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BY OG MANDINO

“Dave is a master communicator and coach.
He puts it all on the line in this masterpiece.
Og would be proud.”

Kevin Hall

President, Power of Words
Best Selling Author, Aspire

The Greatest Substance in the World

THE TEN
SCROLLS



TODAY I BEGIN A NEW LIFE

Intentional Creation: Og Mandino for the 21ST Century

Dave Blanchard
CEO, The Og Mandino Group

Introduction by
Bette Mandino
Wife of the late Og Mandino



Og Mandino and Dave Blanchard — two amazing men who have risen out of their own furnace of adversity to excel, now give us the keys to do likewise. Apply these principles and transform your life!

James Hennig, PhD

Past President, National Speakers Association
Member, Speakers Hall of Fame
Author, *How to Say It: Negotiating to Win*

In a world filled with opportunity, Dave stepped into mine and allowed me to realize just how much higher I could soar. His wisdom has influenced not only my family, but thousands of my business associates and friends.

Dan McCormick

NuSkin Team Elite Distributor
Co-author, *Lessons from Great Lives*



**Dave &
Ramona
Blanchard**

Using these principles, I have made and saved millions of dollars. Each day I strive to create a blue ocean of possibilities with everyone I meet. Each hour I strive to do the next right thing for the right reason. Each moment I strive to be a better husband and dad. Once a person knows this new world, they will never want to leave.

Scott Irwin

CEO, Apex Pipe

*Dave has brought my all-time favorite book, *The Greatest Salesman in the World*, to life with real world experiences, science, and application. A true gift — a symphony of new and practical ideas. I am now sharing this gift with my company and with customers.*

Glade Jones

CEO, Obeo

*Like a phoenix rising from the flame, I feel an emotional rebirth through Dave's powerful writing. His ability to bring *Og's Scrolls* to life is as entertaining as it is enlightening and healing.*

John and Susan zumBrunnen

Founders: The zumBrunnen Companies

Dave has shown us, step-by-step, how to dig out of our darkest dungeons. It is a testament to the power of becoming a victor instead of being a victim. If you need "healing," get this book!

Chad Hymas

Member, National Speakers Association Hall of Fame
Author, *Doing What Must Be Done*

Dave inspired a total shift in my thinking. I am showing up differently in every facet of my life and experiencing unprecedented success. These principles can be applied instantly. You will love this book!

Nancy Norton Thunell

Triple Diamond Executive
Founding ASEA Associate



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PRAISE FOR *Today I Begin a New Life*



We are so excited that Dave's book is finally out. Do you need to heal from a painful experience? Do you need clear direction on how to get out of the dark dungeons of despair and create a new life? You just found it!

— MICHELLE EBORN AND GWEN PETERSON
Founders, HopeforWidows.org

Uncovering the secrets to happiness and success in both my personal and business relationships has been a lifelong quest. Dave has taught me the importance of living in the moment and showing up to listen. Now I can more clearly visualize my personal journey. Today, I have begun my new life!

— GALE H. OLIVER
Senior Partner, Oliver Equipment

Building a business, raising a family, and life in general, can make nurturing a marriage challenging. I have moved from being overwhelmed to an open, honest and selfless place where love can blossom. Dave's words unlocked love and power in our marriage, with our children, with friends, and in our business.

— CRAIG AND JAMIE KLEIN
(Craig is the CEO of SalesNexus.com)

One night while buried in mounds of paperwork and feeling like there is never enough time in a day, I stumbled across the Og Mandino Web site. I have loved Og's work for years. I hired Dave to be my personal coach. Now I am experiencing miracles in every facet of my life. I have sped up my progress one hundred-fold or more. I know where I am going and why. As importantly, so does my wife and children and so do my employees and customers. I want to, I get to, I choose to.

— JAMES WATSON
CEO, GotMold

I am now free to stretch and grow and become all that I was meant to be. I call it being in the ZONE. I am now very literally Intentionally Creating my future!

— RUTH VAN BUREN
Co-founder and President, By Devine Design



TODAY I BEGIN A NEW LIFE



Dave Blanchard

CEO, *The Og Mandino Group*

Introduction by Bette Mandino

Wife of the late Og Mandino



Today I Begin A New Life
Dave Blanchard

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This book is dedicated to Ramona, my sweetheart and the mother of our seven amazing children. It stands as a testament of her trust, courage, and example in the face of the firestorms of life.

Special thanks to Bette Mandino, who trusted me with the Mandino Family Jewel. What an honor to invest my life in this work.

Special thanks to my life coach, Kevin Hall, who inspired me—breathed life into me—when the mission and task of going to the depths necessary to communicate these principles seemed insurmountable. Love you, brother!

A very special thanks to all who assisted in polishing these words while carefully protecting my voice: Karen Christoffersen's team at Bookwise Publishing—Heather Moore, Annette Lyon, and Eliza Nevin, and my gifted sister-in-law, MarNae Washburn, and my personal editor and chief, Ramona.

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Og Mandino Faithful,

In 1967, Og was commissioned to write *The Greatest Salesman in the World*. After a few months of writing, Og had the beginning and the ending, but the book had a gaping hole in the center. Here he wanted to deliver what he referred to as “the wisdom of the ages.” With his deadline fast approaching, Og struggled to complete the middle of the book.

At this point, Og was spending his days editing *Success Unlimited Magazine* and devoted every evening and weekend to his writing. He was turning into a bit of a grump, to put it mildly, because the critical part of the book wasn’t coming as easily as he thought it should.

One evening, after dinner and hearing the prayers of our two sons, Og took a short nap then headed into his “word factory.” I didn’t hear much movement in the room, but I did hear the keys on his IBM Selectric typewriter clicking away. That was always a good sign!

A bit later, I decided it was time I went to bed, so I quietly opened the studio door to let him know I was calling it a day. He had a rather glazed look in his eyes and never looked up. I knew better than to say anything, so I just closed the door. I went back to the kitchen, brewed a fresh pot of coffee, and prepared a snack for him. These I took into his studio, then kissed the top of his head, and went to bed.

I awoke the next morning to find Og’s side of the bed not slept in. I got the boys up and cautioned them to be as quiet as two young boys could be, and then went down to prepare their breakfast. Dana left for school, and Matt settled down in the family room to watch Captain Kangaroo. I could still hear the typewriter clicking away.

About 9:30 a.m., Og dragged himself into the kitchen. He wore a huge smile as he announced, “It is done. I am going to sleep for a week.” That “week” of sleep was only one day, and then he was back to editing what he’d written the previous night. The editing was a

short session, as he pretty much left everything as it was originally written. This Mandino masterpiece was published in hardcover in 1968, and the rest is history, as the saying goes. Little did Og know that morning that Hafid would become a hero to well over 25 million people who speak twenty-five different languages in a world seeking self-help.

In 1998, Dave Blanchard wrote a moving feature film script for *The Christ Commission*, another book by Og. I knew of Dave's love for Og's work and his ability to write. In January of 2000, the rights to *The Greatest Salesman in the World* became available, so I called Dave first. As a result of that conversation, the Og Mandino Group was founded. Eleven years of intense labor and amazing creativity have gone into creating one of the best personal coaching programs in the world. These coaching principles are timeless and healing. Dave has truly brought Og's work into the 21st Century!

In his new book, *Today I Begin a New Life*, Dave has taken Og's words, woven in his unique life experiences—good and sorrowful—and used his extensive experience as a personal and business coach to create a timely message we all need during this period of crisis in our lives. Strength comes from words and thoughts that we can take to heart. This book will speak to your heart and change your life for the better, if you will allow it.

Og created the life of his dreams through his writing and speaking, and now it's your turn to *intentionally create* the life of your dreams. Use Dave's experiences and Og's words to make your life the very best that it can be. Read and grow!

I wish you joy and love on your journey and the best this world has to offer.

Hugs, Bette Mandino

PS: Thank you, Dave, for your assistance and faith in keeping Og's work alive and moving forward into this century. You are so appreciated!

PROLOGUE



Today I begin a new life. Today I shed my old skin which hath, too long, suffered the bruises of failure and the wounds of mediocrity. Today I am born anew and my birthplace is a vineyard where there is fruit for all.

— OG MANDINO

The Light of Hope

WE ARE WALKING OR RUNNING THROUGH LIFE. We have goals and plans, hopes and dreams. Then, in a pivotal moment, it seems like everything changes. Sales suddenly become harder and harder to make. Budgets get cut—and salaries, bonuses, and benefits with them. It feels like we're working twice as hard for half as much.

If we are a business owner or executive, we put off tough and complex decisions for as long as possible, hoping things will change. They don't. We now face the moment of truth that could negatively impact loyal employees—friends and their families.

If we have a home-based business, our customers struggle. They have to choose between the preservation of dwindling credit and the desire to purchase products they love. More and more often, putting food on their table trumps putting food on ours.

For all, material wealth and sustainable cash flow, created by years of focused effort, seem to drain through our fingers like water.

To compound matters, and with far too many, personal challenges are escalating. For some it has become difficult to find or maintain

traction in a previously committed relationship. For others a teenage child has rebelled and gone off the deep end. Yet others have experienced accidents or unexpected diagnoses that challenge their vitality or expected mortality. For almost everyone, someone we love is facing a burden too big and too heavy to carry alone.

With each challenge, we put our best face forward. Determined to succeed, we reach deep into our reserves but our increasingly frequent withdrawals are leaving our courage bank near empty and our cash flow well dry. We are moving closer and closer to exhaustion.

Voices of fear and doubt—unhealthy habits of thinking—once easily silenced by a simple success now crash into our consciousness. Beliefs in almost everything we once held sacrosanct are put to the test. We are beginning to question our intrinsic worth and worthiness, or ability and beliefs.

We want to cling to the past—past love, past income, past successes, past freedoms. We try everything we know, but approaches that worked yesterday no longer produce results today. The rules have changed, and we didn't get to vote. At first, we may feel confused and ambivalent. The changes are hard to understand. They are even harder to accept.

If we have employees, we need every ounce of their ability—their total focus, cooperation, creativity, and productivity. If we are in a relationship we stand in need understanding, patience, and forgiveness. We want to be kind, thoughtful and patient, but time is of the essence—we need to create results now. We cannot afford to make a mistake. Success or failure hangs in the balance.

In an attempt to fix our businesses and organizations, we spent precious resources hoping to improve employee productivity, but these costly efforts produce fleeting results. It is becoming clearer and clearer that far too many are carrying private, painful challenges into the workplace and it is clouding judgment and negatively impacting profitability—and we don't know how to serve them.

