

Running head: MY LIFE DEVELOPMENT: A SELF REFLECTION

My Life Development: A Self Reflection

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The Grid: Developmental Theories

If there is one person in history that I am an expert on, it is me. This reflection is really the story of my life, in my own words. It is neither a comedy nor a tragedy, it simply is what it is. I have divided my story into chronological sections, starting from my birth and building up to the present time. At the end of each section, I will run that period of my life development through a framework of five developmental theories as outlined in the course textbook. The theories are identified and defined below.

Psychoanalytic – The text offers a good explanation in the following quote:

Theories that hold that development depends primarily on the unconscious mind and is heavily couched in emotion, that behavior is merely a surface characteristic, that it is important to analyze the symbolic meanings of behavior, and that early experiences are important in development. (p. 392)

Cognitive – According to our textbook, cognitive processes involve “Changes in an individual’s thought, intelligence, and language” (p. 386).

Behavioral and social cognitive – “Theories that hold that development can be described in terms of the behaviors learned through interactions with the environment” (p. 386).

Ethological – “An approach that stresses that behavior is strongly influenced by biology, tied to evolution, and characterized by critical or sensitive periods” (p. 388).

Ecological – “The view that perception functions to bring organisms in contact with the environment and to increase adaptation” (p. 387).

The story of my life development would be incomplete if it did not include the spiritual markers that are better understood by looking out my rearview mirror than through the windshield of my human lifespan development. This paper follows the real-life journey that I

have taken that led me to become a pastor who has served in full-time ministry for many years. It is not meant to be anything more than a chronicle of my own journey, which is uniquely mine to tell. This ministry aspect of my life is an element that is inextricably interwoven into the fabric of the man I have become.

Ready or Not, Here I Come!

I was born in Centralia, Illinois to childhood sweethearts Bill and Dolores Robertson. I spent my early years in Springfield, Illinois. Memories of bikes and coonskin caps and cookies and milk at 4 Alberta Lane were pleasant.

God saw fit that I should begin character development early so I suppose that is why He gave me my brother, Mark. With a five year head start, Mark was always stronger, faster, and just out of my reach to beat him at virtually anything. We fought like cats and dogs and rare was the time I could pass him in the hallway without toughening up my stomach muscles because he punched me there (or faked it) nearly every time we met. But the upside of all this mental torture was that I had great abs as a young boy.

Our sibling rivalry escalated to the point that our parents got weird on us. Out of desperation, once or twice my parents actually took us on separate summer vacations. The explanation was simple: Mark would not stay on his side of the back seat! The cycle went something like this: I would yell, he would hit me. I would cry, Mom would yell, and Dad would threaten to pull the car off on the side of the road and whip us both with the belt. Mom would eventually cry; separate vacations.

One memory I have yet to suppress is the time my folks dropped me off in Southern Illinois at my grandparents' home (on my mother's side) Early & Helen Sanders, while they took

Mark on vacation somewhere (probably Walt Disney World, a cruise, an African safari, and/or hot air ballooning across the Mediterranean). Marooned and bored in Benton, Illinois (Mayberry was a metropolis in comparison), I retaliated by setting fire to my grandparents' couch.

Actually, I was just playing with matches and hid my mischief under the couch in the garage. I guess that is why you have to be at least 35-years-old to be eligible to run for President. Our next connection would be in suburb of Chicago, a place called Woodridge where I was to spend my elementary school years.

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| Table 1 | |
| <i>The Preschool Years</i> | |
| Psychoanalytic | Early experiences with my parents and my chronic sibling rivalry were formative in the early years. I felt a sense of abandonment when my parents were forced to take my brother and I on separate vacations due to our constant fighting. Psychoanalyst theorists would probably agree that my mischievous behavior was merely an external expression of internal turmoil. |
| Cognitive | Relative to Piaget's four stages of cognitive development, I was in the sensorimotor stage at this point. |
| Behavioral and social cognitive | Just like being in the womb for nine months was critical to my development from conception, similarly, life outside the womb in the infant years was critical to my survival and growth. My parents provided a wonderful environment for me to cultivate essential behaviors and social cognitive skills. |
| Ethological | The obvious caregiver in my life was my mother. She was a stay-at-home mom who chose to pinch pennies and stay home to raise her children. As Konrad Lorenz proved in his experiments with geese (p. 20), I also imprinted on my parents in my early years. My mother is 77 years old and we talk on the phone almost every day. |
| Ecological | Bronfenbrenner identified five ecological theories (p. 21) that can be translated to my own life development. The first is the <i>microsystem</i> (p. 21), consisting of my family, peers, school, and neighborhood. Each of the players in my microsystem deeply affected my life development. |
| Table 1 | |

Growing up Skinny

“Twinkle toes.” That is what my friends called me one summer. I was growing faster than our family budget so Dad, an innovative farm boy from Illinois, cut the toes out of my tennis shoes and I walked around a trend setter one summer.

