

nuclear family had disintegrated as my mother and each of my siblings dealt with surviving the consequences of their own choices. I married into a traditional family that seemed to provide what I was longing for. In 1984, my wife and I moved to Dallas, Texas to begin our new lives as college graduates. We became very active in the First Baptist Church in Carrollton. It was there, as the result of some very good evangelism and teaching that I came to understand that I had never truly surrendered my life to Jesus as Lord and Savior. In an act of obedience, I made that decision on January 13, 1985. My life would never be the same. God began moving in very concrete ways. It was as if He was waiting for me to realize my need for Him so that I could hear His voice more clearly. In 1985, I entered Southwestern Seminary. That decision was one of the times in my life that I have never been more clear about a decision I felt God calling me too. Upon graduation, I served a church as associate pastor, experiencing a great deal of success while there. While all this looked good on the outside, my life resembled a house of cards; ready to come crashing down at the slightest disturbance that would expose my precarious balancing act that was taking place on the inside. God's Will had little to do with my plans. I knew little about grace. I was working too hard to earn His approval, as well as the approval of everyone around me.

In August, 1993, my house of cards came tumbling down. I spent the previous six years neglecting my wife and two sons, while "ministering" to the church family. I did not know anything about boundaries, being a husband, or father. I did not possess the ability to say "NO" to the church. The needs of church members always took precedence over the needs of my family. It wasn't a conscious decision I made, it was simply what I knew. Looking back, I now see that it fed my need to feel needed. It made me look good to others around me, therefore, I felt good about myself.

I experienced a major conflict with a prominent church member while the church was undergoing a renovation project. I made a decision concerning a hard deadline without consulting this particular church member. When one's identity is built on being all things to all people, eventually someone is not going to feel heard and someone is going to be unhappy! This confrontation would lead to my undoing.

It became clear very quickly that I could not continue living my life and trying to please everyone else at the expense of myself and my family. It was clear that I was going to have to start at the very beginning and re-learn how to live according to God's design and not my own. I spent the next five years in therapy; learning about boundaries, grace and forgiveness. I did extensive work going back to rescue the eight year old

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boy who was left behind when he stopped growing up in order to take on the world back in 1971.

Romans 8:28 says that “We know that God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose.” I have suffered many losses over the years. Some resulted from life events, others from choices I have made. I lost my ministry when I resigned my church staff position. My marriage did not survive the damage I inflicted on it from neglect and abuse.

In one of the first therapy sessions I attended, the therapist told me that there would come a day when I would look back on all of the pain and loss in my life and thank God for it. I would thank Him for the lessons He taught me as He walked me through the healing process. Of course, I did not see how that was possible as I sat in that office that day; bleeding from every pore of my body from the pain and loss I was experiencing.

I am here today, over 20 years later, to tell anyone who has ears to listen that I thank God daily for carrying me through the refining process that was necessary to mold me into the person that I am today. I am thankful for the salvation that He offers through His Son, Jesus, Who provides the forgiveness and grace that I so badly needed. I am thankful that He is in the business of healing broken spirits and restoring hope in His children’s hearts. In 2009, I was teaching in public school. I had been teaching for many years, wondering what God had for me in the future. One day, God spoke very clearly to my spirit and told me of the ministry he had been preparing me for all these years. For years I wondered if God would ever use me again. I will never forget the first time someone referred to me as a “wounded healer.” Hearing those words from God’s Holy Spirit set my spirit free to receive the ministry God called me for. I am now serving Him as a funeral director, uniquely qualified to minister to individuals and families who have experienced loss. God has blessed me with a beautiful wife who is partnering with me to minister to the families that He sends to us. With His Son, Jesus Christ, as our example, we strive to share God’s love and restoring grace to every family we serve.

Joel 2:25 says, “I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten.” God is true to His Word. I have come to be thankful for all the pain and loss I experienced which developed in me the skills I need to do the ministry He gave me. The ultimate gift He gave me is His Son, Jesus. Through His death and resurrection, He provided forgiveness for my sin. I’ve also come to understand the grace He gives that allowed me to forgive myself for all the mistakes I’ve made. Through Jesus, freedom is mine!

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