In an attempt to anesthetize our pain, we may have visited mental monasteries of meditation, seeking passive peace. We are so tired of the struggle, of the craziness. We would sell everything tomorrow

and quit this rat race, if only there were a buyer. We just want life to reflect these brief moments of serenity, but every time we escape to this peaceful retreat in our mind and then return to reality, life inevitably disrupts our tranquility.

In an attempt to evade the pain, we may have engaged our gift of vivid visualization in the deadly game of escape-and-avoid fantasy seeking ease—a life without stress, pain or frustration. If so, each time our efforts to magically manifest success fail, we become progressively more broke, broken and angry.

In the darkest of the dark nights, we may have even entertained the possibility of this planet without us on it. We may have reviewed life insurance policies, considered varying methods that would minimize mess, written notes, and given away some of our prized possessions. Miraculously, at the last moment, we flinched.

We all arrive at this pivotal moment from a different path, yet most share a common thread—a moment of absolute fatigue and total surrender. We hunger for success, happiness and peace of mind, but instead are perishing in a life of *failure, misery and sleepless nights*. Tenacious, we do not want to give up, but we are ready to stop resisting and we are ready to give in to whatever is required to make a change.

Yes, there are a few—a very few—who have *willingly* surrendered their resistance, resentments and rebellion, wanting only to become better people. Most, broken by the fire storms of life, are compelled and reluctantly surrender. I was compelled.

On the darkest of my dark nights, I made a solemn oath: If I could be taught the principles, practices and processes for digging out of this dark dungeon, and again find the sunlight of success, I would dedicate the rest of my life to sharing these discoveries. Graciously, I was shown.

Some of the principles undoubtedly came through miraculous means, some from great mentors, and others while focusing on the millimeters of creation. All came while in the service of others. I have been asked to be vulnerable, transparent, and thorough as I share. In doing so, it is my intention to create a safe place for you to examine

your current life circumstance and from this bedrock begin the journey of intentionally creating your new life.

If you need to know what I so desperately needed know, may the words that follow serve you. I know that should you choose to apply these principles, practices and processes, the light of hope can again burn bright.





THE FURNACE OF ADVERSITY



T*o grow and multiply, it is necessary to plant the wheat grain in the darkness of the earth, and my failures, my despairs, my ignorance, and my inabilities are the darkness in which I have been planted in order to ripen. Now, like the wheat grain, which will sprout and blossom only if it is nurtured with rain and sun and warm winds, I, too, must nurture my body and mind to fulfill my dreams. But to grow to full stature, the wheat must wait on the whims of nature. I need not wait, for I have the power to choose my own destiny.*

— OG MANDINO



Pivotal Moment of Surrender



I LAY IN BED, trying to go to sleep, my mind spinning out of control. It was early December 1988 in Southern California, and the holiday season was upon us. It had been an unusually wet fall. The incessant rain and near bottomless mud were wreaking havoc at our construction sites. To make matters worse, the rumble from the tax reform act of 1986 was beginning to create a huge crack in our financial foundation, and, along with it, serious damage to long-term friendships.

We specialized in building new or buying and refurbishing existing multifamily residential units—a fancy label for apartments. For several years, we had experienced double-digit growth. If a person lived in California, especially Southern California, apartments were the *thing* to buy. Those who invested reaped handsome profits and enormous tax benefits. We were the alchemists of the twentieth century, magically turning every undeveloped plot of rich, iron-colored earth into gold, at least until now.

When the bleeding first started there was little concern. Even as the hemorrhaging increased, I remained convinced that we could find workable solutions for our challenges. *Surely we can shore up the foundation and get everything and everyone back on track*, I thought. *Why not? We've done it many times before. Is this night, this moment in history, really that different?* I finally drifted off to sleep. My naïve question was about to be answered.

My Dickens Moment

A vivid dream unfolded. It was so real I thought I was awake. I was still in my bedroom, and everything was in its place, yet everything had changed. It was a Dickens' *Christmas Carol*—*Christmas Future* kind of moment.

In this surreal setting, I had a strange and poignant awareness that somehow all of our worldly possessions were gone, and we were mired in a million dollars of debt. I was confused by this unfathomable and haunting mystery.

How could this be? It was hard to breathe. The despair was nearly palpable. In the dream, I quietly slipped out of bed, not wanting to wake Ramona, and tiptoed to our closet to pray.

I knelt down and cried out in confusion, "Why is this happening? I don't understand!" No answer was forthcoming. I cried again. "I have worked so hard! What is going on?" Nothing but a deafening silence. So I cried out again, this time while angrily pounding my fist on the carpet. "What have I done wrong? I am a good person! This is *not* fair!"

The response was silence.

In that moment of stillness, I felt something well up in my soul. It was small at first, but grew rapidly. It originated in a place so deep, so sacred, so protected—that place in our souls reserved for these kinds of special occasions: life-crushing, life-altering, pivotal moments.

I remembered going there only once before. It was the night I came before God seeking forgiveness for the grievous sins of my youth. On that previous occasion, He was gracious. In this dream it would be very different.

My tears flowed freely as I knelt in silence, head bowed, lips quivering. As the pain continued to grow with intensity, my tears turned to uncontrollable sobs. As I felt the sharp point of a hot knife cutting my flesh, it became increasingly apparent that this time no one would be coming to the rescue.

I cried, "Where is my ram in the thicket? You gave Abraham a ram! Where is my ram?" I pleaded, to no avail. I quaked at the center of my being.

Then suddenly, with one swipe, the searing knife ripped me open. Unable to speak, unable to breathe, I fell forward and collapsed on the floor, prostrate, trembling, sobbing. It was then that God reached into my soul, and, with his powerful hand, grabbed my proud heart, squeezed tightly, and yanked it out.

I gasped for my last breath and I was suddenly awake. I forcefully sat up in bed. I was back to my current reality, still trembling and gasping for air. The commotion woke Ramona.

For the next hour or so, as we sat on the edge of the bed, she tried to console me. “What happened, sweetheart?” she repeatedly asked as she gently stroked my neck and back. I attempted several times to find words to describe the still indelibly imprinted images from the nightmare, but my words were wholly inadequate.

I have since reflected on the sadly comical condition of my life and soul on that portentous night. I was in my mid-thirties and quite cocky—at least until that moment. I’d started fourteen years earlier with little more than a strong work ethic, and had amassed millions.

We had all the worldly trappings to validate our success—bank accounts, a stock portfolio, apartment buildings. In addition, I drove a brand new Mercedes—my ninth—and a new Corvette. I had owned other exotic sports cars, including a Ferrari and two Porsches. A custom forty-foot Bluebird Motor Coach adorned our circle driveway, conspicuously parked for all to see.

Ramona and I, and our seven young children, lived in our dream home on two acres atop Mt. Helix. The estate was complete with a pool and tennis court. We had a private tennis coach for the children, a full-time live-in gardener who kept the yard and everything else buzzing perfectly, and a full-time live-in housekeeper and cook who ruled the roost. We even owned a share in a ski condo in Brian Head, Utah. Oh, did I mention the Rolex watches? I can’t forget the watches!

Og said it best when he wrote:

Never will I allow myself to become so important, so wise, so dignified, so powerful, that I forget how to laugh at myself and

my world. In this matter I will always remain as a child, for only as a child am I given the ability to look up to others; and so long as I look up to another, I will never grow too long for my cot. I will laugh at the world.

Had I grown too long for my cot? I distinctly remember two specific and absurd occasions that signaled my need for a pivotal moment of surrender. The first occurred when a business associate stopped by our home to pick me up for a meeting. He was parked under the porte-cochere, patiently waiting. I remember thinking, while exiting the house and climbing into his Ford automobile, *If I am seen in this car, how will people know that I drive a Mercedes?* Yes, I actually thought this!

The second occasion occurred one morning when I reached the bottom of our hill and discovered I'd forgotten to put on my Rolex. When I wore it, which was *everywhere* except in the shower and to bed, I behaved like a model for a watch company. As I talked, I kept my watch noticeably visible. It was as if I were saying, "Did you see it? No? Here it comes again! Isn't it beautiful? Aren't I cool for having one? Missed it? Don't worry; it will be back several more times."

There I sat in my *new* Mercedes, feeling all important, waiting for the signal light to turn, while thinking, *Should I go back and get my watch, and for sure be late, or should I keep going and be on time?* Consistent with my damaged self-esteem and overcompensation, which was *obvious to everyone else but me*, I turned around and headed back. Silly, I know, but at the time, it seemed like the right thing to do.

I *was* my watch. I *was* my car. I *was* my house. I *was* my things. I was nothing without them. Nothing. It was life or death!

For years I'd tried to fill a huge hole in my soul with material possessions, but I couldn't buy enough *stuff* to fill the void. There had been a few glimpses into my innate goodness and sense of mission, but, taking everything into consideration, it was evident why even God, in all His wisdom and patience, had finally had His fill.

Uncle – I Surrender

One year later, December 1989, the holiday season was upon us again. I lay in bed late one night, exhausted, pondering the now very real and untenable circumstances of our life. All our significant worldly possessions were gone or soon would be gone. Our assets were depleted, and we were buried in a very real million dollars of debt. I was discouraged, and feeling absolutely defeated after spending the past week wallowing in mud and filth.

Plagued by nearly insurmountable obstacles, we had finally completed what would be our last construction project. Five years earlier, our best client—who, at the time, had been one of my best friends—stood by my side, looking at several adjoining parcels of land. We vividly visualized a magnificent, eighty-plus unit apartment complex sitting on this gentle hillside, with a Spanish stucco/red tile motif and fortress-like garages guarding the perimeter. When completed, it would truly be *Ventana del Pueblo*, window to the city.

Construction required a general plan amendment to change the zoning from single family to multifamily dwellings. I'd believed the neighbors adjacent to the proposed project would welcome and embrace our vision, considering the two ugly houses on the property: one condemned, and one that should have been—long ago. And then there were the abandoned cars, several of them. Surprisingly it took a lot more time and considerably more persuasion than expected to convince them, but we finally got over this and several other related hurdles.

By the time construction began, the economy in Southern California was already beginning to tank. In an attempt to get work, subcontractors were bidding low—too low. At the time, we were happy for the pricing, but it was not wise for them to offer or for us to accept. Sadly, during construction, and before finishing their jobs, several contractors cratered. We lost our underground contractor, framer, plumber, and drywall contractors—not to mention most of our hair.

Previously, we had the Midas touch and everything ran smoothly. Now gold turned into lead and we couldn't do anything right. It was like the world was coming apart at the seams, and there wasn't a darn thing we could do about it. With each challenge, my client grew increasingly angry, and in response, I became increasingly defensive. In truth, I was trying to cover my feelings of being inept.