With a body fat percentage hovering around 4%, all my ribs and every vertebrae could be easily counted merely by lifting up my shirt. Most schooldays, I would slick my hair up with V05 (pre-gel era), and ride my bicycle to school. And no, it wasn't uphill both ways, but I did ride all winter through the snow. My love affair with bikes of all kinds began in during this period of my life. My grandfather (Earl) affectionately called my brother and me “Chicago hoodlums.” We were not really hoodlums, but Grandpa Sanders was a fun old man who lived life until he died. Grandpa Sanders was a Ford man. If a better car was made, Ford would make it, and if you did not agree, then you were and idiot and settling for less. Oh well; to each his own. We also had many fond memories of my dad's parents, Brady & Josephine Robertson (married 70 years), who also lived in Benton, Illinois. Many summers were spent on their farm.

The elementary years were filled with mostly happy memories of good friends, mom being a “room mother” in all my classes, blueberry muffins each Sunday morning, and Sunday nights eating popcorn and watching Wild Kingdom (remember Marlin Perkins?) and the Wonderful World of Disney.

Dad was a traveling salesman, and my mother a stay-at-home mom who made Hamburger Helper before it had even been invented. Economically, we were on the lower side of middle class, but we had everything we needed to get by. We never went hungry or lacked having what I called “a good Christmas.” One vivid memory that elicits warm, fuzzy feelings is after mowing the grass on a hot summer day, my dad would pile the entire family into the

company car and treat us all to a Dog & Suds ice cold root beer. I can almost taste it now. A canned drink from a convenience store is a poor substitute for an ice cold root beer from a frosty mug with people you love.

Yes, we were a happy family. Mom and Dad somehow made sure we had what we needed when we needed it. It was years later that my father disclosed to me how difficult it was financially, and how hard he had to work for so little pay. But the ruse that “all is well” worked fine during my “growing up years,” and I thought we had it made. Life was not always pretty and it was not always good, but it was pretty good during this season of my life.

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| Table 2 | |
| <i>The Elementary School Years</i> | |
| Psychoanalytic | My father was a superhero to me. Working as a traveling salesman, he was gone most weekdays, so my mother would hand me over to him on Fridays and tell him to spank me straightaway! Obviously, he did not want to discipline me right off the bat, so this treatment convinced me that mom was “the bad cop” and dad was “the good cop.” |
| Cognitive | In Piaget’s four stages of cognitive development, I found myself in his preoperational and concrete operational stages. |
| Behavioral and social cognitive | I immersed myself in an environment of sports, playing in the woods, wading through creeks, and hanging out at my friends’ homes. These types of environmental factors were really quite instrumental into much of my behavior and social development. |
| Ethological | Ethological theory looks to biology as the major influence on behavior. In this season, “growing up skinny,” my ectomorphic body type influenced what sports I played, my strength level, and how others perceived me. |
| Ecological | Bronfenbrenner’s environmental system #2: <i>mesosystem</i> (p. 21). This involves the relationships between microsystems that have affected my life. My mother was a “room mother” and she was actively involved in every grade level which had a good positive effect. |
| Table 2 | |

The Great Awakening

Let me set the scene: seventh grade, Jefferson Junior High, and still pre-puberty. It was the worst of times and the worst of times. I hated 7th grade, and yes, I realize “hate” is a strong word. Take it from someone who is an authority on this subject – a boy does not want to be pre-puberty in middle school. Public showers can be tantamount to cruel and unusual punishment for late bloomers. Teens can be incredibly harsh to another teen who does not yet have hair under his arms, or a teenage girl who does.

It was in 7th grade that I got stabbed with a pencil by another skinny guy with glasses. I still have the pencil lead permanently embedded in my leg to this day. It got so bad, I would get sick every Sunday night just thinking of going to school the next day! I was not faking either. I was seized with fear, intimidation, and just plain despair over having to go to 7th grade at Jefferson Junior High. I went to see a guidance counselor who tried to talk me through it all. I loathed field trips; was a hypochondriac; and I got into lots of fights.

