communities, which we have been doing, we struck a deal with this hospital group through which we are offering full medical care to everybody in the surrounding communities. First off, we started with two of those communities. They have about a thousand families apiece, so we are able to do that. Over the years, we've been able to provide help and support to more than forty thousand kids.

Indians caring for the less fortunate

What I'd like to do is ask Chandra Prasad, who I invited to come here from Chennai, India, to stand up, and Dhuli Patnaik, who is with her. Chandra is the most godlike woman I know (no offense to my wife). She's the general secretary and co-founder of the organization. In August, the chief minister of Tamil Nadu, equivalent to the governor, recognized her as the number one healthcare worker in the State of Tamil Nadu, which has a population of seventy million people. She was recognized on December 3, which is World Disability Day [UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities], by the vice-president of India as the number one healthcare worker in the country, with a population of 1.3 billion people. So we have somebody pretty special here. And Dhuli is the president of the organization. So if we have the opportunity and if anybody figures out how to help them, we would welcome that. You can go to PathwayDOTorg if you want to learn about this organization.

Begin at home

Let me finish off with a little call to action here for all of us. I'm speaking to myself as much as anybody else. Here are just some thoughts I had on things to think about: One is we should all learn to listen to the whisperings of the Spirit. God is with us. He wants us to do our work. We can be fine in business, but we can also reach out to our community.

Second, we can bloom where we are planted. We don't have to go anywhere else; we don't have to do anything else. We can leverage the relationships we have. We should carve out life in a manner that allows for service and cooperation in our community and our family and the world. We can get behind or create worthwhile organizations that uplift others. We can lift where we stand. A friend of mine uses that statement all the time. Wherever you are at in life, whatever you are doing, lift where you stand. Finally, I will use a quotation I saw on one of the charts this morning, we should "dedicate ourselves to living for the sake of others for the sake of future generations."