With the project *finally* completed and tenants moving in, insult was added to injury. The sewer kept backing up in the last two units of the lower building. We knew that the fall line—the drop required in the sewer from one side of the building to the other and then out to the street—was critical, with no room for error. So what if we passed inspections? It wasn't working. With the plumber bankrupt, the responsibility shifted to us, the general contractor. At this point, *us* meant *me*. There was no one left in the company and no money to hire even a ten-dollar-an-hour helper, let alone a new plumbing contractor.

I'd made a commitment to finish the project, pure and simple. Even though I was now talking to my client through his attorney, I was still hopeful we could mend bridges. That commitment, however, was about to be tested.

Before sunrise and for several days, I drove an hour to the complex in my soon-to-be-surrendered Mercedes. Once there I donned my overalls and rubber boots. To correct the problem, I needed to expose the sewer line. That required a trench about three feet deep and seventy to eighty feet long, spanning the entire length of the building. It had to go under sidewalks and right through the middle of the recently planted shrubs. Each day, I dug until my muscles ached for relief.

Once the pipe was uncovered, the problem was obvious. However, repair required that I open up the plugged sewer line. The second I did, it was a *Shawshank Redemption* sewer pipe experience. Maybe that's why I related so well to the film when it came out five years later. There I stood in the early hours of morning in human excrement and foul mud, unsuccessfully fighting back tears, wondering aloud how my life got so out of control. I really didn't care who was listening or what they thought. I just wanted to escape from this life.

After I made the necessary adjustments to the pipe, everything functioned correctly. Then I worked through the afternoon and late into the night to backfill the trench and clean off the sidewalk so the tenants could move back into their units the next morning. After salvaging most of the shrubs, I washed up with a garden hose and began the hour-long drive home. There was such a conflicting message between the sweet smell of leather in my Mercedes and the lingering and pungent odor clinging to my flesh.

Ramona was fast asleep when I finally climbed into bed on that December night. As I lay there, the events of the day were as unpleasant to remember as they were to live. Maybe it was the smell of the filth that would not scrub off in the shower. Maybe it was the smell of my pride being flushed down the drain. Regardless, sleep would not come. I slipped out of bed and retired to our closet to pray.

Og described this moment perfectly when he wrote:

Who is of so little faith that in a moment of great disaster or heartbreak has not called to his God? Who has not cried out when confronted with danger, death, or mystery beyond his normal experience or comprehension?

As soon as I knelt, I could feel the all-too-familiar pain welling up in the depths of my soul. I knew what was about to happen and did not have the strength to endure it. I was *so* broken. I cried out, “No, God. No!” But it was too late. That night I relived the experience from the previous year’s dream. With it came my pivotal moment of surrender.

Og’s Pivotal Moment

As the fiduciary of Og’s work, I have reflected often on his *pivotal moment of surrender*, the starting point for all of his work. It was a cold winter day in Cleveland, Ohio. The year was 1955. Burdened by the loss of his first wife and daughter due to his alcoholism, Og spent several years traveling the country in his old Ford, “doing any kind of odd jobs in order to earn enough for another cheap bottle of wine.”

He spent countless drunken nights in the gutters, “a sorry wretch of a human being, in a living hell.”

One morning, as he walked by a pawnshop, he paused for a moment and looked in the display window. He saw a small handgun with a yellow price tag reading \$29. He reached into his pocket and removed three ten-dollar bills, all that he had in the world.

He thought:

There's the end to all my problems. I'll buy the gun, get a couple of bullets, and take them back to that dingy room where I'm staying. Then I'll put the bullets in the gun, put the gun to my head, and pull the trigger, and I'll never have to face that miserable failure in the mirror ever again.

The snow began to fall. It was cold and windy. For some reason—one Og didn't even know at the time—he turned away from the window and began to walk. He didn't stop until he reached the public library. There he wandered among the thousands of books, searching for answers to his plaguing questions:

Where had I gone wrong? Could I make it with just a high school education? Was there any hope for me? What about my drinking problem? Was it too late for me? Was I doomed now to a life of frustration, failure, and fears?

That morning he found his first motivational book, and he began the beginning of *his* ten-year journey of discovery and recovery. Each new book he read helped shape his new life. His drinking subsided; he met and married Bette; he had two beautiful sons and, in time, became the editor of *Success Magazine*. He now is known as one of the most prolific and beloved writers in history.

On that morning by the pawnshop, was it too late for him? Was he doomed to a life of frustration, failure, and fear? No.

Surely Og was referring to his most painful memories when he wrote:

Can sand flow upward in the hourglass? Will the sun rise where it sets and set where it rises? Can I relive the errors of yesterday and right them? Can I call back yesterday's wounds and make them whole? Can I become younger than yesterday? Can I take

back the evil that was spoken, the blows that were struck, the pain that was caused? No. Yesterday is buried forever, and I will think of it no more. I will live this day as if it is my last.

Is it too late for any of us? No!

Wherever we have been, whatever we have done, or what has been done to us, it is never too late to begin a new life!

Chad Hymas

Like Og, many have experienced *pivotal moments of surrender* and have become abundant in spite of nearly insurmountable odds. One of these heroes is my dear friend Chad Hymas, a stellar example of courage in action.

One day while rushing to move a two-thousand-pound bale of hay so he could get home to watch his son take his first step, Chad had his pivotal moment of surrender. The hydraulics on his tractor failed, and the one-ton bale came crashing down, crushing his spine. Badly broken, trapped in a body that would never be the same in mortality, Chad could have easily chosen to wallow in disappointment and pain. What happened wasn't fair, but that didn't change the reality of his circumstances. Instead of being a victim, he made the conscious choice to become a victor.

Chad now travels 500,000 air miles a year, delivering an average of three hundred speeches, the majority of the time traveling alone—and he is quadriplegic. He flies so many miles that the airline lets him park under the terminal with the pilots. And yes, he drives his own custom van.

I vividly remember standing at the elevator in the airport saying goodbye to Chad after spending two days with him and Kevin Hall at a speaking engagement in Iowa. As the doors shut, I wanted to collapse to the floor. I was exhausted from witnessing him live life. It takes him an hour and a half just to get dressed in the morning—and that is just the beginning. Yet, he is always positive, gracious, and focused on others. Always! He has chosen to make his loss everyone else's gain.

Whenever I feel overwhelmed or am at all discouraged, I think about Chad. I know that he is somewhere in the world today, inspiring people to take on their lives and make the very most out of whatever circumstance they face. Chad reminds me to stop whining, to stand up and be counted. As he always says both privately and to his audiences, “I may not have legs, but I have wings.” And with his wings, he lifts everyone he meets.

Michelle Eborn

I often reflect on friends who have experienced tragic losses, such as the death of a spouse, many at a very young age. Michelle Eborn is one of these friends. She was six months pregnant when she went to Southern Utah with her four young children to watch her husband, Chris, compete in a triathlon. Young and seemingly healthy, her sweetheart went into cardiac arrhythmia on the last leg of the swim. He was rushed to the hospital and, forty-five minutes later, was pronounced dead. Chris was her soul mate, her best friend. Now he was gone, and she was left alone to raise their four children with a fifth on the way. What now?

It has been hard. It just is. I vividly remember our first conversation the night she was introduced to the concept of becoming an Intentional Creator. She was so ready to move up and forward. I remember watching her a few weeks later at our Og Mandino Women’s Retreat. She was driving a Polaris RZR, racing up and down steep hills, while her passenger, Gwen Peterson, had her hands raised, shouting words of encouragement. Michelle was alive again and ready to create her *new life*.

It would have been easy to be a victim and wallow in self-pity. Michelle had every right to do so, but she chose differently. Now, five years after her husband’s death, she has joined with Gwen, her ally throughout this ordeal, to create the nonprofit organization Hope for Widows. Michelle uses her experience to bring compassion and healing to others.

Dr. James Hennig

The year was 1995. James Hennig, PhD, was fifty-two and the newly elected president of the National Speakers Association. Dr. Hennig was one of the foremost experts on negotiations and a sought-after speaker who maintained a busy speaking career—often flying himself between engagements in his Piper Turbo Lance.

Two years prior to his election, he was honored with the coveted CPAE designation from the National Speakers Association and became a member of the Speakers Hall of Fame. He had recently met and married his sweetheart, Coreen. Og Mandino, a close friend, had agreed to serve on his Executive Board. What more could Jim want? He was dearly loved, highly respected, wildly successful, and financially set for life.

In his college days, Jim played quarterback for the University of Wisconsin. At forty-nine, he had open-heart surgery, but by age fifty-two, he was back to full form and ready to challenge anyone, young or old, on the basketball or tennis court. Jim spent 1995 tirelessly traveling the nation, serving aspiring speakers in nearly every major city.

I met Jim and, subsequently, the Mandino family in late 1997, the year after Og passed away. I can recall our first meeting in detail, sitting on the veranda of a restaurant in Scottsdale, Arizona, with Dr. Ross Cheesman, Bette—Og's widow, Michael Gilbert—Bette's protector and companion, and Dr. Hennig. I was surrounded by greatness. In Jim's circle, he was famous, but you would never know it. He made everyone from every walk of life feel comfortable, valued, and welcome. We became fast friends.

I soon learned that Jim's heart challenges had returned with a vengeance. Over the next eight years, he had two heart attacks, fifteen angioplasties and eight stents. By 2005 all options to save his heart had failed. He was put on the heart transplant list.

In 2000, Jim became a cofounder of The Og Mandino Group, where he served as a member of the Board of Directors. By 2003, with his heart difficulties escalated and his health declined, Jim was unable to travel and speak, yet he remained hopeful and positive.

He continued to serve on our board as a wise and trusted advisor and confidant, ready and willing to do whatever he could. He would often say, “Oh, how I wish I could do more.”

In 2005, as he waited for a heart transplant, the doctor inserted a PICC line and pump that infused medication into his heart 24/7. It would keep him alive for a while, but would they find a heart in time? The following weeks and months featured some very tense moments and what seemed like an interminable wait. To further complicate matters, Jim discovered that his health insurance company refused to pay for a heart transplant or the expensive anti-rejection drugs that would be required after surgery and for the rest of his life.

To live, Jim would face a personal expense of hundreds of thousands of dollars. With the loss of income already experienced from putting his speaking career on hold for several years, the decision to live would wipe out what remained of his personal savings and retirement. Amazingly, Jim remained undaunted.

Finally, in March of 2006, Jim got his new heart. We were all convinced that he would just will himself back to good health, and that is exactly what he did. Again able to exercise, and with the possibility of resuming his speaking career and creating much-needed revenue, Jim got up early every morning to walk and then jog. It wasn't long before he was putting much younger men to shame. His determination, drive, and increasing stamina surprised even the doctors. It wasn't long before we had our old Jim back. But our joy would be short-lived.