Finally, mercifully, 7th grade ended. Summer vacation began and I could breathe again...at least for a while. I had enough on the ball mentally to know that eventually 8th grade would roll around again and my life would take yet another turn for the worse. What to do? It was that summer I met Todd Phillips.

Todd was a good kid from a great family. It didn't matter to me that they sold Amway, they were still nice people! Their family was different, and noticeably so. His mom and dad invited my parents to church – an Assemblies of God church in the next town over -Naperville. We went to Calvary Temple with them and Todd introduced me to the youth group.

The summer went on and Sunday morning before church, like clockwork, my mom would make one pan of twelve blueberry muffins for breakfast. There were four of us in the house so each of us got three. I was hungry again before we got out of the car to go to church.

One Sunday, and I cannot recall the date, something wonderful happened to me. I cannot remember what the preacher preached, what songs were sung, or any other detail of that particular service. All I know is that on this day, I had an encounter with God that would prove to be the turning point in my entire life course. On that day, I made a commitment to walk with Jesus Christ and to become a student of the Bible. Well, here is the result: the peace of God that flooded my soul displaced all what I will call “soul scum,” that had plagued me during my entire 7th grade. I was transformed by truth. Soon thereafter, I was baptized in water and began taking Bible study courses by correspondence (pre-Internet days). I devoured my brand new Living Bible and began the adventure of a lifetime.

Eighth grade came and a new kid with my old body showed up for school. My newfound faith had made the difference! Eighth grade at Jefferson Junior High was a banner year.

| Table 3 <i>The Great Awakening</i> | |
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| Psychoanalytic | Self-image is all-important to a middle schooler! Wounds, inner traumas, emotional baggage can be picked up during these turbulent times. Fortunately, I had a spiritual awakening that renewed my mind and helped me transition from a regressive period of psychoanalytical development to a progressive one. |
| Cognitive | In Piaget’s four stages of cognitive development, I was in the formal operational stage at this point. |
| Behavioral and social cognitive | My interaction with my environment – a Junior High School – was extremely critical in this season of my life. The school rooms which were designed to educate students can become an emotional battlefield where all sorts of |

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| | subtle social and cognitive skirmishes occur. |
| Ethological | Being a late bloomer did not help my cause. Biology is big when you want nature to speed up and she will not cooperate. Biological factors played out in social settings can dramatically influence behavior, self-image, and social status. |
| Ecological | Bronfenbrenner 's environmental system #3: <i>exosystem</i> (p. 22). This system “consists of links between a social setting in which the individual does not have an active role and the individual’s immediate context” (p. 22). My father being a traveling salesman is a good example of how his absence during the week affected my behavior. Weekends were an entirely different experience for us as a family with the entire dynamic changing when compared to weekdays. |
| Table 3 | |

The Dark Years

High school came and went without much fanfare. I wasn't a jock, a honor roll student, or a nerd. I joined the swim team, made the swim team, and quit the swim team. I tried out for the tennis team but got cut. As a result, I privately arranged matches with most of the players I knew who did make the team and defeated each one in matches. Satisfied, life went on.

I graduated from Downers Grove South High School in 1978. I went to work at a convenience store for my first real job for \$2.35/hour. I thought I had hit the big time later when I got hired on at Jewel Food Stores in the Produce Department for around \$5/hour. I started spending more time with work buddies than church buddies. They say that friends are like an elevator – they can take you up or down. Whoever “they” are was right. Instead of being a positive influence on my co-workers, I allowed the low- or no-morals of others to begin to corrupt my own. This was not their fault by any means; it was simply my poor choices. My downward spiral had begun. After much discussion, my parent’s decided to move the family to

Tennessee (minus my brother who had left home at 17 to work,) where my dad was going to start a new job. So for the first time in my short life, I lived outside of Illinois.

The first week I arrived in Murfreesboro (the exact geographic center of the State of Tennessee), I got hired at Kroger as a bagboy. Ten years later I quit. I met some fine people, made some good friends, bought a couple of motorcycles, and met a bad, bad lady who became my girlfriend.

The bad, bad lady took me down a dark path. She was a beautiful sight to behold – very attractive but in all the wrong ways. It was with her that I came to understand that lust can be so deep it can be physically felt. I am sure I had opened doors to demonic spirits and gave them free reign to oppress me, control me, and own me.

