

“When the Game of Life Goes Back in the Box”

INTRO:

It's been a great weekend.

We've talked about ... How to handle our money, our marriages, our children, each other, our church home, our careers ...

So, now what? In the board game if things don't go well, we re-roll ... start over ... hit the reset button.

What about RL?

Life gets messy. What do I do?

Life goes good. Now what?

Life gets boring and mundane and takes FOREVER ... What now?

When this is all over (life) and you look back on what you have accomplished, what does it look like? What will you see? Do you have a visual of what you want your life to look like? A life plan?

I lost my granddad Allen last September. Aside from my dad, he was my idol, my role model, my conscience. When he died, I was asked to do his funeral and I thought about his story, his legacy. It made me think about mine.

I want to share this with you to get you to think about your plan.

Thinking about my life's plan at 16, I didn't think much past 25:

PLAN A:

I was on my own ... I was tired of mom and dad. I loved them, but I wasn't following any rules but my own!

I wanted to be married to a Christian woman, she was skinny, beautiful, athletic, funny, and worshipped me ...

I was a college grad (No more school!), working in a job that required little of my time and paid me a lot of money ...

If I was lucky I would have a kid already or one on the way. Being a Dad is my favorite thing ... always has been a very high goal of mine. I prayed to God to let me experience all that He had to offer in the way of being a Dad ... I thought I was asking for a boy and a girl ...

I assumed I would be going to church but I had no idea what that looked like to me. I only had one experience growing up of church and it was a great one ... I figured

everyone else and everywhere else was just like NorthRidge in Shawnee, OK. (I was wrong about that.)

I had no thoughts at all about my individual spiritual life.

At 25, my life plan hadn't turned out like I had hoped and I had adjusted accordingly:

I was on my own, but I didn't know quite as much as I thought I did and I constantly found myself seeking out advice for my actions from my mom and dad ...

I had a great job working for the largest accounting firm in the world, but I worked longer and harder than I ever had and still didn't have much money left over to "play" ...

I had married a woman who was just as skinny and pretty and Christian as I had planned ... she didn't worship me quite as much as I had figured.

Our marriage had gone through the honeymoon phase and reality was setting in ...

Our first child would be born about 15 months from later ... I was still praying that God would give me all He had to give in the way of being a Dad ...

We were faithfully attending church ... I had gone through a period in college where I didn't go regularly ... I had become unfaithful and had (for about 9 months) my dark period in my life (It was at the end of this time that I started to put together my own individual faith) ...

Still virtually no thoughts regarding any sustainable individual spiritual plans or goals ...

My plan had shifted to goals for my career and for my family, PLAN B:

I had begun to look around for another job that would pay me more and take less time.

At my accounting firm I realized that the partners were on their third wives, didn't know their kids and didn't attend church ...

I had realized that I was in this with another person and we had begun to plan together ...

Life insurance, retirement plans, college plans, all became a part of my life and vernacular ...

I started to study and explore the riches of the scriptures and things eternal ...

At 30, everything had changed for us:

We had gone from no kids and two incomes to 4 kids and one income ...

We had our first daughter and second child, a son, according to the plan ... then we had twins! (God had more to give than just a boy and a girl!)

In a 5 year span our whole plan was turned inside out, upside down and there I was holding the proverbial dice wondering what had just happened?

Life insurance, retirement and college plans ... not an option ... now we were in strict

survival mode. One day at a time, trying the best we could to live within our means ... Mom and Dad, both mine and Kerry's, were so important to this time in our lives and provided so much needed help ... VERY IMPORTANT!

Time for a shifting of the plan, PLAN C:

We decided it was important to us for Kerry to stay home with the kids ...

She quit her job and we went to one car ... (unheard of in our circle of friends) ...

She would stay home until the kids went to school ...

We put off everything that had to do with the "future" to take care of the present ...

diapers, formula, baby food ...

But the plan was to put that off for a bit and get our bearings and then get back on plan

...

Our church family was great providing diapers, sitters, etc. ...

My continued quest toward my own personal deep relationship with God continued and was fueled by the tough times we found ourselves in ...

At 43 (present):

I have a good job ... balanced with money for bread is time available to do what I love ...

like DEVOs, CBH, WQ, SYS ...

The kids are not young anymore ... I like them a lot ... They love God and the church and it shows

Kerry is still "retired" ... Kid 1 graduates from HS in May ... She is the best mom ever ...

We aren't the people we married ... not skinny, not pretty ... but our life is richer, our love deeper ...

We attend church faithfully with our kids and Kerry's mom ...

I have never felt closer to God and more secure in my personal walk ... strengthened through trials ...

My story is not over ... a LONG way to go still. More work to do.

Why did I tell you all of that? I believe God has taught me some things in my life that can help you.

A. HAVE A VISION YOU BELIEVE IN:

You must visualize what life looks like when you've succeeded.

An idea of what you want your life to look like when it is done.

This is a scriptural concept. Listen to what God told the Abraham when He made the covenant with him.

Genesis 17:1-8

Or when He told Jacob:

Genesis 28:13-15

Or what He told Mary about Jesus:

Luke 1:28-33

Or when He told us what Heaven would be like:

Revelation 21 - 22:5

Where do we start?

Start with a great foundation in Jesus Christ ...

Acts 4:8-12: There is no other name.

Matthew 7:24-27 Built on the Rock.

Where does it end?

Heaven, finish the race

II Timothy 4:6-8

What about the middle?

Knowing the beginning and the end makes the middle easy.

Drugs? Nope. Alcohol? No, sir. Pre-marital sex, heavy petting, etc. No way.

Those things are inconsistent with the beginning and come between me and the end.

Marriage? With Christ as the Head of the family. Ephesians 5:22 - 33

Kids? Raised to know, respect and love God. Ephesians 6:4

Job? Commanded to provide for our families and to toil with our hands to our best ability.

Self? Improve, get better, get closer to God. Matthew 5:21,22 ... 5:27,28 ...

5:31,32 ... 5:38-42

You don't have to have a life like I've had. But think back to my story I have always had a plan in mind.

My actions and decisions have had purpose to drive me toward the ultimate goal.

B. HAVE A PLAN AND WORK IT:

Have a plan to achieve your vision.

Put First Things First.

Begin with the end in mind.

If you can visualize life at completion (Point A) and you know where you are now (Point B) the Plan is getting from Point A to Point B.

Planning is a biblical concept.

Luke 14:25-30 Count the cost.

Work the plan.

Work is at the heart of the Gospel.

Proverbs 12:14, 16:3, 22:29, 24:27

C. REVISIT and REVISE THE PLAN:

Review your progress and adjust accordingly.

Be open to the possibility that God has a different plan.

Life is unpredictable. Roll with the punches.

This is only possible with a solid foundation in Christ Jesus.

It's only with a foundation of and focus on Jesus Christ that you can manage trials.

Story of Paul.

Paul had a VISION. Paul had a PLAN. Paul worked his PLAN zealously.

God had a different PLAN.

To his credit, Paul adjusted and pressed forward to His goal.

Acts 7:58

Acts 8:1-3

Acts 9:1-19

D. CONSTANT RENEWAL:

Godly self-Improvement is found in the denial of self.

Sharpen the Saw.

Pray without ceasing.

I Thessalonians 5:17

Study the Word.

ACTS 17:11

Worship God.

Matthew 4:10

Hebrews 12:28

Serve one's neighbor.

Mark 10:43-45

Galatians 6:10

Evangelize everyone.

Matt 28:18-20

Fellowship with the community of believers.

Hebrews 10:23-25

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12