Jim knew his body well. Within a few months, he could tell that something wasn't right. It would take several more months for the doctors to isolate his new challenge, and when they did, the news was not good: Jim was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

Many people would have become cautious after open-heart surgery. Others would have dropped out of the race after two heart attacks, fifteen angioplasties, and eight stents. A heart transplant would have sidelined many more. The financial losses would have pushed most to the brink. For those left, Parkinson's would have pushed them over the edge. Not Jim. He still walks almost every day, and on

good days, jogs a little. He serves as an active member of our board of directors. He consults. One night a week, he serves at the visitor's center for his church—and the list goes on.

Jim is one of my biggest heroes, because of his continued undying positive attitude and his total focus on serving others while bravely facing financial challenges and the realities of a progressively degenerative disease. There are only a few people like Jim Hennig on this planet, and I am blessed to know him and be counted as a friend. We will not have him forever, but while he is with us, he will make sure we get all of him!

The Goodman Family

These reflections on the heroes in my life take us to one more example—an entire family of heroes, the Goodman family. Steve, Claudia, and their nine children traveled the world singing, serving, and promoting the importance of family. In a private audience, they sang for the Pope. In a general assembly, they performed for the UN.

One Sunday afternoon, while traveling to a family event, their car was hit broadside, tragically killing three of their children. Love poured in from every corner of the world. Inspired by the event, musician Kenneth Cope wrote a new album for the family. Steve, Claudia, and their six remaining children somehow found the strength and courage to press forward in spite of their terrible loss.

Hundreds donated tens of thousands of dollars to cover the costs for these eight extraordinary people to resume their service to the world. As it turned out, their greatest moments were still ahead. Over the months and years that followed, their faith and strength breathed new life into thousands worldwide.

To commemorate the one-year anniversary of the accident, they decided to produce a television special. I was given the honor of writing and directing the program. I asked a dear friend, Merrill Osmond, to host the special. It was one of my favorite life experiences. Spending time with any member of this unique family was inspiring.

Claudia wrote a book about the family and their travels. She came to me one day asking if I would help her select a title. I was overwhelmed and humbled by the request. After several days of prayerful consideration, I came back with two ideas. The first title was *The Goodman Family Story: Parting the Red Sea One Bucket at a Time*. The second title was *The Goodman Family Story: Miracles Are Only Miracles in Retrospect*. Claudia chose the first one. I saved the second for the next chapter in this book.

When we experience our pivotal moments of surrender, we can feel as if we're being asked to drain a lake with a bucket. What's astounding is watching a family actually pay the price to do it.

We may not have lost our material wealth due to a proud heart. We may not have lost a wife and child to alcoholism. We may not have lost the use of our limbs because of an accident. We may not have suffered the unexpected death of a spouse. We may not have our mortality threatened by an untimely diagnosis. We may not have lost a child or children to premature death. Perhaps our heart is simply badly bruised, wounded or broken and in need of repair.

Perhaps the fire storms of life have simply consumed our resources, and with them, our hope. Perhaps we have wanted to believe that there is a place called *ease*, and we have wasted hours in search of a shortcut to abundance, away from this seemingly endless journey that has drained our resources and our energy.

Maybe we are one of the rare ones who have independently and courageously made the decision to take on life's lessons and become a better person. It doesn't matter how we got to our pivotal moment of surrender. What matters is that we are here!

Miracles, In Retrospect



ON DECEMBER 30, 1989, with everything we owned packed in two Ryder trucks, we exited the circle drive of our dream home ready to commence our new journey. It was time to turn my avocation of writing and directing educational films into a profession. I had edited my previous projects in Utah, so that was where we would move.

We were buried in what Kevin Hall calls the “humus of life,” that rich, dark, organic soil where “the smallest of seeds planted in the spring becomes the bounteous harvest in the fall.” It may be here that seeds are planted, but being planted this deep, dark soil felt more like being suffocated.

Before driving away, I stopped for one last moment of reflection. I relived the first time I saw our home. I couldn’t wait to show it to Ramona. It took ten years, but I kept my promise that one day, we would own it. Then, five short years after moving in, we were leaving.

The real estate market had collapsed, and with it, real-estate values. I’ve been told only two big houses sold on Mt. Helix that year—our home and our buyer’s home. Both were deeply discounted to make the sales possible. The balance of our equity was verbally promised to creditors, a promise we kept.

Moments before we drove away, the new owner purchased two treasures right out of the back of our moving truck. First, a large statue of an eagle, with its eight-foot wingspan, talons releasing as it prepared to lift off its wooden perch. The artist had used coat hangers as welding rods, thousands of them, to shape this spectacular bird. I

found great pleasure in studying the handcrafted feathers. The second treasure was a fruitwood-inlaid grandfather clock, an unusual gift from a special friend in Manhattan.

Five years earlier, Ramona and I had traveled to New York where I was to receive an award at the International Film Festival for writing and producing the music video *Reach Out* on the topic of teenage drinking and driving.

We did not know, even as Ramona and I traveled to New York, that over the next four years the video would be purchased by over 30,000 high schools in the US. As it turned out, the video made teenage boys cry.

Side note: Years later, while attending a driver's education class a thousand miles from where the video was filmed, our daughter, Christina, was identified by her classmates as the featured three-year-old in the video. She was a little embarrassed. I had to smile.

We arrived in Manhattan for the film festival on a bitter cold morning. While riding in a taxi to our hotel, we noticed an Oriental rug shop adjacent to Central Park with a big butcher-paper sign taped in the window. Written in broad brush strokes, in bright blue paint, were the words "Going Out of Business." I have a mad passion for Persian rugs, so after checking into our room, we bundled up and raced back to the shop.

The building had been purchased by none other than Donald Trump, and, of course, it was being turned into luxury condos. The store owner needed to liquidate. We found one rug that we loved, then two. We had a lot of wood floors in our new home and wanted several.

About four hours and seven rugs into this fun exercise, the total was adding up and I started to get cold feet. The owner was not about to let us out of his sight. He sweetened the pot. While pointing to my absolute favorite rug he said, "I have this rug's big brother in the warehouse. It is magnificent." While touching my arm to ensure my attention, he continued, "I'll ship it with the others, my gift to you. No charge. Absolutely free." I love bargains, but this one was starting to arouse suspicion, and he sensed it.

It was then that he asked us to follow him. “I want you to see this,” he said. We walked to the back of the store and into a special room. We stopped in front of a beautiful fruitwood inlaid grandfather clock. “David, do this deal today, and I will also include this clock, my gift to your beautiful bride. Let’s do it. You will be so happy. What do you say?”

What could I say? The clock was stunning.

Over the weeks to follow, as items were shipped and received, we became even better friends with the store owner. As it turned out, liquidation was the least of his worries. We discovered that he had a specific amount in mind the entire time we were in his store and was willing to do *anything* to get it. A gambling debt to the wrong person in New York City can create this kind of urgency. In a way, we were the answer to his prayers that day.

For years, every hour on the hour, musical chimes from our new grandfather clock filled the air in our spacious entry, but it would no longer be—at least not for us to hear. We were buried in a million dollars debt and desperately needed the \$2,000 now in my pocket. It was a paltry price for these two treasures—the eagle and the clock—but the money was a gift and a blessing, considering our circumstances.

Ramona’s Gift

It was time to commence our journey. I drove the first truck, and my dear father, the second. Ramona drove our van. Before I pressed the gas pedal and exited this dream-turned-nightmare, I looked over at Ramona. She turned and gave me one of her reassuring smiles. This moment was not easy for her either, but in stark contrast to my obvious roller coaster of emotions, Ramona chose to remain calm, not wanting to upset our seven already nervous and confused young children.

A few months earlier, when we needed to let Carlos, our grounds keeper, go, Ramona had said, “The boys need to learn how to mow the lawn.” When Socorro, our housekeeper and cook, left, she said,

"I'm so glad to get my kitchen back." As we prepared to leave our dream home and head into the unknown, she was leading our children in a rousing chorus from one of her favorite camp songs, "If You're Happy and You Know It, Clap Your Hands." What grace and composure in the middle of such upheaval.

As I watched the riotous singing and the van swaying, I had a flash of badly needed humor. For the previous twelve months I served as a scoutmaster. We'd gone on trips to the mud caves in the Borrego Desert. We traveled to Mexico, where we traded canned goods for lobster. We had been on a very long hike in the Sierras, complete with a few scary encounters with bears. We tackled the ski slopes at Big Bear in Southern California and Brian Head in Southern Utah.

After each trip, in which ten Boy Scouts, including our two oldest sons, consumed a few too many bags of Nacho Cheese Doritos, our brown, twelve-passenger Ford van had a certain lingering odor. Our children had affectionately tagged the van "the pooh-log." The thought was crass, but as we drove away from home, it made me chuckle, helping to quell my sobs.

After driving nearly nine hundred miles, we arrived at our destination, Bountiful, Utah. I was ready to begin our new life. It was the dead of winter. My sweet sister, DaLynn, took Ramona and me in while we searched for adequate housing. Out of necessity, our children were shipped off to gracious grandparents an hour and a half away.

Funds were scarce, so options were limited, and some of those options were scary. One night, Ramona sat me down, took off her diamond ring, and handed it to me. The ring was my gift to Ramona on our tenth wedding anniversary. The setting, custom designed by one of my Rotary brothers, was exquisite. The 3.1-carat diamond was breathtaking with its cut, color, and clarity.

"Sell it," she said. "I don't need a ring like this anymore. I'll wear the one you gave me when we first got married. Maybe we can get enough money to buy a home." We sold the ring and with the proceeds, along with some generous owner financing, bought an eight-bedroom *major* fixer-upper. It wasn't pretty, but it had the space we needed.

We'd been separated from our children for several weeks, and it was so good to be reunited. We hugged, and then they excitedly modeled their "new" thrift-store coats and snow boots, courtesy of Grandma and Grandpa. That night, after the truck was unloaded in a snowstorm with help from wonderful neighbors, we found solace kneeling together in a corner of the box-filled living room. We expressed heartfelt gratitude for being together again under one roof.

Og wrote:

I love the light, for it shows me the way; yet I will love the darkness, for it shows me the stars.

In ancient times, the stars in the sky were believed to be diamonds. The sunlight of success obscured my vision and made it difficult to see the real diamonds in my life. It took the darkness to finally see what was most important. Ramona always knew.

When I first shared this story with my agent, Margret McBride, she sent an email asking that I include Ramona's feelings surrounding her extraordinary sacrifice. Later that day, years after this tender moment, and while reading Margret's email to Ramona, I saw her cheeks begin to quiver as tears welled up in her eyes. Just as I finished reading the email, one of the tears escaped and rolled down her cheek. It was a tender, sweet moment revisiting this experience, a singular sacrifice sufficient to open the windows of heaven.