Eventually, I asked the bad, bad girl to marry me and sadly she said yes. I told her (are you ready for this?): “I love you more than God.” That phrase was the beginning of the end of that relationship. I know that the Lord caused her to reject me and eventually she broke up with me to continue cycling through a long list of men to do what couples without boundaries do.

In the process of time, I meet a nice, nice girl but because I had opened doors in my life to immorality we did bad, bad things. I enrolled in college at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), and crammed four years of college into five-and-a-half. It was there I fell into an even worse crowd and did even worse things! How low can you go? How true is the saying: “Sin will take you farther than you ever intended to go, keep you longer than you ever intended to stay, and cost you more than you ever intended to pay.”

I had enough of God in me to be miserable in my sin and enough of sin in me to be miserable in church. I was double-agent with one foot in two worlds. By day, I was smiling,

collecting coupons, being careful not to mash someone’s bread while checking out groceries, but by night, as Bob Seiger sang in his song “Night Moves:” “I used her, she used me but neither one cared, we were getting our share.” These were dark times indeed.

I did not play sports at MTSU. I never went to even one football game. I never joined a fraternity or a club. I just went to class, worked at Kroger by day and was a deviant pervert by night. Oh, by the way, did I mention that I went to church nearly every Sunday?

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| Table 4 | |
| <i>The Turbulent and Transformational Teenage Years</i> | |
| Psychoanalytic | “What was I thinking?” This is the key phrase for many teenagers. It seems like they are not in their right mind during the seven-year period called the teenage years. At least that was my situation. I made poor choices that messed with my mind and caused me to experience confusion, distraction, and a loss of my true identity. |
| Cognitive | Vygotsky’s sociocultural cognitive theory hits the nail on the head during my teenage years. Social interactions and culture held far more importance to me in this stage than many other factors. |
| Behavioral and social cognitive | Someone once plainly stated that when it comes to behavior, environment wins. The years I spent working a Kroger and completing my undergraduate degree at MTSU were years when my environment nearly did me in. It was not the brick and mortar part of the equation, it was the types and groups of people that I chose to model my lifestyle after in those environments that shaped my deviant behavior. |
| Ethological | Once the testosterone factory started production, my male parts came online quickly, in all the wrong ways! I used my new manhood for nefarious purposes that would have a negative effect on my life development and set me back years in finding my true self. |
| Ecological | Bronfenbrenner’s environmental system #4: <i>macrosystem</i> (p. 22). This system involves the culture where I lived. I was heavily influenced by key people in my life circle, especially those in a church environment during this period of my life. |
| Table 4 | |

Seeing the Light

I am glad that I do not get everything I pray for. I am thankful that God has told me “no” sometimes. Somewhere at some point something began to stir in my spirit. Surely it was God gently whispering to my soul, calling me back home from prodigal living. No doubt people who did not succumb to my “blind spots” were praying for me behind-the-scenes. Surely it was the mercy of God that kept me from accidents and diseases and freak events that could have taken my life because truly I was flirting with disaster.

Nevertheless, in my state of confusion and dual citizenship in two kingdoms, somehow I managed to graduate in one piece from MTSU in 1984 with a “B” average. Post-graduation, the flame of my life’s call began to flicker and illuminate the path home. A passion for the things of God began to stir, I am convinced, because of the prayers of caring people.

I entered a season of needing to be filled with power to live a holy life. My faith embraced the concept of Jesus Christ as Savior, but I have never submitted to Him as Lord - choosing to obey Him in all things. After a long time of running dead-end trails to fulfillment, I retraced my steps back to my roots of a happier time; a time when I was in right relationship with my God and my family. Like the prodigal son in the Bible, I “came to myself” and humbly returned to the foundations of my faith. Since that fateful day, my life has been characterized by a growing sanctification and progressive revelation of God’s love for me and His call on my life.

