

Pivotal Moments of Surrender

“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?” Og Mandino

Abundance is not something we seek to win. Abundance is not something we seek to receive. Abundance is a sacred process in which we actively participate and eventually become. We call this process Intentional Creation. We actively participate by embracing the Six Qualities of an Intentional Creator, fully engaging in life, connecting with people, creating value everywhere we go and enriching the world through our contributions.

Each traveler has been uniquely prepared for this journey, yet each shares a common thread that binds all together. Each has experienced a pivotal moment, a moment of total surrender, driven by a deep and abiding desire to know the truth about *becoming abundant*. Some travelers have *willingly* surrendered wanting only to be a better person. Most have been compelled to surrender by a firestorm of life of such magnitude that few if any options remained. I was compelled.

I was lying in bed trying to go to sleep, mind spinning out of control. It was early in December 1988, Southern California, the holiday season was upon us. It had been an unusually wet fall. The incessant rain and bottomless mud were wreaking havoc at our construction sites. The rumble from the tax reform act of 1986 was beginning to create cracks in our financial foundation. The economic stress was mounting as trust, sadly between friends and long-term business partners, was quickly eroding.

We specialized in building and buying multi-family residential units, apartment buildings. For several years we had experienced double-digit growth. If you lived in California, especially Southern California, apartments were the *thing to own*. Those who invested reaped handsome profits and enormous tax benefits. We were the true alchemists magically turning every undeveloped plot of rich, coal-colored earth into gold, at least until now.

When the bleeding started there was little concern. Even as the hemorrhaging increased I was still convinced we could find workable solutions to these seemingly solvable problems. Surely we could shore up the damage and get everything and everyone back on track. Why not? I had done it numerous times before. Was this night really that different?

I was in my mid-thirties and quite seasoned, I thought. After all I had made my first million by age twenty-five. The second and third quickly followed. The sky had no limit. We had all the trappings and possessions to validate our worldly wealth and success. There were the bank accounts, the stock portfolio, the

apartment buildings. I drove a brand new Mercedes, my ninth, and a new Corvette. I had owned other exotic sports cars including a classic 1973 246 GTS Ferrari and two Porsches. A custom forty-foot Bluebird Motor Coach *adorned* our circle driveway, conspicuously parked for all to see.

Ramona, our seven young children, and I, lived in our dream home, two acres atop Mt Helix, complete with a pool and tennis court. We had a private tennis coach for the family. We had a full-time gardener and handyman who lived on premises and who kept the yard immaculate and everything else buzzing perfectly. We had a full-time live-in housekeeper and cook who ran the roost. We even owned a share in a ski condo in Brian Head, Utah. Oh, did I mention the Rolex? I can't forget the Rolex. Who could question my ability to solve these challenges? Who?

I have since reflected in amazement on the sad and sadly comical condition of my soul on this portentous night. For years I had been trying to fill a huge hole in my soul with material possessions but couldn't buy enough stuff to fill the void. There had been a few glimpses into my goodness and sense of mission, but taking everything into consideration, it was evident that even God, in all his wisdom and patience, had finally had enough. A course correction was required.

I distinctly remember two specific and absolutely ridiculous occasions that contributed heavily to the need for my pivotal moment of surrender. The first occurred when a business associate stopped by to pick me up for a meeting. He was parked under the porte-cochere patiently waiting when I finally exited our large mahogany front door. I remember thinking while opening the door to my friend's Ford automobile, "How will people who see me in this car know that I drive a Mercedes?" Yes, I actually thought this.

The second occurred one morning when I reached the bottom of our hill and discovered I had forgotten to put on my Rolex. When I wore it, which was everywhere except in the shower and to bed at night, I was more like a watch model. As I talked, it was always 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 green while thinking, "Should I turn 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 the *obvious to everyone else but me* overcompensations, I turned around and headed back home. 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! That is the truth of it. It is embarrassing, but the truth.

There I lie in my bed, trying to go to sleep, mind obsessively searching for answers to challenges that surely were solvable while pathetically negotiating with God, "I promise to do 'x' if you will do 'y'." Finally I drifted off to sleep.

In the middle of the night a vivid dream unfolded. I found myself in the same room. It was so real I thought I was awake. Everything was in its place, yet everything had changed, a Dickens *Christmas Carol* kind of moment. In this surreal setting there was a strange and poignant awareness that somehow all my worldly possessions were now gone and we were mired in a million dollars of debt. A cold chill went down my spine. It was hard to breathe. The despair was palpable.