The Razor's Edge

For the next two years, money was extremely tight. One by one, we sold off what treasures were left to supplement our income from the sale of our educational films. We had the strong impression that we should be proactive, transparent, and disclosing with our creditors. They were not necessarily happy or satisfied, but for the most part were respectful. We were living on the proverbial razor's edge.

These two years had several bright spots. One occurred late in the first year when the Department of Defense (DOD) purchased our three-part series on child abuse prevention, *Come in from the Storm*,

for every DOD school and Family Services unit worldwide. Those funds were used to pay a way overdue tax bill with only a few pennies left over. The funds came in the nick of time. We hungered for a reserve that might relieve some of the pressure, but quickly learned to be grateful for the little tender mercies that kept us afloat.

More tender mercies occurred one night each week and one weekend every month. David and Danny, our two oldest sons, were active in Boy Scouts. For the first year after arriving in Bountiful, I served as the assistant scoutmaster to John Cushing. The second year, I took over the reins. To replace John's extraordinary leadership, I needed two assistants. I turned to my new neighbors and friends, Steve Ericksen and Charles Hanna—two more bright spots.

There would be pelting rainstorms and blinding blizzards, blown-over tents and claustrophobic snow caves, sweltering desert heat and freezing Klondikes. We would frolic in the Pacific Ocean, play at Disneyland, and climb mountains that took us to what seemed like the top of the world. Many an evening we spent sitting on logs around a campfire, telling stories and carving walking sticks. We never missed a monthly camp out, no matter what the weather. For me scouting was a nice diversion from the trials of life and a grand opportunity to connect with my two oldest sons.

I still vividly remember one frightening moment. We were standing at the bottom of Spire Arch in Arches National Park when I heard a faint voice in the distance.

“Hey, Dad! Up here!”

I turned to find my son Danny standing on top of the arch. He and a buddy had scurried up a narrow chimney and then out to the top of the arch. They were nearly a hundred feet in the air. A third miscreant was on his way up the chimney.

Climbing the arch was against the law, but the only law that mattered right then was gravity. Getting them down took over an hour, but we were able to coach the boys across the slick rock and back down to safety. Years later, Danny sees those experiences from a different vantage point, as he's a scoutmaster. His older brother, David, has also served as one.

The third bright spot occurred in October of the second year. Determined to become a scriptwriter, I had been studying *Truby's Story Structure* and pounding on my keyboard eight to ten hours a day, often six days a week, for twenty-one months. I had completed three feature film scripts and was deep into the planning stages for a fourth. Some days were more productive than others; some weeks were more satisfying. But writers write—that was the one constant. I was in the middle of one of those weeks where little, if anything, seemed to flow.

Ramona asked me to take a break and accompany her and her running partner, KaeLoy Hanna, to Southern Utah, where they were running the St. George Marathon. In need of a break, I agreed to go.

As we drove to St. George, Ramona and KaeLoy shared several fun training stories, including details about their twenty-one mile run the previous Saturday. They shared how they hid water bottles in strategic locations along the path and, of course, some embarrassing rest room challenges. We laughed so hard, tears were streaming down our cheeks. It was therapeutic.

That night, as we settled in for a few hours of sleep in an inexpensive motel, I remember pondering, *Where have I been all of these months?* The only answer I could come up with that made any sense was, *preoccupied*.

There was a little nip in the early morning air as I dropped off the eager runners as close to the starting line as possible. The race would begin in about thirty minutes. The route traveled the requisite 26.2 miles along the red rocks that lined the beautiful Southern Utah community. Ramona was prepared and focused. She reached over, gave me a kiss and a confident nod, and exited the vehicle.

I said something inadequate like, “Wish you the best, sweetheart.”

As Ramona disappeared in the predawn throng, I thought of so many things I should have said. Awareness after the fact was becoming a habit. I parked the car and began the wait.

Although spectators could not get near the starting line, the words soon rippled through the crowd, “They’re off!” I pictured in my mind the televised start of the Boston Marathon and imagined Ramona

squished between thousands of participants struggling for position. At least she'd be warm.

The minutes ticked by slowly. I became increasingly conscious of what was transpiring on the mountain road above me. As the sun rose and began to heat the October sky, I grew thirsty. I began to imagine Ramona's thirst. As one hour turned into two, I became increasingly anxious and concerned.

By the time the first wave of failed and injured runners were brought to the First Aid station close to the finish line, my heart was pounding. *What is she attempting to do? What drove her to take on something so monumental? How had she managed to stay so focused with so many responsibilities at home? I am sure she could have used more support.*

Despite my preoccupation with writing while digging us out of a financial pit, Ramona always remained calm, trusting, and supportive. She also ran six days a week while maintaining the multitudinous tasks of being the consummate mother to seven young children. Our children were so energetic, running around the house and up and down the stairs while playing games. Unfortunately, the stairs were adjacent to my office.

Ramona spent most of *their* waking hours playing traffic cop and trying, often in vain, to maintain peace and quiet so "Daddy can write." No wonder she got up before the sun to run. My contribution? Maybe hanging out with me was good *endurance* training for this marathon.

Two hours turned into three. I was beginning to ache for her. *Keep going, sweetheart.*

I began to work my way through the crowd and up the road a little, wanting to get a glimpse of my champion. *You can do this. If anyone can, you can!*

We all spontaneously cheered, as one exhausted runner after another passed. *Where is she?* Then suddenly I saw her.

"Yes! Yes!" I yelled, as she got closer. Once she was in front of me, I stepped out of the crowd and attempted to run alongside. It was clear that she was thoroughly spent. With each labored breath, I could feel her reach deeper and deeper in search of a little more strength. The

finish line was now in sight. “I love you!” I shouted. “You’re almost there!”

Ramona struggled, but managed a smile. I stopped in the middle of the road and watched her approach and cross the finish line.

I rushed to the staging area and stood at the fence that separated the cheering crowd from the runners. There she was, bent over, hands on her knees, trying to catch her breath, the prized St. George Marathon medallion with its wide terra-cotta ribbon dangling from her neck. She stood up and saw me. She proudly held up the medallion as she approached the fence.

“I did it,” she said in a tearful whisper.

“Yes, you did,” I responded as we reached through the fence and interlocked fingers. “Yes, you did!” Little else needed to be said as we looked deep into each other’s eyes and wept.

Ramona had given her all. She always does. She had conquered her fears and doubts. She was victorious. It was inspiring, encouraging, and humbling to witness. I imagined that this moment must be much like the reunion we will have after successfully finishing the marathon called Life.

This is what we get to take with us—love without secrets, commitment without reservations. This is the real treasure—the treasure worth sacrificing a lifetime to create—and one a financial crisis could dent but not destroy.

We stayed for the awards ceremony, wanting to bask a little while longer in the afterglow. As they gave out the awards for the top three finishers in specific age categories, we suddenly and unexpectedly heard a familiar name, “Second place, Ramona Blanchard.” What a sweet ending to a transformational experience.

We drove home that evening and returned to our daily routine with one exception: I was more present in the now and more available for the entire family. With new energy, creativity blossomed. Within three short months, the fourth script was completed. Money was still extremely tight, but I was gaining confidence in my skills, and for the first time in a long time, there was a flickering light of hope.

Little did we know, we were about to be crushed.

The Darkest of the Dark Nights

With one stroke of a legislative pen, the primary funding source for our educational films dried up. Overnight our finances went from tight to nonexistent.

Faithfully following our inspiration, we had uprooted our children and relocated to another state. Guided by strong impressions, I had been tenaciously writing day and night at great sacrifice to the entire family, all in preparation for a new career. We worked closely with our institutional creditors, maintained payment schedules, and avoided litigation. We had learned to appreciate tender mercies that kept us afloat. What now? Did we receive inspiration to do all of this, or was it all our imagination? Or as a good friend and humorist June Cline asks in the title of her very funny little book, *Is It God or Is It Gas—Intuition or Indigestion?*

We had no income, no savings, no remaining limits on credit cards, nothing of significance left to sell—we were broke. Every night for two weeks, I helped Ramona put the children to bed, said good night to her, then went out to the living room to pray in private. When she came in, worried about me, I put her mind at rest.

“Not to worry. I just need a little time to think.” She had enough to handle without being burdened by my pain.

For the most part, the nights were spent pleading and begging for answers. Occasionally, I paused, rested my face on the carpet, and fell asleep for a couple of hours, then awoke and resumed my cries for help. I followed this pattern night after night after night, but no answers came. It didn’t take very many sleep-deprived nights for the flickering light of hope to be extinguished. I had reached a new level of exhaustion. It was hard to catch my breath. This time I was *so done*.

In a week the premium for my million-dollar life insurance policy would be due. We did not have the money to pay it, so it would lapse. Imprisoned in a dark dungeon of despair and discouragement, giving my family the proceeds from that policy seemed like the only option left.

It took three more nights to write a note to Ramona and the children that could even begin to explain my decision. “This is a violation of everything I have believed and taught our children. I just don’t know any other way to provide for all of you, and I really wanted to. It will be painful for a few weeks, but when the dust settles, you will have the money needed to create a better life.”

That night I walked to the very edge. In the end, it was those treasured marathon-type moments that called me back.

It could be risky, and it certainly is difficult and emotionally painful, to revisit that night, and to be this transparent and excruciatingly vulnerable, but this is too important to hold back. Please allow me to speak plainly and boldly. With all of the life altering events raging around us today, with security and stability being shaken at their very foundation, with many of us experiencing storms not of our own making, perhaps you, too, have been searching for answers that have not been forthcoming. Perhaps you, too, have lost faith and are now privately, secretly questioning core beliefs and everything that is sacred. Perhaps you are also *so done* with it all—your business or your relationship or even your life. If you are in this desperate place, standing on the edge or just tired of walking a path that seems to be going nowhere, please pause for a few moments and breathe.

Og knew this dark night, the despair, the exhaustion, the hopelessness. He was standing at the pawnshop window staring at the instrument of his demise when he made a different decision. He turned away and walked in a different direction. It’s almost metaphorical that he went to a library—a place where he could find wisdom to dig out. Even then, his questions were penetrating yet filled with shame and doubt. It wasn’t the perfect solution, at least not immediately. It was just a different decision.

Looking back on his own life, Og wrote:

This day is all I have and these hours are now my eternity. I greet this sunrise with cries of joy as a prisoner who is reprieved from death. I lift mine arms with thanks for this priceless gift of a new day. So too, I will beat upon my heart with gratitude as I

consider all who greeted yesterday's sunrise who are no longer with the living today. I am indeed a fortunate man and today's hours are but a bonus, undeserved. Why have I been allowed to live this extra day when others, far better than I, have departed? Is it that they have accomplished their purpose while mine is yet to be achieved? Is this another opportunity for me to become the man I know I can be? Is there a purpose in nature? Is this my day to excel?