| Table 5 | |
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| <i>Early Adulthood</i> | |
| Psychoanalytic | This season my mind was beginning to wake up to the realities that my past choices were determining my present realities. After I had an experience with God, my mind began to clear, the “mental clutter” began to dissipate, and for the first time in a long time I began to dream again of a hope and a bright future. |
| Cognitive | Vygotsky would argue that my peer group during this phase of my life would have substantially influenced some of my major life decisions and he would be right. |
| Behavioral and social cognitive | When I began to change my friends I began to change the way I thought, spoke, and behaved. It was in this season that I began to seriously become a truth seeker and purposely surrounded myself with persons of high moral character and this began to rub off on me. |
| Ethological | Heredity comes into play in this season of my life, but not as much biological as philosophical. My father taught me (by example) that if something was worth doing, it was worth doing right. I carried his work ethic with me into my own work experience and began to learn that the older I get the smarter my dad gets. |
| Ecological | Bronfenbrenner’s environmental system #5: <i>chronosystem</i> – “The chronosystem consists of the patterning of environmental events and transitions over the life course, as well as sociohistorical circumstances” (p. 22). The fact that my parents had a strong marriage (59 years together at this writing) during this season of my life was a stabilizer for me. While the lives of some of my friends at school were coming apart at the seams because their parents were divorcing, our home offered the predictable security of a family committed to staying together. |
| Table 5 | |

Two Become One

After my sanity returned, I attended Family Worship Center (FWC) church faithfully, leaving my hypocrisy at the door. After some time living as a satisfied, sexually pure single, a beautiful young woman named Monica Lambert (who also attended FWC) caught my eye.

Where had she been all this time? How did I miss her?

Monica was recovering from a difficult divorce and I felt sorry for her. I wanted to be a friend and supportive person and my theology (at the time) did not include me ever being romantically involved with a woman who had divorced (that is what bad theology can do to you).

Months passed and since I was free to be the real me without pressure to perform or impress, I guess Monica began to like what she saw in a guy who was free - really free. At the time, laughter and joy came easily. I was not afraid to get ridiculous for God regardless of who was watching. I was so glad to be free from (most but not all) of the junk in my trunk that I was giddy. Well, there I was, a celibate, growing Christian young man; loving God, loving people; serving every chance I could get at church; going to as many church services as my Kroger schedule would allow me to, and then I came to a realization: I was ready for a wife.

One evening, I was washing dishes in my apartment listening to the song "Somewhere My Love" playing on the radio praying to God to send me a wife when the phone rang. I remember saying out loud, "and there she is!" It was Monica. Monica asked if she could come over and talk. I agreed and shortly a knock came to the door. Monica entered and presented her predicament. She shared that, of all things, that I, me, David, was constantly on her mind! She could not stop thinking about me! Funny thing was, I was having a similar situation going on in my mind and heart about her. Long story short, I decided that perhaps my theology about divorced women was wrong after all, and we agreed to see each other again and talk this thing through. That was twenty-five years ago and we have been together ever since.

We got married on the Fourth of July that same year. It has not been easy but it has been worth it. Marriage is a great place to learn that life is not all about you. Oh, how I have learned

that lesson! Nevertheless, marriage is an honorable estate and the writer of Proverbs is absolutely correct when he writes: “He who finds a wife finds a good thing; she is a blessing to him from the Lord” (Proverbs 18:22).

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| Table 6 | |
| <i>The Early Married Years</i> | |
| Psychoanalytic | Trying to change another human being to be like you is not only unwise impractical, but impossible! Being married changed the way I thought about so many things during this season. I’ve come to peace on the two become “one flesh” and now (after 25 years of marriage) we are in one mind and one accord on most things. |
| Cognitive | My ability to gradually increase capacity and processing of information continued through my early adult years as more and more demand was placed on me to use critical thinking skills to make major decisions as a married person. |
| Behavioral and social cognitive | Living with a beautiful woman who was now my wife was another milestone. Establishing our happy home led to new traditions, accommodating new extended families into the mix, and an ever-widening social community. |
| Ethological | The joy of sexual expression in married life was (and is) wonderful. My bonding with my wife through the many years of intimate contact and blended lives have made us “comfortable in our own skin” around each other. |
| Ecological | Bronfenbrenner’s environmental system #5: <i>chronosystem</i> . This system consists of “the patterning of environmental events and transitions over the life course, as well as sociohistorical circumstances” (p. 22). Leaving my single life at home with my parents and cleaving to my wife as set up our own home together was an event that dramatically changed my life. My wife purged my apartment of “man things” and made it a real home. |
| Table 6 | |

The One Become Three

Five years into the mission of being married, Monica and I wanted to go see Mickey at Walt Disney World. It was there that my wife told me that she was pregnant. We rode the Space Mountain roller coaster anyway and come home to prepare a nest for our little baby bird.

Abigail Grace Robertson entered the world on Leap Day, 1992. Abbey's birthday was a sweet and sour event in that we nearly lost Monica during childbirth. Come to find out that Abbey shared the womb with a fibroid tumor the size of her head. It is a good thing Abbey had been going to church nine-months before she was even born! I put my hands on Monica's tummy and prayed out loud for my unborn daughter's healthy development every day for nine months. God answered those prayers – Abbey was perfect.