I was profoundly confused and increasingly devastated by the haunting and unfathomable mystery that everything was lost. I saw Ramona lying next to me sleeping peacefully. I slipped out of bed and quietly tiptoed to our closet to pray. It seemed like the right thing to do under the circumstances.

I knelt down and cried out in confusion, "Why is this happening? I don't understand!" No answer was forthcoming. I cried out again, "I have worked so hard! How could this happen!" There was nothing but a deafening silence. I cried out again but this time while pounding my clenched fist on the carpeted floor in anger, "What have I done wrong? I am a good person! This is NOT fair!" The response was only silence.

In this moment of stillness I began to feel something well up in my soul. It was small at first but growing quickly. It originated from a familiar place that is so deep, so sacred, so protected, a place in our soul reserved only for these kind of special occasions, life-altering, life-crushing occasions. For those who have been here, you know of what I speak.

I had visited this place only once before. It was the night I came face to face with the pain I had caused as a teenager. During this previous visit, the guilt and the shame had been graciously lifted, but tonight everything seemed very different.

My tears started to flow freely as I knelt in silence, head bowed, lips quivering. As the pain continued to grow with intensity, the tears changed to uncontrollable sobs. It was becoming increasingly apparent that this time no one would be coming to rescue me. I cried out, "Where is my ram in the bushes? You gave Abraham a ram! Where is my ram?" I pleaded, but to no avail. I began to quake at the center of my being until my proud spirit was crushed and my heart contrite.

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

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

For the next hour or so she tried to console me as we sat on the edge of the bed. "What happened, sweetheart?" she repeatedly asked as she gently stroked my back. I attempted several times to find words adequate to explain the indelible images from the nightmare but words were wholly inadequate. It seemed like forever before we again found sleep. This was only the beginning. Many more sleepless nights would follow over the months to come.

One year later, December 1989, with the holiday season again upon us, all our worldly possessions now truly gone or soon to be gone, buried in a very real million dollars of debt, truly discouraged, absolutely defeated and wallowing in despair, I lie in our bed contemplating the untenable circumstances which were now my reality. Instinctually I again retired to our closet to pray.

Just as soon as I knelt down I knew what was about to happen. I had been here before in a dream just one year earlier. I spontaneously cried out, "No, No, God. Please, No!" But it was too late. The pain began to well up in my soul and the experience of a year previous began to unfold in minute detail.

It would be on this night, fully awake in the Now, proud heart ripped out, truly in need of peace, that I would have my pivotal moment of surrender. With surrender, instruction commenced. A willing and deeply humbled student, I was finally able to listen and learn.

Instruction commenced with a foundational principle upon which all future principles would be built. The foundational principle was simple yet counterintuitive to my previous understanding of how to create abundance.

Most seek to *have* abundance. Seek instead to *become* abundant.

I was instructed that I was to focus on becoming abundant in every fiber of my being. I was promised that as I focused on this fundamental principle, doors would open and blessings would flow. If I desired riches, I could aggressively pursue riches but only with the intent of lifting and building others.

I was instructed to use these riches to contribute and create value everywhere I went. I was to become a creator that would enrich the world, not a taker that would rob the world. My mission would be to heal torn bodies and torn minds.

On December 30, 1989, with everything we owned packed in two Ryder trucks, we exited the circle drive of our dream home having barely sold it before we lost it. We were a million dollars in debt and had less than a \$2,000 to our name and

that only due to what happened just a few moments earlier. The buyer of our home had purchased two items right out of the back of our truck, our bronze eagle with its eight-foot wingspan, talons just lifting off its wood perch as it prepared to take flight, and the fruitwood inlaid grandfather clock we purchased in Manhattan five years earlier. Two more worldly treasures gone.

I was driving in the first truck, my dear father driving the second and Ramona was in our van with our seven children. I stopped for a moment and perhaps for the last time to survey the site. I was sobbing. In stark contrast Ramona and our children were singing one of Ramona's favorite camp songs. For me, leaving this dream home was the ultimate loss. For Ramona this was just another fun adventure. What a rock!

We drove eight hundred miles in search of a new life. Ramona freely offered her 3.1 carat diamond ring so we could get into a house. While learning and applying the principles, which were now flowing into our lives, we went into passion driven action.

I had always wanted to be a writer and a director. As an avocation and during those brief glimpses into my real purpose and divine worth, I had written and produced the film, *Reach Out*, on the topic of teenage drinking and driving. It was now in 30,000 schools nationwide. I had also written, directed and produced the film series, *Come in From the Storm*, a three-part program on child abuse awareness and prevention. This project had been purchased by the government and could be found in every Department of Defense school system and in every U.S. Military Family Services Department worldwide. In addition, the series was in thousands of schools in the U.S., Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Prior to my *pivotal moment of surrender* this was only a hobby, a respite for my soul from materialistic and self-centric pursuits. It was time to turn it into a profession.

New marketing ideas came that created just enough additional sales to provide sufficient income to sustain life. I tenaciously studied Truby's Story Structure and over the next two years wrote four feature film scripts. The principles were working at every turn. Then all of a sudden at the end of the second year everything went dark again.

After working tirelessly to master the skill of writing, while constantly dealing with creditors, past partners and struggling to market our educational films, the primary funding source for schools to purchase our films, our primary market, instantly dried up with one stroke of a legislative pen.

Over the next few weeks the principles and I were put to the ultimate test. This was the darkest of the dark nights. Exhausted and discouraged I came too close to failing that test. Let me speak plainly and boldly. It is never so hopeless, never so ugly, and never so dark to consider the option I considered. If you are there now, you know the place of which I speak. Take courage, apply the principles you will

learn in this book, trust and stay in creation no matter what. Keep pressing forward! As Winston Churchill said, “Never, never, never give up!”

Fortunately I made the decision to re-engage. I consciously turned away from destructive thoughts and again focused on creation in search of inspired ideas, impressions or solutions to this challenge. A new vision came, passion was re-ignited and action commenced. I learned a great lesson about the relationship between action and miracles. As one of my dear friends Dr. Alexandra Delis-Abrams quotes, “God does not drive parked cars.”

Within a few days I received a call from a local production company. They had remembered our child abuse prevention film series, which I edited at this facility five years earlier, yes, five years previous. They asked if I would be interested in writing a script for them and they were willing to pay me. Needless to say, I gladly accepted.

As I continued to apply these principles, one script soon turned into two, which turned into three. Two hundred projects later, including TV specials, national commercials and more, our debts to the banks were paid and financial freedom was restored. Please know that when we are in the thickness of a dark night, miracles only look like miracles in retrospect. We only get to see them when we continue to press forward.

I can still vividly recall the day we sent the last check for \$14,000 to the bank. That night I fell to my knees in gratitude. That which seemed impossible ten years earlier was now an accomplished deed, and far more.

As I poured out my heart to a loving God that evening, a warm feeling filled the room. I was asked, “What did you learn, David?” The question seemed odd for the occasion, but I knew the answer and it rolled off my tongue with ease. “You open the doors of opportunity and I do the work. When I try to open them I frustrate the program. When I try to get you to do the work I frustrate the program. You open the doors, I do the work.” It was as if I could feel God smile as the capstone to this decade-long-instruction was confirmed, “Lesson learned.”

It was about seven years into this journey of instruction that I became intimately acquainted with Og Mandino’s work. Og’s words spoke to me with a familiar voice, one that resonated with my own experiences and vibrated with my soul, the litmus test for truth. His words reinforced everything I had been taught to date and then added new insights, richness and depth.

Interestingly, the last feature film script I was commissioned to write during my ten-year journey in the film industry was for one of Og’s books. Upon completion, I flew down to Arizona to deliver it to Bette, Og’s widow. Didn’t know it at the time, but the date on the front of the script, my completion date, was her

birthday. There are no accidents. This was the start of a sweet and tender relationship.

It was at the beginning of the next decade that I would get a call from Bette asking if I would be interested in the film rights to Og's perennial best seller, *The Greatest Salesman in the World*. At the time I was in New York filming a series of television commercials. There I stood with the film crew in the cancellation line for *The Lion King* shivering in the January cold talking to Bette, then her attorney, then my attorney and then the publisher. By the time we got into the show the framework for something even more expansive and exciting was in place. I would leave the film industry, become the CEO of The Og Mandino Group and have the privilege of bringing Og's time-tested principles into the 21st Century.

That we have done. We started by adding a proprietary application of the formal science of axiological mathematics that allows us to measure with laser accuracy how a person thinks. In addition, we have created powerful practices and processes to assist people in driving these time-tested principles deep into their lives. We capped this off with an online delivery system that provides affordable access to the entire program. This approach to self-improvement allows us to quickly identify strengths and challenges and target time and resources to maximize results.

We constantly search for fertile places to plant these seeds. During one of the darkest nights during my ten-year journey of discovery I promised that if I could be shown the way to dig out I would invest the rest of my life teaching others how to do likewise. It is so exciting when we find an individual or leader of a company or organization who values life and living at this level. We plant and nurture these seeds and the harvest is abundant for all involved.

We all come to our pivotal moment of surrender from different sets of circumstances. As mentioned earlier, a few are wise enough to make the conscious choice to be humble simply because they want to be a better person. That is both beautiful and rare. The majority of us have been compelled by life circumstances.

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 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 had spent countless drunken nights in the gutters, "a sorry wretch of a human being, in a living hell."

That morning he walked by a pawnshop window and paused for a moment. He saw a small handgun with a yellow price tag, \$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. For a reason Og did not 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 book and the beginning of his ten-year journey of discovery. Each book he read helped shape his *new life*. His drinking subsided, he met and married Bette, had two wonderful sons and in time became the editor of *Success Magazine*.

In 1967, Og was commissioned to write, *The Greatest Salesman in the World*. It would be finished and released in 1968 and become the #1 selling self-help book of all time. Og would go on to write other classics, *The Greatest Miracle in the World*, *The Greatest Secret in the World*, *The Twelfth Angel*, *The Choice*, *The Christ Commission*, *A Better Way to Live*, and many more. A beloved author, Og has sold over fifty million copies of his books. *The Greatest Salesman* alone has sold over twenty-five million copies and has been translated into twenty-five languages. Who would have known on that cold wintery day in Cleveland the importance of Og's pivotal moment of surrender?

Like Og, many have experienced *pivotal moments of surrender* and by example have become abundant in spite of nearly insurmountable odds. One of my dear friends, Chad Hymas, is a stellar example of this kind of courage in motion. Chad is quadriplegic. He delivers 300 speeches a year, traveling nearly 500,000 miles, the majority of the time traveling alone. It is a miracle to witness. He is always positive, gracious and focused on others. One day while at our home for dinner, Chad whispered, "I miss my body. I really do miss it. But my mission has changed."

One day, while rushing to move a 2,000 pound bale of hay so he could get home to watch his son take his first step, Chad would have 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 chosen to wallow in his disappointments and pain. It wasn't fair, but that didn't change the circumstances. Instead of being a victim, he made the conscious choice to become a victor! As he says, "I may not have legs but I have wings."

In his *new life*, Chad travels the world encouraging people to be safe in the work place and for those in pain, to become healed and take steps forward in their

lives. He misses his body, but he also knows that he can impact those in need unlike almost anyone else. He has made his loss everyone else's gain. Chad is a humble servant who is abundant in the very fibers of his being. He is one of my greatest heroes and a constant reminder to stand up and be counted.

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 he was pronounced dead. Chris was her soul mate, her best friend. He was now 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 finally ready to move 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 and best friend, Gwen Peterson, hands raised, shouting words of excitement and 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 through out this ordeal, to create Hope Connecting Widows, a non-profit organization. It was created to bless other women who have lost spouses. Michelle now uses her experience to bring compassion and healing to others. How cool is that?

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. We may not have suffered the death of a spouse, as did Michelle. Perhaps our heart is simply badly bruised, wounded or broken and in need of repair. Maybe we just want to be a better person. It doesn't matter how we got here. What matters is that we are here!

One day, our pivotal moments, no matter how we got here or how painful they may have been, will be viewed in retrospect as great gifts, moments on which our futures hinged, turning points that helped define our destiny. Our journey need not take ten years. I had a lot to learn and a lot of changes to make and was far too often stubborn, in resistance and in rebellion to the changes required. You need not be.

If this is your pivotal moment, again no matter how you got here, and you are ready to press forward with newfound energy press forward on the journey of

becoming an intentional creator, soon you will discover, as do we all, three critical lessons:

- 1) The pain is not in the changes required, but in our resistance to making the required changes.
- 2) The very abundance we seek is often waiting right behind the very changes we are resisting.
- 3) The speed with which we become abundant is directly related to the speed with which we are willing to surrender to these principles.

Would we like to experience unspeakable joy in our life publicly and privately, joy that is driven by clarity, integrity, commitment and trust? Are we hungry for real success? Do we thirst for happiness and peace of mind? Let us have the courage to press forward no matter how heavy our current burden. Fight through the resistance and take action. Start by committing to read each chapter of this book and then applying the principles, practices and processes.

Og chose to end Scroll IX: I will act now, with these words, *"Lest I act I will perish in a life of failure, misery, and sleepless nights. I will command, and I will obey mine own command. I will act now. Success will not wait. If I delay she will become betrothed to another and lost to me forever. This is the time. This is the place...I will act now."*

Now is the time. Today is the day to begin your new life.