The Next Step

Obviously I made a different decision, too. The very next morning, miracles began to unfold, oddly at first I must admit, but unfold they did. I was still broke, but I was still alive. While sitting in a peach-colored overstuffed chair in our master bedroom, beyond exhausted, determined, and yes, very angry, I got deadly serious with God. These words flowed from my lips: "I long to cry to the God of my youth, but the God of my youth will not hear my cry. I must change my God or change my cry!"

Care to guess which one needed to change?

As painful as the darkness can be, getting sucked into this dungeon of despair and discouragement is so easy. I was tired and desperate and vulnerable. I wanted to escape from my current circumstances. I wanted a life free from stress and debt and pain and frustration. I was tired of the daily grind—the pulverizing pressure of the gristmill. I wanted to be free of time and financial constraints. I was so tired of struggling. I just wanted life to be easier. I wanted to be rescued. When I was not, I questioned my worth and worthiness. I questioned my ability to do anything to change the situation, and eventually, I questioned the value of my own life.

Og wrote:

Never will I pray for the material things of the world. I am not calling to a servant to bring me food. I am not ordering an innkeeper to provide me with room. Never will I seek delivery of

gold, love, good health, petty victories, fame, success, or happiness. Only for guidance will I pray, that I may be shown the way to acquire these things, and my prayer will always be answered.

Og went on to explain in even more detail what kind of guidance we should seek.

I ask not for gold or garments or even opportunities equal to my ability; instead, guide me so that I may acquire ability equal to my opportunities.

The inspiration I previously received was correct. I had been focusing on acquiring *ability*. I had two years of focused work already complete. It was time to go back to work and press forward even if I could see no light. Then, and only then, could I ask questions and receive the answers I sought—questions that could be answered. Og knew this well.

He wrote:

I will avoid despair but if this disease of the mind should infect me then I will work on in despair. I will toil and I will endure. I will ignore the obstacles at my feet and keep mine eyes on the goals above my head, for I know that where dry desert ends, green grass grows. I will persist until I succeed.

Doors of Opportunity

In Donald Miller's book *A Thousand Miles in a Million Years*, he shares that the days of our lives are simply pages in the story of our lives. He challenges us to write a good story.

In the chapter entitled "Negative Turns," he shares a thought from Steven Pressfield:

Resistance, a kind of feeling that comes against you when you point toward the distant horizon, is a sure sign that you are supposed to do the thing in the first place. The harder the resistance, the more important the task must be.

None of us can change the past; it's history. But I now know that

the future pages of our lives can be filled with amazing opportunities and beautiful experiences. As bleak as my dark night seemed, a door of opportunity was about to open, and I would have missed it if I had stayed in doubt and fear.

Og writes:

I will forget the happenings of the day that is gone, whether they were good or bad, and greet the new sun with confidence that this will be the best day of my life. So long as there is breath in me, that long will I persist. For now I know one of the greatest principles of success; if I persist long enough I will win.

Within a couple of weeks I received a call from Rick Larsen, sales manager for STS Productions. He remembered the educational films, edited at his facility five years earlier—yes, five years previous. He said he felt inspired to call and had been searching for my phone number. He was delighted to discover that I now lived close by and asked if I could come over and brainstorm a project.

“A client needs a script and it needs a little commercial flare,” he said. Then he verbalized the magic words: “We will gladly pay you for your time.”

I poured my heart and soul—all of my ability—into that script. One script turned into two, and two soon turned into three. During this time, Rick accepted a new position as the president of TeleScene Productions, but we didn’t miss a beat. He hooked me up with their top sales guy, Mike Peterson.

Mike was a cold-calling fool and one of the best salespeople I have ever known—and one of the best men I have ever known. We had a flawless system, a finely tuned engine. Together, we made a formidable and prolific team.

Mike would set an appointment. We would then go together to meet the prospective client. I was introduced as the writer and director who would be handling the client’s project should they choose to do business with us. After the meeting, I would come back to the office, and, based on the information provided, write the script—on spec. We would then go back, I would share the script, and Mike

would work his magic. I was not the best scriptwriter or director by a long shot, but I understood business and could quickly assess people's needs. With my consulting background, Mike's genius as a salesperson, and a decent creative angle, our batting average was near perfect: .995. That's 199 out of 200.

Goal one, accomplished. I was finally making enough money as a writer and director to support our family.

As it turned out, the move to a new city was not only inspired; it was critical. Following the impression to invest hours honing my writing skills was not only important, it was imperative. *Lucius Annaeus Seneca wrote, "Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity."* As my dear friend Dr. Alexandra Delis-Abrams recently shared, "God cannot drive parked cars."

I have reflected often on those two years of preparation, the price that was paid, the darkest of my dark nights that could have so easily turned out differently, and the doors of opportunity that opened when I went back into Intentional Creation. All these things stand as constant reminders that when we are buried in what feels like darkness, we must press forward anyway.

For these moments, Og writes:

The prizes of life are at the end of each journey, not near the beginning; and it is not given to me to know how many steps are necessary in order to reach my goal. Failure I may still encounter at the thousandth step, yet success hides behind the next bend in the road. Never will I know how close it lies unless I turn the corner. Always will I take another step. If that is of no avail, I will take another, and yet another. In truth, one step at a time is not too difficult. I will persist until I succeed.

There will be days when we will need to constantly struggle against forces that would tear us down. Becoming an Intentional Creator does not exempt us from trials. We are not okay because of our circumstances. We may be in the middle of a fire storm. We are okay because of the way we have chosen to show up in those fire storms—and that makes all the difference. Besides, this too shall pass.

In 1941, during a dark hour in a bleak war, Winston Churchill added this exclamation mark when he said, “Never, never, never, never give up!” With focused effort, time will provide the opportunity for us to look back and see these moments for what they are—miracles in retrospect.

Healing the Bruises of Failure



During any single week for nearly five years, it was not unusual for me to be writing one script, shooting a second project, and editing yet another. Days were long but never boring, mundane, or repetitious. I was alive. I was living and cherishing every breath and every moment of every day.

Og writes about living like this:

I will seal up its container of life so that not one drop spills itself upon the sand. I will waste not a moment mourning yesterday's misfortunes, yesterday's defeats, yesterday's aches of the heart, for why should I throw good after bad?

My joy and enthusiasm was contagious and made up for any deficits in raw talent—which were many. We were never without the next project.

My all-time favorite film project involved traveling with Mike Peterson to Chicago to make a presentation to the board of directors of what was then the third largest mattress manufacturer in the world. Based on a successful local campaign, we'd been invited by one of the board members to come present. I was totally out of my comfort zone.

Upon our arrival at the corporate offices, the board member informed us that our presentation would follow their Chicago-based ad agency, whose reps were already in the boardroom. Mike and I sat down to wait.

We'd known that this Goliath of an agency would be there. But at that moment, this David felt more like an anxious shepherd boy standing in the middle of the battlefield holding a sling in one hand

while digging through the dirt searching for a bigger stone—and wondering what right he had to even be there.

At the time, Vanna White was the company's spokesperson. I had a vision of Vanna driving a direct-response TV campaign that included a thirty-second commercial, high-end product videos, and special in-store promotions. The concept was definitely unique and aggressive for this market segment—and this client needed something aggressive. I could feel it in my bones. By the time the double doors to the boardroom opened, I was grounded. The agency reps exited, and Mike and I entered.

At the end of the day, Mike and I sat on one side of the boardroom table, an ad agency rep on the other side, and the company's project manager at the far end. With all of the board members gone, the table seemed a lot longer than it did earlier in the day. No one made eye contact, let alone spoke a word.

The CEO, a tall, stately and dynamic gentleman walked in, stood at the head of the table, and delivered the verdict. The conversation was short and to the point. "We have made our decision." Turning to Mike and me, he said, "You two will produce the TV commercial and all the supporting videos." Turning to the ad agency rep, he said, "You will produce all of the point of purchase materials for the stores and make the air buys." He concluded by turning to Bernie, the project manager, saying, "And you will keep these guys from killing each other." He turned and exited the room.

I smiled and wanted to shout, "Hooray!" but as I looked across the table, it was clear that not everyone in the room was delighted with the decision. We exited the room and immediately turned our focus to production.

Most of us have seen Vanna turning letters on Wheel of Fortune. She looked much different that day when she stepped off the plane, hair in a ponytail, no make-up, and wearing pink sweats. She was so real and fun—no celebrity pretense. That made it even more enjoyable to treat her as one. Over the next several days I had the privilege of directing this amazing talent and watching her light up every time the camera rolled. It was like witnessing magic.

The craziest production schedule of my career had to be the PBS promotion of the animated series from William Bennett's book, *The Book of Virtues*. The New York producers kept pushing the filming schedule, but airing dates were set in concrete—absolutely no wiggle room. In the end, we had to schedule three, thirty-six-hour editing sessions in a row with three-hour breaks between them in order to meet the deadline.

We cycled through three editors for each session. As both the writer and director, I had to be there the entire time. The rumor was that I inserted a Diet Dr. Pepper IV in my arm to stay awake. I'm not sure I ever recovered from that project...I'm not sure I ever recovered from that project . . . I'm not sure. Smile.

Through the years, I had the honor of working with some genuinely talented people. There was the extraordinarily creative Eric Stilson, who trusted me to write and co-direct the award-winning NatureSleep infomercial. There was the kind and gracious soul, Gary Jackson, owner of CDI Productions, who hired me to write and direct the award-winning Goodman family special. There was the quintessential genius Jared Brown, who brought me on board to write and direct infomercials for Nest Entertainment, including the promotion of their Bible videos for children. There was the consummate marketing manager of Equis, Dan Smith, and our creation of the CNBC commercials for their MetaStock trading software. There was the one and only Juleanne Dawson with Bard Access Systems. I did over twenty projects for her. Oh, that every company could be blessed with a Julie!

I had the privilege of working with outstanding and talented people who were masters of their craft. There was the Emmy Award-winning director of photography, Jerry Kuhlwick, who guided both the camera and me through land mines while filming the child abuse prevention series, *Come in from the Storm*. There was Jeff Lambright, who could make a camera sing and make me look like a genius—and keep everyone on the set laughing at something other than me. Most of all, I miss Bryan Clarke, our sound engineer and still photographer, who died one night in his sleep from heart failure. Bryan knew someone in every city. When Bryan was around, we were always

treated like kings by the airlines, hotels, and restaurants. This humble giant of a man taught me volumes about how to treat and serve others.