Monica, on the other hand, lost thirteen units of blood in childbirth and was in bad shape. Her entire reproductive system had prolapsed and I signed papers for emergency surgery. She went into the operating room and I went into the chapel to do what the old Methodist preachers used to call "praying through." If I ever "prayed through" in my life it was that day. I respect the faith of all people, and even have room in my life for those who disagree with my own, but I not ashamed to say I cried out to God that day for a creative miracle to save my wife's life. And it came! The surgeons testified to this fact as well. Turns out, they did little more than shove her organs back in place and sew her up and she lived to tell the tale.

Grace. Abbey's middle name tells the story. Today Abbey is nineteen-years-old, thinks she knows more than her parents, can live without eating hardly any food, loves to stay up all night with her friends at sleepovers, and sends/receives about 4,000 text messages per month. She is training to become a phlebotomist. At her young age, she has spent many weeks on the mission field exploring God's call on her own life as a medical missionary.

| Table 7 <i>The Early Parenting Years</i> | |
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| Psychoanalytic | Becoming a father was a milestone in my life that affected me deeply. To have another human being depend on me (and my wife) for everything dramatically changed my thinking. I took fewer risks outside of the home knowing that I am now a parent and have to be there for my child. |
| Cognitive | Robert Siegler argued that when “individuals perceive, encode, represent, store, and retrieve information, they are thinking” (p. 19). As a new father during this stage, I began to see the cycle of my own life development replicated in the life of my brand new baby girl. |
| Behavioral and social cognitive | With the birth of our first and only daughter, my wife and I were suddenly thrust into the world of babies, nurseries, and Veggie Tales. A college educated man who has watched every movie Pixar every produced is a phenomenon that only a parent can appreciate. |
| Ethological | The biological formula is easy: David + Monica = Abigail. The pregnancy and birthing process deeply affected our lives. The joys of parenthood continues to be a source of fulfillment in our lives. |
| Ecological | Our happy home has been an ideal place to raise a well-adjusted child. We home schooled our daughter K-12 and she is bright, socially gifted, and has a depth of character beyond her years. |
| Table 7 | |

From PC's to Pews

I quit a decade of work with Kroger to try a one-year stint as Office Manager for my brother's water treatment business. The moral of that story is that some people can work with family and others cannot. I seem to have fallen into the latter category. To save the relationship, I quit the job and today my brother, Mark, and I once again enjoy each other's company.

The next phase of my life involved six months of unemployment. I remember like it was yesterday that I felt rich if I had \$10 in my pocket and a full tank of gas. I am here to tell you that only by God's grace and with the help of generous family and friends did we make it through this season of life. I learned many life lessons through suffering, lack, and being a bit

disoriented. I discovered, though, that it is all good and I am a better man for having gone through some hard times. Without a test, there is no testimony. Without a mess, there is no message of hope to share.

I cycled through a series of “dead end” jobs: Commercial Driver Institute (Director’s Assistant), Commercial Furniture Services (Office Manager), and Stingray Computer Services (Marketing Director). I was a square peg in a round hole at every one of these jobs. Then, providentially, my big break came.

Nissan Motor Manufacturing had a company called Instrumental Control Services (ICS) do all their PC maintenance for them. They hired me for a 60-day temporary position to work on PC’s. Three years later (and three \$2/hour raises later), I was still at it. God blessed me at Nissan immensely. It was the best “secular” job I have ever had. I learned more about trusting God here than I think I did in Sunday school classes over the years. It was here that I learned how to face overwhelming odds and still keep persevering. Every day, every single day, I would go into the bathroom at Nissan first thing and ask the Lord to help me. And He did in a big way. Once, the president of ICS got on a plane to fly to the Nissan plant to give me an award for a creative idea I felt like God gave me to improve their business. It seems that God does not call the qualified, He qualifies the called.

One day, my pastor at Family Worship Center which I had been attending for eighteen years up to that point, invited me to join the church staff as the Business Manager full-time. After prayer and counsel, I said goodbye to Nissan and hello to ministry life.

For the next four years, I served the church, the people, and the Lord the best I knew how. One day, as Mary Poppins would say, the winds began to change. I got invited by another

pastor in town, Jerry Trousdale, to join him in a church plant as the Administrative Pastor. So I preached my last sermon at Family Worship Center and went with the blessing of the congregation to help pioneer a new church called The Carpenter's House.

That began an eight-year journey to freedom. It was at The Carpenter's House that I learned that I was quite a "religious" character (and I do not use "religious" in a flattering sense). I would have made a pretty decent Pharisee supposing I had a corner on the organized religion market. How brazenly mistaken I was. I discovered at The Carpenter's House that wearing a tie does not make you any more spiritual. I discovered that you will not backslide if you do not go to church on Sunday night.

It was there that my wife, Monica, and I were appointed to oversee weekend freedom retreats known as Encounter Weekends. We led about 25-30 of those and through them we became more and more free ourselves as we led others into freedom from addictive behaviors, emotional trauma, and other issues that can bind a person's thinking and life.

I became an ordained minister at The Carpenter's House and so I was now authorized to marry and bury people. I baptized people for the first time there. I taught every discipleship class offered. I spoke on a few Sunday mornings and at men's events. I led small groups and made all sorts of contributions to the administrative aspect of the church.

The pinnacle of my experience there occurred when I was invited to become Spiritual Development Pastor of the Lazarus Project. This was a twelve-month live-in Christian discipleship / rehab program. The Lord allowed me to use the full suite of my gifts to pour my life into developing the curriculum for the men for a one-year stay. I grew to love these men and they returned the feeling. I began mentoring young men and trained and trained other mentors.

That season at the Lazarus Project, which was to last four years, became the most significant contribution in my ministry life up to that point. It was at The Carpenter's House that I met Joe Rouse, a ten-year missionary to Sierra Leone, and Joe became my mentor for eight years. God had sent us there with this word: "Stay there until I tell you otherwise." On the very day we had been there eight years, I heard what I felt was the voice of God, clearly. It was time for the next chapter of our lives. His assignment for us had ended. I told the pastors and they released me a few days later.

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| Table 8 | |
| <i>The Early Professional Years</i> | |
| Psychoanalytic | When a man is unemployed or unsettled in his job, it greatly affects his psyche. I was out of alignment during many of these years working at dead-end jobs for low pay for people who had no investment in me. These types of professional experiences helped form my character, built new skills, and prepared me for other employment opportunities. |
| Cognitive | According to Seigler (p. 19), a part of our cognitive development is learning strategies for processing information. This was certainly a characteristic of my own cognitive development as I was clawing way through the corporate and business cultures to find my place in this world. |
| Behavioral and social cognitive | Becoming a professional minister thrust me into a world of missionaries, traveling evangelists, and pastors. Being responsible for a growing congregation as a staff minister forced me to come outside of my shell and become an extroverted people person. |
| Ethological | Working with drug addicts during this period of my life helped me see the effects of substance abuse. I worked with recovering addicts whose drug of choice was crack, meth, pain killers, alcohol, and/or porn. |
| Ecological | At the Lazarus Project, I formed a partnership with a high ropes adventure camp called New Frontiers. I bartered labor for "free adventures" for the men in the program. Taking these men caving, canoeing, camping, hiking, and on high ropes courses in natural surroundings was transformational. Breakthroughs that would not occur in a church building or a classroom happened out in the woods for these men. Truly, the environment quieted many busy souls and lulled them into a season of receptivity. |
| Table 8 | |

My Two-and-a-Half Year “Minimum Security Prison Sentence”

After my tenure at the Lazarus Project ended, I took a job at KeyStone Financial Services,. This is the season of my life I jokingly refer to as my “two-and-a-half year minimum security prison sentence.” My new boss was a decent, mostly good man who also valued his faith in God. Glenn Price, Jr. owned a company that serviced the retirement needs of senior adults. He offered me an opportunity to come work for him as his sales assistant. I thought that I had hit the big time! Good money, bright future, working five minutes from my home, daytime schedule, no weekends, work indoors on PC’s – hey, what could be better, right? I thought, I will take care of my family, my wife can stay home from work, and I will do ministry like nearly everybody else I know does it – as a volunteer.

It only took me about sixty days to learn what I am about to tell you. I discovered that I do not have the right to just pick a career and be good at it. I learned that without passion and heart, we cannot sustain the rigors of pressure on the job. At least I could not do it.

I cannot describe to you how bad it was at work for me emotionally from “Day 60” on. While I do not want to appear to be unappreciative of God or Glenn, I have to say that this was one of the toughest seasons of my entire adult working life. I loathed going into work (not quite as much as I hated the 7th grade because now I was more mature, had a good marriage and family, and a strong faith in God). Nevertheless, I did not want to go to work, ever! I lived for weekends and hated Mondays! Imagine that! The job was not for me. I was a square peg in a round hole.

To make a long story short, I made my next employment connection. Before closing this chapter of my life, here is the lesson I gleaned from the incarceration: this incredible experience

had been for me like mining for diamonds. Think of being lowered into a deep, dark pit on a daily basis searching for something of value is an appropriate metaphor for this season. At the risk of sounding melodramatic, the life lesson I learned is that there are diamonds down in the hole somewhere. Diligence will mine them out and if we do not give up we will come out richer than when we went in. Next stop: part-time ministry as a staff pastor at Christian Life Church.

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| Table 9 | |
| <i>The Middle Age Years</i> | |
| Psychoanalytic | This was one of the most difficult seasons of my adult life. For the first time, I understood that emotional health was not a myth but a reality. I had to seek counseling multiple times to make it through this season. |
| Cognitive | Part of being successful is sometimes learning what <i>not</i> to do. This season of my life I had several encounters with poor leadership that would serve as life lessons indelibly engraved on my mind of leadership styles and philosophies that I would not carry forward in my own emerging leadership. |
| Behavioral and social cognitive | My work life for over two years was spent in a small office with no windows. Not wanting to even be there, my behavior changed noticeably. No longer a happy-go-lucky person with a dry wit, I had to learn to cope with mammoth amounts of stress which I brought home from the office. |
| Ethological | Without effective stress reducers during turbulent times, ulcers and other biological health ailments can appear. Those undergoing extreme stress can look for coping and escape mechanisms – healthy and unhealthy. |
| Ecological | Notice above where I mention I worked in “an office with no windows.” This is no small statement. Like an assembly line worker or a coal miner, the environment can really affect your psyche, emotional state, and physical health and wellness. |
| Table 9 | |

Joy Rediscovered

Pastor Ron and Kerri Kairdolf embraced us with open arms. The worship at this church arrested me. The people rallied around my family and accepted us. Monica preached her first

sermon there on a Wednesday night on “Five Hindrances to Prayer” and it was a breakthrough for her. I cannot describe how validating and empowering it has been to have a true pastor in my life who accepts me for who I am in spite of who I am not. Truly, this season, which I am in at this writing, has been joy rediscovered!

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| Table 10 | |
| <i>The Balanced Blessed Years</i> | |
| Psychoanalytic | It has been said that “when the work becomes play you’ll never work another day in your life.” Finding my “happy zone” and doing what I feel I was born to do transformed my mental, emotional health. Now, instead of dreading to go to work, I looked forward to it and my countenance, attitude, and emotional well-being have been enriched. |
| Cognitive | Finding a place of acceptance and belonging where I could use all my skills, talents, and cognitive abilities has been very rewarding. |
| Behavioral and social cognitive | Getting back into ministry was like a cowboy getting back on his horse. It was natural, it was right, it was a powerful change agent in my behavior and social cognitive expression and development. |
| Ethological | A clear conscience has made for me a soft pillow at night. A peaceful heart and mind has lowered my blood pressure. I have taken up the sport of triathlon, run half marathons, and joined a running club during this season. These behavior modifications are yielding many positive results. |
| Ecological | Not surprisingly, working in an environment where I “feel God’s pleasure” has made a huge difference in my life. The environmental factors of my surroundings and church culture have been therapeutic, healing, and redemptive in nature. |
| Table 10 | |

The Sky is the Limit!

So what is the conclusion of the matter? Well, the short answer is “the sky is the limit!” I am now living the dream. I have told friends on more than one occasion that if I had \$20 million in the bank and was living off the interest, I would be learning something and serving

somewhere. Wealth is a great servant but a lousy master. Right now, I have never been busier in my entire adult life! I drift in and out of three vastly different worlds every day of my life!

- World #1: A pastor at Christian Life Church
- World #2: A full-time student at the University of West Georgia
- World #3: An employee in the Digital Media Studio at Middle Tennessee State University.

Each of these three worlds presents a different atmosphere, climate, language, culture, and benefits. I feel I am a better man for having to learn how to plan ahead, manage my time, communicate well, leverage technology, and cope with stress effectively. As strange as it may sound, I know that at this stage in my life that I am in the right place at the right time with the right people doing the right things. Truly, the sky is the limit!

David Scott Robertson

References

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