My New Shield

Intense, passion-driven work with its routine, rhythm and rhyme was a healing balm. However, some old festering wounds remained from our previous life, both received and inflicted, which would require special treatment to be healed.

Addressing these sensitive situations, Og writes:

And with this new knowledge I will also understand and recognize the moods of he on whom I call. I will make allowances for his anger and irritation of today for he knows not the secret of controlling his mind. I can withstand his arrows and insults for now I know that tomorrow he will change and be a joy to approach.

No longer will I judge a man on one meeting; no longer will I fail to call again tomorrow on he who meets me with hate today. This day he will not buy gold chariots for a penny, yet tomorrow he would exchange his home for a tree. My knowledge of this secret will be my key to great wealth.

It was early in the year 1994. Ramona and I took the weekend off to attend a seminar. The topic for the morning was personal accountability. The facilitator asked us to identify the single greatest challenge we were facing with another person. That was easy.

During the last year of our previous life and for three years into our new one, we'd lived with one constant: an angry adversary who'd once been a close and dear friend. He and I had owned apartment buildings together. I built buildings for him and acquired and refurbished others.

In 1987, my friend and I decided to create the world's best-ever educational film on the subject of child abuse prevention. On a handshake, we made an equal and substantial investment. At the time it was not a big deal for either of us. Later, as the economy in Southern California crumbled, everything became a big deal.

He hired an attorney and gave him one mandate: make Dave's life miserable. The attorney was a master of miserable. This was long before emails and text messages, so communications were generally by letter—venomous letters. His attorney threw an arrow, and I threw a spear. He launched a rocket, so I dropped a bomb.

After all, it was me who dug up that eighty-foot long, three-foot-deep trench. I was the one who stood ankle-deep in human excrement to fix a mistake made by a bankrupt plumber. It was me who contributed my commission from the sale of that building, plus the remaining equity from our dream home, to help cover *his* investment in the child abuse project. It was me who continued to market the film series yet paid the lion's share of net profits to his side of the ledger. My rationalizations and justifications—excuses—for being so angry went on and on and on and on, ad nauseam.

While playing these toxic stories out in my mind, something I'd done for endless wasted hours, the facilitator instructed us to get outside ourselves and see the situation from the other person's perspective.

Do what?! I cried out in silence. You have got to be kidding! I won't do it! I'd invested too heavily in my resentment and anger. I am the injured person here, not him! Anyone with a clear mind can see that! I clung to the past. This guy wants me to step into my adversary's world and see the situation from his [ad]vantage point?

That's exactly what he wanted us to do. In that moment, everything came to a head. Maybe it was sheer exhaustion. Maybe it was a deep and abiding love for this old friend, even if the love was buried under years of vitriolic communications. Whatever it was, four years was long enough to be in hell. I finally surrendered at a whole new level.

In a few moments, and for the first time, I saw the situation through his eyes. I saw his loss, his pain, his frustration—even his anger. I could see me taking a stand and defiantly shouting all of my pathetic pontifications while trying to justify my position. I saw why he felt the need to hire a powerful advocate to represent his position against his bitter adversary—me. The realization of my personal

contribution to this distasteful and untenable situation was nearly unbearable. The behavior of my former friend, which had seemed totally insensitive, inappropriate, and abhorrent, was now understandable. When looking at the situation through his eyes, I felt ashamed.

The seminar had a scheduled break at noon. I decided to use that time to lay it on the line. I located a pay phone (cell phones were rare back then), and with the intention and determination to be totally accountable, made an overdue call. It took a little convincing to get him on the line, having been instructed to communicate only through his attorney, but he finally came to the phone.

“What do you want?” he gruffly asked.

“I’m going to give you everything you need to bury me,” I replied, sure my comment would intrigue him. His attorney had conducted a thorough audit of our real estate management account, through which tens of thousands of dollars flowed each month. Not a penny was missing. He had examined the sales records for the educational films, and again, everything was in perfect order. For four years he’d been looking for dirt, and now I was about to give everything up—willingly?

He replied, “I’m listening.”

I proceeded to tell him the history of the events but from his perspective. I shared how I had controlled every profit center in our development and management activities, from concept to completion, from general plan amendment to rent-up and sale. I explained how this worked great while the economy was booming, but as it started to collapse, I was simply wearing too many hats. I shared the now-obvious weaknesses in the system and the mistakes we made in the last construction project. I stated that we probably lost more money than we needed to, simply because I couldn’t handle everything effectively. I ended by telling him I was very sorry for the things I’d handled poorly and for my defensive behavior ever since. I finished by asking for his forgiveness.

What seemed like an interminable silence went on, and then he spoke. “I’ve been waiting four years to hear you say that.” There was another pause, and then he continued, “Dave, I don’t want the shirt

off your back. I'm not saying I want to be friends, but the hatchet is buried."

I thanked him, hung up, slid down the wall on my haunches, and wept.

When I got home, I took off my Rolex watch (I'd sold everything but the Rolex), then polished and packaged it and sent it to this forgiving man.

I included a note: "Here is my Rolex watch. You have watched me flaunt it. You know how much I love it. This is the last treasure from our previous life. This is a small token of how badly I want to mend our relationship. It is now yours."

Within the year, we were sharing insights about how to raise teenagers. Two years later, his family came to Utah for a ski trip and stayed at our home.

My New Weapon

Remember that forty-foot, custom Bluebird motor coach that had been conspicuously parked in our circle drive for everyone to see? It qualified as a second home, so I could justify having it, because it was a great tax write-off—back when we needed tax write-offs. Admittedly, it was also a good excuse for buying something conspicuously expensive and then financing it.

As a family, we took some great trips in that bus—and some crazy ones. The fun abruptly ended when we had to take the bus back to the dealer. We had a fair amount of equity when we bought it, but with the collapse of the economy, no one was buying luxury buses, so values had plummeted. We couldn't sell it, so we voluntarily surrendered it. The financial institution was able to sell it but at a huge discount. Now what? Simple: We got a letter in the mail notifying us of a high five-figure deficit—and they wanted their money *now*.

The last year of the construction company was awful, with little or no cash flow. Costs were going through the roof, and salaries needed to be paid. How did we make ends meet? We used our corporate line of credit. I was the guarantor—a hopeful one, but a guarantor

nonetheless. In the end, it would be me who got the letter of default—hundreds of thousands of dollars due, with the interest accruing daily.

What about salaries that needed to be paid? Salaries were paid, yes, but payroll taxes, no. The IRS wanted their money.

What about credit card balances? Of course, credit cards are how we survived personally for the last several months in California. Those creditors were the least understanding and the most difficult.

For almost four years, we'd been able to work with the major institutional creditors by being transparent and proactive. I provided each with a monthly statement of our income and expenses and a modest \$50 payment. No one argued about our ability to pay more. No one filed a lawsuit. In fact, it was quite the contrary.

One day I received a phone call regarding the bus. I was informed that due to our relationship, they were going to *slip* our loan into a block of under-performing loans being sold to a discount buyer for pennies on the dollar. I was told to expect a call in about two weeks from the new owner of the note. The estimated amount they would be requesting would be one-eighth of the original deficit. I was elated.

A few weeks later, I got a second call, this time from the attorney at our corporate bank. He thanked us for disclosing so much and said he was including our loan in a portfolio being sold to an investor, again for pennies on the dollar. He informed us that the investor would be seeking an amount equal to one-sixth of the outstanding balance. I would need to be prepared to come up with a down payment and then make monthly payments, but with no interest accruing. Payments were scheduled to end several years later on August 2000, at which time a balloon payment would be due.

He asked if I could arrange for the down and handle the monthly payments. My biggest writing and directing fee to date, which I had just received, would be barely enough to cover the requirements—again, help in the nick of time. I remember hanging up from the second call, deeply moved by what had just transpired. Our two single biggest institutional creditors had just settled within weeks of each other.

The IRS was the scariest. I felt impressed to invite the revenue agent to our home; we had nothing to hide. She came, and we sat to discuss the situation. I even offered to give her a tour of the house.

“Take what you want,” I told her. “This is all we have. I owe the taxes. We can’t pay all of them, but in time, we can pay some.”

Within a few minutes, she made an offer that was both fair and doable.

Before leaving, she paused to tell me about the place she was going to visit next. “This taxpayer keeps trying to avoid me. He won’t answer my calls. He ignores my letters. I even drove to his residence and left a business card on the door.” Shaking her head in frustration, she added, “I’m going by there one last time. If he’s unresponsive, that’s it—I’ll have to take serious action.” I understood what that meant. She shook my hand and thanked me for being so open and honest.

Sorry, tax guys on TV. My experience with the IRS was so different!

Then there were the credit cards. This was the most frustrating and impersonal experience of all. We wanted to settle, but we couldn’t. It took months to finally reach someone with the authority to negotiate a settlement. We finally achieved success.

In the end, we settled our million dollars of debt for a little less than one-half. Much of the reduction came from the forgiveness of accrued interest and the kindness of those with whom we worked so closely. We cannot promise anything like this for anyone else; we just know that the people we worked with appreciated our proactive approach. We always called them before they called us. We paid as much as we possibly could, and they knew it. The rules had changed in our life, and our creditors changed with us.

We didn’t want to file bankruptcy, but the option was on the table. Early on, some consultants and legal experts recommended it. For many, bankruptcy is the only option remaining, and it exists for that reason. Because of the kindness of others, we were able to create a different option, and with it, priceless life experiences.

Og provides sage wisdom for these moments of darkness:

And how can I laugh when confronted with man or deed which offends me so as to bring forth my tears or my curses? Four words I will train myself to say until they become a habit so strong that immediately they will appear in my mind whenever good humor threatens to depart from me. These words, passed down from the ancients, will carry me through every adversity and maintain my life in balance. These four words are: This too shall pass.

With our major debts to the banks and other financial institutions settled with manageable payments, we retained the services of Lexington Law to help clean up our credit report. It took a few months, but soon our FICO score reflected our desire to honor our obligations. For the first time in five years, we were on a firmer financial foundation, and again, just in the nick of time—a theme so oft repeated.

Nenawashi

In 1996, I wrote, produced, and directed three television commercials for a new network marketing company. As part of the process, we were given products to try. Ramona loved their skin care products, and I loved their nutritional products.

A little over ten years prior, I started my own company, Team Entertainment. The mission back then was to sell “lyrically trusted rock and roll.” The idea was to use a grassroots organization of ever increasing home-based marketers to launch new artists, starting with my own mid-life crisis band, Team Players. The idea was a rather mechanical and clumsy version of today’s American Idol. I learned a great deal about networking and could clearly see the value in the marketing model, although our application of it was missing some critical ingredients needed for success—one of those being a reoccurring consumable product.

After finishing the television commercials and spending time with the principles of this new company, my interest was again piqued. I always believed network marketing to be a powerful yet delicate dance between two equally important partners: the deeply

personal—a person's hopes and dreams, and the structure and discipline of business—creating a profit.

With this new company, I saw a unique opportunity to apply this belief, with the possibility of building relationships in both the US and abroad. Ramona and I dove in, working part-time while maintaining my film career. We invited our attorney, accountant, personal coach, and several others to build with us, based on one single premise—honoring all people and assisting them in realizing their hopes and dreams.

The Japanese call this *nenawashi*—binding of the roots. It means the smallest hair-like root is as valuable as the biggest root. Everyone matters and adds to the riches of the tree. We wouldn't be throwing mud up against the wall to see what stuck and then washing the rest down the drain. We would honor all people, no matter how big or small, how powerful or weak. Yes, it was a numbers game, but it would not be about sifting and sorting human beings. It would be about identifying and making friends—good friends. All would be bound together and nourished.

In Japan, we would find common ground. My most memorable experience occurred at 3 a.m. at the end of another typical twenty-hour day. True to custom, we sat on the floor on cushions, surrounding a large table and enjoying delicious Japanese barbecue. Distributors were still on the phone talking to prospective distributors. I watched as the two men directly across from me kneeled and faced one another. I do not speak Japanese, but the energy was undeniable—they were making a sacred oath. I turned to my translator for details.

She explained that the older man was already a distributor with the company, and the younger man had decided to become one. The younger man was committing to work very hard—with emphasis on *very*—and was turning over the fiduciary responsibility for the welfare of his wife and children, the realization of his hopes and dreams, to his new leader—complete trust. The leader was, in turn, accepting full responsibility to get into the trenches and work by his side. It was not an idle commitment to secure a sale. It was a covenant—a

two-way promise. The moment was poignant and sobering. These two men, from a faraway land, richly modeled the principle of *nenawashi*.

The Japanese leaders were a breath of fresh air, and it was reciprocal. They could never understand when someone from the West would say, “It’s just business.” In the network marketing profession, it never is “just” business. Within two and a half years, Ramona and I had built an organization with 140,000 distributors in the US, Japan and the Philippines, 70,000 of whom were active.

Circumstances at corporate, which were out of our control, caused the company to fail—a very sad day that included the loss of several dear friends. Ramona and I decided to take the high road and move on with our lives. Recently, I received a phone call from the former president of the company. Suffice it to say—and as Og Mandino promises—love does *melt all hearts like unto the sun, whose rays soften the coldest clay*. Og just didn’t give us a time line. Yogi Berra said it best: “It ain’t over ‘til it’s over.” The end of this story is yet to be written.

Og Mandino for the 21st Century

It was 1997, seven years into our new journey as a family, when I first became acquainted with Og’s body of work. At the time, my oldest daughter, Kathryn, was dating (and would eventually marry) Rene Oehlerking.

One evening, while sharing our family story with Rene, he excitedly said, with his delightful South African accent, “I have some books you will want to read. You will love them!” He went on to explain that a few years back, while wandering through a used bookstore in Margate, halfway around the world, he stumbled across a book written by Og Mandino, an American author. He bought it for the equivalent of \$0.59, went home and read it. He liked it so much he returned the next day in search of more titles. He found four. Rene is well-read, well-educated, and intelligent—determined to create success. I was more than willing to read any book he found valuable.

A couple of days later, he delivered all of his Og titles to me. That night, I picked up the book on top of the pile. It was entitled *The Greatest Salesman in the World*. I got comfortable and began to read.

It was an easy read at first, a quaint little story about an ambitious young camel boy named Hafid, who wanted to earn enough money to fund a dowry so he could eventually marry the daughter of Calneh, a successful businessman. Through a series of defining moments, Pathros, Hafid's boss, was inspired to entrust him with the Ten Scrolls, ten time-tested principles of success, through which Pathros had amassed great wealth.

Pathros claimed that the Scrolls had been passed down from the ancients and that one day Hafid would be inspired to pass them on to another who would, in turn, give them to the world. As promised, Hafid left for Damascus, where he commenced his life-long study of the Scrolls.

I had reached Chapter Eight. It was time to discover what Og Mandino believed to be the ten time-tested principles of success. What happened next was totally unexpected.

From the inspired words that open the first paragraph of the first Scroll, *Today I begin a new life*, I knew that Og knew the truth of it. Sentence after sentence, principle after principle, each Scroll validated all that I had been through and all that I had been taught. To this he added critical insight, clarity, richness and texture. Concepts, principles, explanations, and answers to questions seemed to pop off the page. It was clear that we had the same teacher.

Until that moment, I had never allowed another human being, other than Ramona, into this private place where I really lived, where inspired ideas, impressions and solutions to challenges were manifest. Og sauntered in like an old and trusted friend. It was as if he were saying, "What took you so long, David? I've been waiting to talk with you." I wept.

Interesting how doors of opportunity close and new ones open. A little over a year after reading and successfully applying Og's principles in our network marketing business, the company collapsed. Within weeks of that sad day, I was commissioned to write the feature film script for one of my favorite Og books, *The Christ Commission*.

It would take six months to complete the script. I flew down to Arizona to deliver it to Bette, Og's widow. I didn't know it at the time, but the date on the front of the script—the completion date—was her birthday. This was the start of a valued relationship, another tender mercy, another door of opportunity, and again, a miracle in retrospect.

In January of 2000, with Y2K behind us, I was traveling around the country shooting client testimonials for a series of television commercials promoting a technical trading software program that would air on CNBC. For two days, we were in the lower Manhattan financial district. We finished early on the second day so the local film crew headed home, and my two-man traveling team and I headed to Broadway. We wanted to see *The Lion King*. Tickets were sold out eight months in advance, so we stood in the cancellation line on a late and very cold afternoon in January, hoping to get in and trying to stay warm.

My go-to man, Jeff Lambright led the entire collection of ticket-less but hopeful theater devotees in singing our favorite Beatles tunes. Our sound engineer and still photographer, Bryan Clarke, took photos and made friends. That's what Bryan did—collect friends. They were his greatest treasure. One sweet older lady had already invited him to come to Florida in February to enjoy the sunshine—and she was serious. The exchange—I'd seen similar ones many times—made me smile.

We all sang, “Oh bla de, Oh bla da,” while I also reflected on the next day's shoot. My cell phone rang, and I answered. It was Bette.

She was straightforward. “The feature film rights to *The Greatest Salesman in the World* are not being renewed. I wanted to call you first. Would you be interested in buying them?”

For a moment I was speechless. This had to be the rhetorical question of the decade. “Of course!” I blurted.

Over the next couple of hours, I had no trouble staying warm, even with the brisk wind and frigid temperatures, as I talked with Bette, then to her attorney, then to my attorney, and finally to the publisher. By the time we got into the theater—and we all got in—the framework for something even more expansive and exciting than the film rights was in place.

Within a few months, I left the film industry, became the CEO of a new Og Mandino company, and was given the fiduciary responsibility of bringing Og's principles into the 21st Century. I couldn't think of a better way to invest my life.

We Do the Work

What a decade. We lost everything, relocated, hit an even deeper rock bottom, experienced the dark night, started a new career, and worked tirelessly to pay off our debts. We learned that when we trust inspiration, act on it, and press forward with undying dedication and determination in spite of moments of darkness, miracles happen. Og's words added renewed energy and determination.

He wrote:

Each obstacle I will consider as a mere detour to my goal and a challenge to my profession. I will persist and develop my skills as the mariner develops his, by learning to ride out the wrath of each storm.

Behind the scenes, Ramona was managing our home and our children's busy lives. It was something to behold. Our three boys, David, Danny, and Paul earned the rank of Eagle Scout. David served a two-year church mission to New York. Danny served in Cebu, Philippines. Paul was preparing and would later serve in the West Indies.

Danny and Kathryn earned music scholarships to the University of Utah. Tobi received the President's Scholarship at the U, and during her freshman year, became the national president of HOSA—Health Occupation Students of America. Christina realized her dream by becoming a Mandenelle (a member of Bountiful High's drill team).

Paul was a member of a Shakespeare Troupe and began his high school football career. Cyndi, our youngest and the strongest of them all, worked her way through the crazy challenges of junior high. Toward the end of the decade, David, Danny, and Kathryn would get married and begin families. Cherished memories.

This was a time of focus, of passion-driven work and healing. One of the sweetest moments occurred in August 2000, just a few months after Bette's memorable call while I was in New York. This was the day we sent the last check to the bank, the final balloon payment.

That night I fell to my knees, and in gratitude, I poured out my heart to a loving God. That which seemed impossible ten years earlier was now an accomplished deed and oh so much more. Our institutional debts were paid and financial freedom was again ours. Our children were healthy, and their dreams—and ours—were being realized. And I was beginning a new journey with Og.

As I knelt in gratitude, a warm feeling filled the room. I was asked, *What did you learn, David?*

The answer rolled off my tongue with ease: "You open the doors of opportunity, and I do the work." I continued, "When I try to open the doors of opportunity, I frustrate the program. When I try to get You to do the work, I frustrate the program. You open the doors, and I do the work."

Suddenly I was awash with a warm, penetrating feeling. It was as if I could feel God smiling as this decade-long instruction came to an end with this declaration: *Lesson learned.*

My Journal: The Principles I Learned



1. I can fight, rebel, resist, and even resent what is happening, or I can surrender to “what is” and focus all of my energy on creating something better.
2. The pain really isn’t in the changes required, but in my resistance to the required changes.
3. I was my things; however, wealth and health are transitory—they come and they go. They cannot be the foundation of my happiness or I will lose my worth every time they’re threatened.
4. My pivotal moment did not come a moment too soon, and in truth, it came just in time. It seemed inopportune in the moment—and that will most likely always be the case.
5. I am not alone in my challenges. I have been blessed with many brave and kind friends who have overcome so much. In moments of despair and discouragement, I can find strength and courage in their examples.
6. Humility is not about giving up, but about growing up.
7. The speed with which I can become abundant is directly related to the speed in which I am willing to surrender to these principles.

8. I will live more present in the now, more aware of the sacrifices made by others, especially those made by my sweetheart. May I see the stars in my life without the need for darkness.
9. Miracles only look like miracles in retrospect. Most likely, I am standing in the middle of a miracle right now.
10. Passion-driven work is one of the greatest healing balms.
11. The best way to assuage anger is to step into the other person's shoes, see the situation through their eyes and acknowledge and validate their position. I can choose to be right, or I can be rich—in relationships and money. I choose to be rich (most of the time).
12. Blessings are born of sacrifice. I will willingly sacrifice for things that matter most.

SHARE ANY ADDITIONAL PRINCIPLES YOU HAVE LEARNED:
