

The Flow (Wendell Globig, 2021)

How to Get the Most out of this Book: This book is edited for brevity. Abrupt changes in topic are intentional to enable movement through concepts quickly. This aligns with the purpose of *WendellNotes*. **Red letters are highlights of my highlights.** If you wish to go deeper, view *WendellNotes* on my website, <https://globiginvestments.com>, launched in August 2018. It has attracted some 1500 users from 34 countries and 35 states, over 1200 of which have returned more than 200 times—mostly to *WendellNotes* and Journal. *WendellNotes* are 1-8 pages of highlights from significant books I've read that others may find valuable but are unlikely to read for themselves. My Journal records memorable words that describe how people relate to God and the World.

Special Grace

God has given me special grace to speak into the lives of young adults ages 20- or 30-something. This has largely been developed and refined over the 13 years I served on the board and as a Journeyman at Richmond Christian Leadership Initiative (RCLI). RCLI (started in 2007 to equip Christian leaders to weave the gospel into all they do for the good of metro Richmond) worked with some 30 young men and women at a time, ages 25-40, each vetted through an application and selection process for their Christian leadership and commitment to Richmond, VA (2020 and later classes are smaller with 13-16 people). RCLI gathers for 10 months, September through June, one weekend a month, Friday evening and all day Saturday to dialogue about a single issue of the city with Christian leaders who are living the gospel in that arena. The first and ninth sessions include overnight stays. Issues include: Richmond's Unhealed History (using a book by that name), race relations, urban family life/health, education, immigration, business, and land use. My dialogues have continued with Randolph Macon College (RMC) students.

COTN (Church of the Nations)

I was with COTN for about 10 years through 2013. COTN is a global network of about 150 house churches (HC). It was started by Tony Fitzgerald and co-led in the Richmond area in the early 2000s by Don Coleman (African-American), one of Tony's spiritual sons. Don's HC got out of hand and grew into what is now East End Fellowship (EEF). My son Nathan and his then fiancé Carolynn Harris were part of Don's HC.

EEF

I joined EEF about 2014 where more than 20 RCLI alum attended at the time. As I sought God about which of the small groups called HCs at EEF to join, I had a conversation at one of our after-church meals with Amy Schad, a HC leader

and alum from the 2008 class of RCLI. She said that her husband Mike was 1 of only 2 men in their group of a dozen young women, and that they desperately needed more men. She didn't realize that they also needed age and a business perspective. They got all 3 with me.

For 7 years I was part of that HC. My centering verse for the last decade has been Rev 12:11. The New Wendell Version (NWV) is, *And they overcame [the accuser] by the blood of the Lamb and telling their stories and they lived without self-interest 'til death.* At our HC we began the practice of telling stories of what had happened in the week, since our previous Wednesday night meal and meeting, that could only have happened by God's action. Some began calling these stories *Sweet Nuggets* and they became a central element of our time together.

About 2019 we changed the venue to a smaller house at the same time we suddenly grew, making for tight quarters. At this time I felt restless and thought that we might need to split the group, but no one else did. I guess God was up to something else. At the start of 2020 I felt called to Ashland Impact Mission (AIM) to serve Stuart Royall and others connected to him. AIM is a church plant in Ashland where my son Nathan lives. He had not been able to find a church nearby. AIM is near RMC and many of their students attend.

“What do I do now?”

Many conversations with RCLI friends, well-trained (mostly college graduates), proven leaders, passionate for God, centered on the question “What do I do now?” This was central to their conversation and thoughts. The dialogue has helped me develop and refine thoughts and answers to these and recurring concerns for those at this stage of life--issues also central to life in the Kingdom of God.

Jesus said, *The Kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:21).* **If you want to know your place in the Kingdom of God, follow the dream in your heart. If you want to know how to get there, follow the relationships you're in.** God will lead you through those relationships. Don't go looking for a great book, great organization, or great idea for the next step. God will most likely reveal your next step through someone you already know. If you look back over your life, that is how He has *been* leading you. God works and reveals his will through relationships, first with Himself, and then with others. It's how business, politics, and religion function. It's the way of the Kingdom and the way of the world. If we recognize this, decisions will get easier. Our task is to seek God and know Him and His ways so that we hear Him speak into our lives.

Life of God

For many it is obvious how the life of God is flowing *out* of them. But early in our conversation, I often ask, “How does the life of God flow *into* you? How do you hear God? What spiritual disciplines do you practice?” About half of the time, they talk about their church, fellowship group, pod, or

music they listen to. In this case I respond with I Cor 3:2 (NIV) *I fed you milk and not meat because you couldn't handle it then and you can't handle it now.* The difference between milk and meat is that milk has already been processed by someone else; it is second hand. Meat is something you bite off and chew for yourself. Until you learn to feed yourself, you will never grow up or grow strong in Christ. Our churches are filled with aged babes who have never learned to feed themselves or matured. Unless someone has daily time in the Word and prayer, they will remain spiritual babes.

Spiritual Journey

Early in our conversation, I also ask them to describe their spiritual journey, whatever that means to them. Everyone has one, including those not yet believers—and they love to tell it. This is an extraordinary way to quickly go deep with a new friend. After telling their story, they are often curious about mine. And so, a heart-to-heart dialogue begins. As I hear their story, I often begin to see the currents of God in their life, which enables me to speak into their life in what may seem to them to be profound ways.

Tell your story

I recommend that you learn to tell your story in each of a 30 second (in an elevator), 5 minute, and 45 minute version. Each has a place in a venue of life that may connect to someone in a unique way. Out of our stories may flow a conversation that leads to another story. This is how we are called to center our life and conversation—*the way we overcome the world.* The Kingdom of God advances as we experience God and tell our stories. As your stories connect with my stories they become part of history--His Story. **If you're going to lead, you need to write and tell your own faith story.**

My story

The 30-second version of my story: My dad was pastor of a fundamental Baptist Church where I learned the gospel through the lens of the Law. I have been on a journey toward Grace ever since.

A longer version: I grew up in Madison, OH, a white exurb east of Cleveland, a community of about 20,000. We had about 1100 students in Freshmen-Senior classes of High School. The first black family moved into our community while I was in High School, although I never met them. I did well in school, graduated from 'The Ohio State University' and went to work for Du Pont. I worked in both research and operations at 3 sites before I landed in Buffalo in 1985. There a colleague, John Hannon, and I developed a new way to cast Corian® into sinks in closed molds. I was named Project Leader, given \$30 million to build a plant, train a crew, and start up a plant to produce Corian® sinks commercially.

After a few years there, I had noticed a group of sharp, hardworking people who were repeatedly passed over for opportunities and promotions. They were all African-American, many part of a Jehovah's Witness community. As I

worked with and befriended them, God spoke to me, "You are going to be involved for the rest of your life in racial reconciliation in the body of Christ." A short time later a young African-American engineer, Michael Shepherd, transferred into our startup team from one of our Texas plants.

My Boyhood Dream

As I grew up I had school friends, neighborhood friends, and church friends. None of them knew each other. I had an unvoiced dream of at least one friend who I could do all of life with. Michael and his family fulfilled that wonderfully. He was a graduate of the Naval Academy, a new believer, and had met and married a Japanese wife in Okinawa while stationed there with the Marine Corp. They had 2 little girls and bought a house a mile from us. Their oldest daughter and my youngest son were in the same third grade classroom in public school. I invited him and his family to dinner and we had an amazing connection. So I worked with Michael, went to the same church and connected almost daily. His wife Midori spoke English poorly and was very shy. My wife Jeanie and she bonded immediately. According to Michael, "Jeanie ruined Midori." After Jeanie's threat to teach her how to drive, Mike finally did. Then Jeanie showed her how to shop and develop confidence in public--she was no longer the submissive Japanese wife Michael had married. Jeanie and Midori still talk at least an hour a week over 30 years later.

A few years later Michael transferred to our DuPont plant in Richmond. A few years after that I transferred to Richmond also and built a house 9 doors down from them on the same road. A few years later, Michael took a transfer to Louisville, KY and later left the company. But relationship brought me to Richmond. Michael was gracious enough to educate me on Black History and Culture, an exhausting task, since my first African-American friendships began so late in life.

Black Leadership

In 2003 the Lord showed me a vision of the twin towers of slavery coming down in Virginia. Richmond, 1 tower, was the capital which led a war to defend it. The other was Norfolk, where slaves were brought into America. Dr. King said, "Unearned suffering is redemptive." And no people-group in America has come in for more unearned suffering than African-Americans. God also showed me that African-Americans will lead revival in America. Since then, I have made it a priority to serve black Christian leaders wherever I see them emerging. Two of my spiritual sons are African-American.

While I was with COTN, Don Coleman introduced me to a young African-American couple, David and Joy Bailey. Joy had received a small inheritance and was looking for some investment advice. Since I had been advising others and writing an investment newsletter (Globig Investment News—GIN) for over a decade, Don thought I could help her. As I met with David and Joy, we connected powerfully and I

continued to meet with them for the next 3 years for a few hours every other Thursday afternoon. They were newlyweds and recent college graduates, so I helped them think through decisions about their careers, changing churches, buying a house (what kind and where), and launching new businesses. That relationship was the gateway to most of the fruit in my life since then and much of the learning reflected in this paper.

RCLI

David was part of the inaugural class of RCLI and invited me to his 2008 commissioning service. The keynote speaker was Governor Tim Kaine. I was so impressed with the organization that David and I both went on the board that fall and I served through 2018, including 6 months as chairman, except for 2011 which I took off to deal with stage 4 Hodgkin's Lymphoma. (After 6 months of chemotherapy and city-wide prayer, I was healed and pronounced in remission after 5 years). David served out his 3-year term and has since launched 2 national ministries and written 2 books.

I also served RCLI as *Journeyman* for most of the time I was on the board. Journeymen were assigned to 5-7 class members for the year to serve as a personal guide to spiritual formation. These years of processing life with some 80 young men and women developed and refined skills and tools to quickly develop deep relationships and work on common issues reflected in this article.

RCLI uses the device of 4 H's: Head, Heart, Hand, and Habits. Habits power the other 3 and center on listening to God. We find and express our identity through our Heart, Head, and Hand—our Passion, Way, and Expertise. Find your strengths and develop them. You will prosper as you align with them and your calling.

Identity

I continue to help people, especially 20 and 30 something, discover their identity and God's calling on their life. **God leverages our redemption story through our identity**, which maps with Heart (**passion**), Head (**way**), and Hand (**expertise**). Passion: What do you wake up thinking about? What does your mind keep returning to? Way: How do you get things done? How do you make your way in the world? Expertise: What are you known for? What do others look to you for help with? My passion—I wake up thinking about money; what has happened overnight globally that affects my clients' and our investments. My way—I read, think, and write about God and the world. Since 1992 I have been publishing a bi-monthly investment newsletter which summarizes my view on world events in religion, business, and politics—the currents of God in these arenas. My expertise—my investment model of the market (GIN) has outperformed the S&P (index of the 500 largest US publicly traded companies) by 50% over 30 years.

Vulnerability

Brene Brown tells in *The Power of Vulnerability* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4Qm9cGRub0>, also linked in the website, Journal) that **stories are data with a soul**. Connection is why we're here. Shame is about fear of disconnection. People with a strong sense of love and belonging believe they are worthy of love and belonging. They have the courage to be imperfect and the compassion to be kind to themselves and others, to connect with authenticity. They also embrace vulnerability and believe that **what makes them vulnerable makes them beautiful**. We are the most obese, indebted, addicted, and medicated cohort of people in history. As we numb hard feelings, we also numb joy, gratitude, and happiness—then look for purpose and meaning. There is another way—let ourselves be deeply seen and practice gratitude and joy.

Journaling

We struggle to make real our relationship with an invisible God. Men in particular need journaling to bring a sense of reality to it. My journal records a continual search for words with power and grace. Journaling is also a good way to reflect. It tells our soul and God what matters. If it matters, it needs to be journaled. A journal assigns words to feelings. I have journaled for more than 50 years. I do so using an Excel spreadsheet with 2 columns—one for God and one for World. I find that most entries lend themselves to one of these. I use Excel to quickly recall key words with a shorthand to maximize density and enable me, with 2 sides of a page, to carry in my pocket permanent access to it for meditation during recurrent dead times throughout the day. Thus, I usually refine and update all 139 pages (currently) every few years. This keeps it current and enables me to recall most of what matters that I've ever heard, read, or thought.

Identity discovery

I've helped many young people begin to discover their identity. A few have seen in themselves 1 of the 3 agents of change that Malcolm Gladwell describes in his book *Tipping Point* (website, Journal page 21, Column D, line 39). One young man, Peyton Cox, was a commercial real estate broker. As I helped him recognize and affirm his pivotal role as a *Connector*, he gained the self-confidence to leave the firm he had been with for 6 years and start his own company. He has done well since his move in 2016.

Another young man, Chris Greene, struggled to find a sense of God's call on his life. As we discussed infertility in one of our RCLI sessions, he revealed that he and his wife had felt the radical call to rescue preserved fetuses from their unborn state. His wife had received 3 fetuses implants and given birth to them all—the most recent of which turned out to be twins! At his commissioning service in 2017 he introduced me to her and their 4 small children. Children rescue us from our selfishness, especially us men. If you don't have children of your own, go find some. They are everywhere. How will you fully understand the Kingdom of God without them? Jesus

said, *Of such are the Kingdom*. The absence of children in men's lives is damaging to them and--much more so--to children.

As we hear from God our role in the brokenness of the society around us, we find our identity. When we find that our identity aligns with an instrument of the Kingdom (ministry, church, or job) we should remain there and align with it. Finding His role and identity in every dimension of life was how Christ aligned with the Father. As I help others make sense of their lives, my own life makes sense to me. As I help others find their identity, I find my own. **Work is a fundamental ingredient of identity and value**, a primary way that we find our place in the Kingdom of God.

God's calling

It is a powerful force in your life to identify God's calling, to see how the events and relationships of life have aligned in a particular way. (I know of few who have done this well that are less than 50 years old). I was introduced to this notion by Steve Herzig. He engaged a coach for a 12-hour marathon session to help him through the process. His calling: *To reveal the heart of God and confront the resurrection choice*. He has a prophetic ministry. Based on this new clarity of calling, he and his wife Anita rented out their house in South Africa and travelled to the US to begin an itinerant ministry. I heard their story over lunch after hearing him speak at a COTN gathering. Steve challenged each of us to describe God's calling on our life in 12 words or less. It took me several months to do so. My calling: *Discover the currents (flow) of God in the world*. I later added *and in individuals*. We find God's calling primarily in religion, business, or politics. If we don't see this, we may discover one of those arenas becoming an idol to us. My investment newsletter (GIN—Globig Investment News) *curates global news with brevity and clarity*. All events that affect my client's money and pique my curiosity occur in these 3 arenas. I believe Don Coleman's calling is: *Serving you into your greatness*. It was on his answering machine for over 10 years and describes his life.

We become wonderfully indifferent to positions and titles as we seek maximum influence (not recognition) through pursuit of our identity and calling. Our influence rises through character and vision--the measure of leadership. **You can either impress people or influence them**, depending on a self or God focus. My aim is to influence others deeply through careful use of words. Serving people is the best way to influence them. You'll discover that **those who influence you are those who believe in you and think the best of you**. Do the same to others. Spiritual authority is the grace to influence others in redemptive directions.

Wilderness

It wasn't rebellion that took the children of Israel into the wilderness, but it kept them there. Every Christian who seeks to leave the world system and/or organized religion for the Kingdom of God will experience the transition of the

wilderness. It is temporary, unless we choose to build a home there. Adam's rebellion from God turned a garden into a wilderness. The lesson of the journey in the wilderness is that we may know ourselves. Our wilderness experience is a cocoon. To leave it too soon is to die or never develop God's ultimate narrative for our life.

Metaphor for Hearing God

I'm a mechanical engineer by training and trade. God gave me the metaphor of a 4-speed transmission for hearing Him. Just as a transmission engages a set of wheels with an engine, hearing from God depends on engaging our body, soul, and spirit with God and then journaling. I have a goal of 3 hours of prayer a day, which I reach occasionally. God has begun to show me how to pray and to give me a passion to pray. 4 Keys to Hearing God was written in 2010 by someone else with the same 4 keys as those contained in the transmission metaphor.

My current prayer habits are in constant flux. I currently begin each day by reading the Word in several versions: The Message, New King James Version, Amplified, and the Narrative (or Chronological) Bible. Seeing the poetry, and prophecies unfold in narrative sequence as they happened clarifies in amazing ways. To read the Psalms of David in the context of 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles when he wrote them; to read Isaiah and Jeremiah as part of 2 Chronicles; to see how Daniel and Ezekiel were contemporaries living in Babylon at the same time as Jeremiah prophesied in Jerusalem during King Josiah's reign; to read Paul's letters placed in the Acts narrative as he wrote them--enriches and clarifies the story immensely.

When a passage resonates, I memorize it in the King James Version as I have since childhood. The KJV sticks in my mind as other versions don't and I can't meditate on something I haven't memorized. I may then pray the passage to the Father and meditate on it until I can put it into my own words (NWV). Then I shut up and listen to God speak into my spirit--my intuition. **In quiet and solitude**. If I don't find quiet and solitude, I don't hear Him; I only hear the noise of my racing thoughts or the sounds around me. I now find most of my prayer time is spent listening, pondering and writing what God speaks.

Spirit Life and Communication with God

Our body has 5 senses: sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch. The soul has 3 faculties: mind, will, and emotions. The 3 instruments of the spirit are conscience, intuition, and imagination. God speaks to our soul through the written and spoken Word, and to our spirit through His spirit, often through our intuition. Jesus heard God continuously. It was his central habit and the source of his power. It is also the source of our power with God. His disciples saw this and asked Jesus to teach them to do it. He answered: *When you pray remember the Father's: holiness, Kingdom, and will. Ask for His provision, forgiveness, deliverance, and complete rule (Matthew 6:9-13, NWV)*.

As we see God's vision for the world and our city, we move beyond our own. As we take our place in the brokenness of the world and serve others, we begin to fulfill Jesus' prophecy that *out of your center will flow rivers of living water*—and others will want a drink. As we *abandon self-interest, take up His passion, and follow him*, we begin to reflect His heart and become His hands & His feet--*the Word made flesh*.

Hearing from God through a habit of prayer is also how we find our identity. Once I saw this narrative, this theme, I found it everywhere. *Jesus, knowing who He was, washed His disciples' feet* and went to the cross. Knowing His identity launched Him into his final act. I challenge you to discover your Passion, your Way, and your Expertise--your Heart, your Head, and your Hand. If you frame your journey this way, you will find your identity much sooner than I did. It will transform you. You will experience God and others in amazing, intense ways and you'll have the time of your life. I know I am. *As you take His yoke upon you and learn of Him, you will find rest for your soul*. When it is His yoke, the burden is easy. If you feel like your burden is heavy, check to ensure it is one God has given you, rather than your own idea or agenda. Even when we work hard, **our soul will feel light when yoked with God to His burden.**

Cancer/Prayer

I see my personal history as parallel to world history—BC and after (before Children and after); and more recently, before Cancer and after. I was diagnosed in August 2010 with stage 4 Hodgkin's Lymphoma. During the next 6 months I dropped out of community life, including RCLI and teaching an online master's level course in Management Information Science at Spring Arbor University. With a low white blood count from chemotherapy, to prevent infection I sequestered from others, even visitors to my house. I went from a full life of fellowship in many circles to only phone calls and email. With lots of time on my hands and desperate for fellowship, I turned to God and prayer. I had struggled with a weak prayer life for 40 years. My time in the Word has always been rich, but my prayer life was lame. So, I asked God to show me *how* to pray and give me a *passion* to pray. 2 men inspired me to this. Don Coleman and Minh Ha Nguyen, both spend 4 hours a day in prayer. I served with Don on the leadership team of COTN. I served Minh Ha as a Journeyman in the RCLI class of 2009. He helped plant 25 house churches in the 3 years up to 2013 as part of the International Christian Church he started. The 2 men I knew personally with the greatest impact on our city were most given to prayer. Do you see a pattern here?

Since 2011, I have learned to enjoy the presence of God as I listen for the rhema that He breathes through the logos of His Word and the prayer dialogue with Holy Spirit that ensues. We are clearly *commanded* to give God thanks, to pray, to love, to praise and obey Him, but not to worship Him. Worship appears to be an invitation, a freewill offering in which the Lord takes special delight, so much so that He *seeks out* those who

worship Him (John 4:24). As we approach God we enter His gates with thanksgiving; we enter His courts with praise; and we come near Him on His throne in worship. The greatest **worth** I can give Him is to meditate on His Words, pray His own thoughts back to Him, listen to Him speak into my spirit, and do what He says. I believe that was the core habit of Jesus. I seek to make it mine.

Fathers and Sons

The prime relationship in Hebrew life has always been Father/Son, not husband/wife. We become wise as we align with our heavenly Father in Father/Son relationships. God revealed himself in his own image through his first son, Adam. When Adam failed to reflect God, He then redeemed Adam through Jesus, who really did reflect His Father. The pattern through the Old Testament in Hebrew culture was spiritual life and culture transmission from father to son: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph; Moses, Joshua; Eli, Samuel; Jesse, David, Solomon; Elijah, Elisha. In the New Testament we see Jesus and His disciples, Paul and Timothy. God wills for this to happen through natural fathers and sons. But it is also the pattern for spiritual relationships where God sets into place those who we recognize as spiritual fathers to us. It falls to the son to recognize who is (or who he wants to be) his spiritual father. But it falls to the father to respond with recognition of the relationship, to accept the responsibility and give it structure. There needs to be enough contact to allow a visibility of life-style and thinking to flow both ways. The continuing energy and will for the relationship needs to come from the son to avoid a pattern of control that often develops in the natural. Counsel, direction, and connection to empowering sources should flow from the father to the son. We discover power in our lives as we find spiritual alignment with one another and God in ways he has ordained from the foundations of the earth.

3 men, ages 29-73, have continued to regard me as their spiritual father over the last 6 years. Several others have done so for a shorter period. We connect by phone, zoom, or in person at least monthly. These men seem to value our time together because they keep returning. We have found that a monthly rhythm works well for us, although weekly rhythms work well for younger people—even daily rhythms for children.

My spiritual father

I met Martin Hopkins at a COTN gathering in New Jersey in 2006 where he spoke. We connected around our common interest in financial management and spiritual alignment. I asked him to be my spiritual father and in 2007 he invited me to become a Registered Representative of his Registered Investment Advisor LLC. This has since allowed me to trade other people's money with the model I had developed and have published in an investment newsletter. We have continued both a business and personal relationship ever since, to my great benefit, both financially and spiritually.

I continue to connect with Martin at least monthly by phone and yearly in person. He counselled me through a dispute with the IRS, which was resolved to my benefit. He has recognized and affirmed my writing and encouraged me to begin publishing *WendellNotes* with my Globig Investment Newsletter. These have become primary content for my website and a valuable supplement in my counsel to others regarding Kingdom principles.

Tom

I have 3 sons, all adopted as infants. The oldest, Nathan, has some mental illness that prevents him from supporting himself, although he lives alone and is doing well. The next oldest, Steven, is totally handicapped and has lived in institutions since he was about 8. Tom, our youngest, is healthy, although he has had trouble with the law, living a few years in reform school, and 5 years in prison.

After Tom's release in 2014, he attended *Needle's Eye*, a Christian organization that meets weekly in small groups of young professionals. There he met Jena, who he later married. He also met Jeremy and Monica Chambers, who he invited to our house to play a game of *Cashflow*, in which players roll dice and move around the board, completing each turn by updating their Income Statement and Balance Sheet--a short course in business and money management.

During the game and our conversation, Jeremy asked for a copy of my Journal, which I gave him. I didn't hear from him again for several years. Until one day I got a phone call from him. He said that he had been through a difficult period and my Journal had been an important support for him. Could we get together and talk? During that and subsequent conversations he asked me to spiritually father him.

AIM (Ashland Impact Mission)

I have recently discovered another powerful flow of God in daily corporate prayer at AIM. Pastor Stuart Royall is a spiritual son to Don Coleman. In 2019, Jeremy Chambers introduced Stuart to me over lunch at a nearby Panera Bread and then in January 2020 I began to attend AIM. That March, Covid-19 shut down our Sunday services until they reopened outside in the back parking lot in May. On June 15, AIM began daily prayer meetings at noon outside with up to a dozen people from the community, including a Muslim and the Ashland Chief of Police. These prayer gatherings have continued to the present, moving indoors a few months later with inclement weather. This is the first time I have ever participated in daily corporate prayer for an extended period. The gatherings have fluctuated over many months, with attendance ranging from 2-10. They also serve as a daily debrief of God's answers and his work in our people's lives. In addition to getting to know and love one another as we pray together, we are learning to hear God's words and burdens in one another's prayers. These prayer times now guide the life of AIM, as we operate with no agenda other than daily revelation from God.

Hearing God

The most important book I have ever read is [Can You Hear Me?](#) God speaks to us through daily events as if they were parables. Prophecy is sharing something God has shown you. Retreating to the supposed safety of "figuring things out for ourselves" is another version of the fleshly mind trying to think independently of God. The Spirit has led us into truth that our Bibles and church traditions alone did not. Apart from the conviction of the Holy Spirit, the church would still be using the Bible to support slavery, women would still be silenced in all churches, and military crusades may have continued. Christian deism (heresy): "God set things up in the beginning but has pretty much left the running of things to us, only intervening in our lives if absolutely necessary." Signs are only meant to encourage us along the path of faith, not to help us overcome our skepticism. The cynic is a thief of hope. The beatitudes show us a type of prophetic respiration in which we inhale the fullness of the Spirit in contemplative prayer then exhale justice and mercy into the community.

The danger of refusing to heed God's voice is not that he will resort to the silent treatment. Rather, He will begin to speak more clearly and forcefully, which is not always pleasant (remember Jonah?). You can hear His voice as an ointment that heals or as a sword that pierces. Coincidences are the winds of God which draw a treasure map into the blessings of God. We meet with Jesus to behold and to be held.

The second most impactful book follows a similar theme, [A Praying Life](#). Learning to pray doesn't offer us a less busy life; it offers us a less busy heart. Suffering is important to the process of learning how to pray. Instead of trying to suppress anxiety, we can turn it toward God. Anxiety is an unused prayer link. Satan cynically twists God's commands to his own ends. Cynicism is the seed for our own rebellion. Learned desperation is at the heart of a praying life. **Integrity, beauty, hope, and love are all in the same category as prayer. You can't define them because they are too close to God's image.** When times were good, I ignored God, but when times were hard, I blamed God. God customizes deserts for each of us and takes everyone he loves through one. A lament is faith. A complaint is rebellion. The difference is who you complain to. Nothing clears out self-righteousness better than serving someone who is critical of us.

By giving his brothers coats, Joseph became an artist. He noticed God's use of themes (coats) in his own life and extended it to his brothers. He took God's brush and finished the painting. He learned his heavenly Father's rhythms. **The downward journey is the gospel story. Since Jesus, no one has been able to tell a better one.** If we embrace the gospel story God is weaving in our life, we discover joy, but if we pursue joy directly, it slips from our grasp. The novel is a specifically Christian form of writing and echoes themes of: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. Prayer is where I do

my best work as a husband, dad, worker, and friend. How do you love someone without prayer? I manage my life now through my daily prayer time.

Meditation

There is a unique activity that God promises will make you wiser than your enemies, smarter than your teachers and elders; you will have good success, and everything you do will prosper. It's not prayer or Bible reading. It is meditation on His Word. Ps 119:97-100. *O how I love thy law. It is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: For they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: For thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. Ps 1:2,3 His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. Joshua 1:8 This Book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*

Bill Gothard was challenged in the 8th grade to do a project: to memorize and meditate on a chapter of Scripture each week. The continuous mental discipline of memorizing and meditating on Scripture refocused his emotions and redirected his goals. By-products of this activity were an increased memory span, greater ability to concentrate, and an improved reading rate. The absence of these had been some of the major causes for poor grades in school. As this project continued many other beneficial by-products began to appear. When it was discontinued there was a noticeable decline in the success of what he attempted to accomplish. One of the reasons God is able to guarantee success in whatever we do if we meditate on his Word is that meditation brings a greater ability to discern ahead of time which ventures will be successful.

I was so energized by Bill's story that for the next 10 years I spent 1 hour/day memorizing the Word and meditating on it. I memorized ¼ of the New Testament, as well as parts of Psalms and Proverbs—and all of these promises have come true in my life.

My first job offer from college was as a "Rocket Scientist" at Rockwell International in Columbus, OH. However, I accepted a position at DuPont's Engineering Development Lab (EDL), which was part of the Engineering Research Division of their Engineering Department. I struggled at EDL to have the creativity needed to invent new devices and solutions to automate their bulk continuous fiber (carpet yarn) plants to which I was assigned. But after I started memorizing scripture and meditating on it, my work improved dramatically. I developed one of the first robots in DuPont. I eventually retired from DuPont after 32 years, serving at 5 locations in 4 states.

My Agenda

I begin daily prayer by asking God for grace to desire his will--and nothing else. This comes from my long history of mixing God's will with my own agenda. God calls this *iniquity* and he hates it. I'll cite 3 examples.

1) I started piano lessons at age 6, did well, and started teaching at age 11 when I became the pianist at my father's church of about 200 people. I excelled in piano competitions at the state level in Ohio and placed second in a national contest in my senior year. Then at the age of 18 I cut off the middle finger of my right hand at a grenade press I was operating at a summer job at Smith & Wesson Pyrotechnics! No more piano after that, except in a limited form.

2) At age 13 I started a weight club with my 2 brothers, concentrating on the power lifts. I got within 70 pounds of the 500 pound national deadlift record for the 148 pound class. At John Brown University in our required freshman fitness tests I scored the highest in the school. Then, 3 years later in my last quarter at Ohio State where I transferred after my freshman year, I fell down a flight of stairs--the first sign of what was eventually diagnosed as Multiple Sclerosis. It took another 28 years before I was consigned to a wheelchair, which I've ridden since.

3) At DuPont, when I transferred from Kansas City, Missouri to Buffalo in 1985, I was one of the youngest level 5 engineers in a company of 300,000 people. After participating in the successful invention of a better way to produce Corian® bowls by casting them in a closed-mold process, I was given charge of \$30 million to lead a team to build a plant and train a crew to run the new process using the technology. We hit every technical objective but were 2 yrs late starting up--part of the reason I transferred to Richmond. The process was still running profitably 30 years later. My role was valued by many--but not management, because of the missed date.

Do you see a pattern here? Everything I excelled at, God touched--like He touched Jacob's thigh after wrestling with him on his return from a very successful exile. This began a period of fruitfulness in Jacob's life as he trained Joseph to save millions of people. Similarly, the move to Richmond began a period of fruitfulness in my life. I've found great benefit from connecting with those whom God has touched and now walk with a godly grace, some with a limp.

Seasons

And it came to pass, seemingly a through-away phrase, is repeated often in the Old Testament. Whatever happened didn't come to stay. In the Kingdom of God seasons come to pass, not to stay. One error of our religious impulse is to try to make a move of God into an institution. Just as the 3 disciples on the mount (Mt 17:1-8) wished to make 3 tabernacles, our impulse is to dwell on the current or last move of God, even as He moves on to the next as his Kingdom strategy advances. The seasonality of the Kingdom supports a transformational intensify of relationship that is often unsustainable--meant only for a season. This is true in the natural, as well as

spiritual connections. Even marriage has seasons and variations in intensity. If we recognize this, we may be more ready to move on to the next relationship God has for us, continuing to value and remain connected to each person we release for their next season.

Flow and Leadership

Flow is an optimal state of consciousness where we feel and perform at our best. Group flow is considered the most pleasurable state on earth. This may explain the interest so of many men in watching sports, as they seek to recall and relive those flow experiences of their High School experience. I have puzzled for many years over the pattern that those who do well at team sports usually succeed in life at whatever they choose, regardless of other abilities (or lack of ability). Flow may explain it. It may also explain why so many leaders seem to be “born,” rather than “made.” Athletic ability is largely natural, rather than acquired--ergo the expression “born leader.”

Debrief

Some people get wiser as they get older and the rest of us just get older. The difference is a process I call Debrief. The US military has used it for generations in many forms. *Plan/Act/Debrief/Adjust* is one. They follow every action with a debrief. Sometimes they throw in a *Celebrate* step. In business some call the improvement cycle PDCA (plan-do-check-act). A debrief (or evaluation) is how we learn from and lock in experience. Every successful or progressing group does it. Thriving families debrief their day around the dinner table. That's where discipling happens. Thinking and debate skills are sharpened. At AIM we debrief our Sunday service and other events in our daily corporate prayer meetings. Every ministry should incorporate debrief into their rhythms. Individually, we can debrief with a journal. As we reflect on events and things we have heard, read, or thought we record and make them accessible for further reflection to adjust our lives and our walk with God. This is how we write our story, as in Rev 12:11.

Leadership training

Some of the most powerful leadership training processes incorporate this. Rather than teaching as telling, reading, lecture or discussion, it prepares people to exercise judgment and skill in the world of practice. The *case study* is one of the most often used tools to teach future business managers in MBA (Master of Business Administration) programs. **But adults learn best from their own experience.** They must learn to see for themselves. Transformative teaching has a set of ideas and frameworks but waits for a case to appear in the process of the class itself. The teacher imagines that what went on in the class for the last 10 minutes was a case study and uses it to illustrate the skill she was trying to present. She remains the authority, providing orientation by also *practicing* Leadership. Adaptive challenges (swamp issues) require new learning, innovation, and patterns of behavior. Mobilizing people to address adaptive challenges calls for change of hearts and minds. When the focus shifts from authority and technical problems to leadership and progress on adaptive

challenges, charisma and personality become less critical. Leadership depends less on magnetism and more on the capacities of individuals to intervene in complex systems. Thus, the capacity to be present, comprehend what is happening in the field of action, and choose how to intervene from within the social group helps to progress on swamp issues. Those who teach Leadership well serve more as coaches and mentors than lecturers.

Every time we tackle a problem, we don't just solve the problem itself; we also learn from it what matters. **In a Culture of Honor we develop a process for problem solving and create or dismantle culture--defining and refining our values (what's important).** Our processes and values are the real drivers of success and culture. Debriefing is the “Kingdom-Way” forward for individuals, families, churches, and nations.

Culture of Honor

Hearing and responding to God is the process by which we advance the Kingdom with God's strategy. As we recognize and affirm the people and gifts God is using, we develop a Culture of Honor. We may then add structure to support them in what they're doing, taking care not to build our own notion of what God wants to do.

I see this process emerging at AIM, as we saw the worship team emerge from Sam and Lauren's leadership and coaching. The team is developing their own rich processes of rehearsal and leadership. The youth ministry is emerging from the gifts and calling of Philip and Audrey, as they search for rhythms to reach kids of all ages. The House to House (H2H) ministry has tried some things from which we learned. We finally launched into 4 groups which pulse with life, spiritual growth, and great differences in process and culture. As we continue to pray and debrief events and emerging patterns, we recognize and embrace the processes God is using to reveal each step in his strategy.

APEST

Jeremy Chambers has written the book Kingdom Contours--a virtual toolbelt for missional practitioners. It is the product of over 1500 books he has read, his 40 global church plants, and experiences in more than 30 countries and 40 states in the US. (His parents were missionaries). Kingdom Contours summarizes best practices from the last 2000 years and describes ways African, Asian, and global South brothers and sisters are wonderfully advancing the Kingdom in their spaces. **Apostles** create a sending and multiplication environment. **Prophets** create a purifying, challenging, strengthening environment. **Evangelists** create a welcoming, super-positive environment. **Shepherds** (pastors) create a caring, nurturing, protective environment. **Teachers** create a learning environment. If each of our APEST voices speaks regularly into the Body with appropriate maturity and freedom, we create the right environment for vibrant life and spiritual growth. Apostles send, prophets challenge, evangelists welcome, shepherds nurture, and teachers create a learning environment.

Culture of Honor complements Kingdom Concepts. Life flows through honor. The disheartening cycle of great outpourings that return to “business as usual” shows a lack of understanding of 5-fold ministry. **A healthy APEST culture may sustain the next revival.** A dualistic worldview separates knowledge from experience. Flourishing comes through our agreement with Heaven’s culture. We are confined to earthly limitations when our senior leaders are teachers, pastors, administrators, and evangelists *unconnected* to the flow of anointing and revelation in an apostolic government. Free will made evil possible. **Free people are difficult to lead and require Apostles and Prophets to show the way. They establish both an environment for others to gain freedom and a government for them to keep it.** We are spiritual conductors and create an atmosphere, a reality, with a spirit around us. There is an order for leadership that sustains the flow of heavenly reality, of grace. The skill to combine honor with confrontation is key to sustaining an environment of grace. Gentleness does not mean nice or polite. It means the belief that “I don’t need to control you.” Power is given to each one who makes a mess to clean it up. No one will be able to clean up a mess you have made as well as you can. Confrontation is an examination.

Class

Social class is largely a matter of **Time Horizon**. The poor have a short one—from one day to at most a year. The middle class have a longer horizon—perhaps through retirement. The upper class have a multigenerational horizon—including grandchildren and descendants. The Kingdom of God goes beyond the upper class and provides an eternal horizon.

The **Young man's disease**—you think you're bullet-proof or you'll live forever. The **Old man's disease**--cynicism, believing that everything is going wrong in the world, and we should protect what we have. Life is politically a conservative influence, as we learn the cost and consequences of liberal ideas. If a young man is not a liberal, he has no heart; if an old man is not a conservative, he has no head (Winston Churchill).

Gospel to the Poor

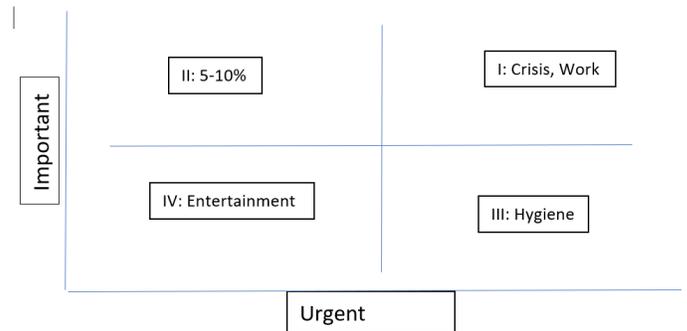
(Lk 4:18) Jesus’ first words as he launched his ministry after His baptism and temptation were *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.* **Good news to the poor** is relief from their poverty. **The gospel doesn't take the poor out of poverty; it takes poverty out of the poor.** Jesus was the most self-disciplined person in history. As we follow Jesus, we move from a self-centered, undisciplined lifestyle to one conformed to His image and directed by the Holy Spirit. We begin to produce more than we consume, enriching us and those around us, transforming and enriching the culture. Wherever Kingdom thinking takes root, prosperity follows. For a period from 1995 to 2010 my company GI invested through ETFs (exchange traded funds) in South Africa, Brazil, India, the

Philippines, and China. The most rapid improvement in the deployment of capital for that period of time followed where the gospel was advancing and transforming culture, especially after the fall of the Iron Curtain and the rapid gains from an embrace of capitalism.

Jesus spoke more about the Kingdom of God than anything else. 5 times He summarized a parable with the words, *To him who has shall more be given* (Mt 13:12, 25;29; Mk 4:25; Lk 8:13, 19:26). This is called the Matthew Effect of accumulated advantage or ‘Matthew Principle.’ It supports free market capitalism. But Jesus was also seemed to be a flaming liberal in the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Mt 20:1-16). The landowner gave each laborer at least what he had promised. He was just, but not fair. He didn’t treat everyone the same. Jesus was after the heart, not an economic system. In a democracy when someone gets special treatment because of relationship, we call that **corruption**. In a Kingdom we call it **favor**.

Time

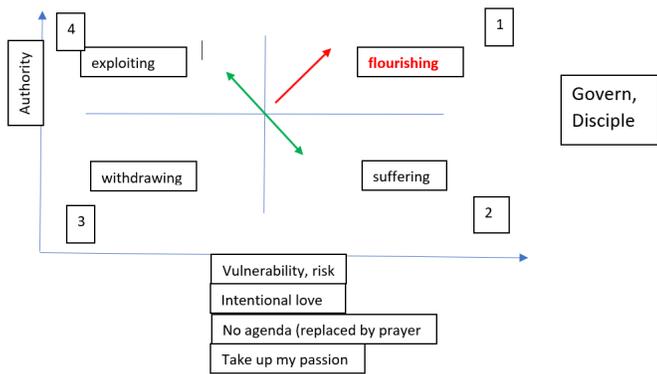
To organize and execute around priorities is the best thinking in the area of time management. **Priority Map:** Visualize a vertical axis of **importance** and a horizontal axis of **urgency**.



If we can spend 5-10% of our time in Quadrant II, we will build a successful life. This includes our quiet time and reflection on how to connect each moment of the rest of our lives to spiritual, personal, and professional goals. This 5-10% also applies to our finances as a source of prosperity. Pay yourself before you pay others, just as you feed *your* spirit before you feed others.

Vulnerability 2.0

The paradox of flourishing is that it is often found on the other side of suffering. Flourishing comes from being both strong and weak--embracing both authority and vulnerability--**Strong and Weak**. Visualize another quadrant map with a vertical axis of **authority** and a horizontal axis of **vulnerability**.



We love our mothers because they first loved us—the most powerful natural example of this vulnerability dynamic. Our mothers’ authority in our lives comes from their love, just as Christ’s does. No one ever embodied flourishing more than Jesus. **Flourishing** captures Jesus’ statement of his own life’ purpose in Jn 10:10, *I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly*. Authority is something others confer on us—either a title or successful action. Vulnerable at root means *woundable*. When authority and vulnerability combine, you find true flourishing, not just of the gifted or affluent, but of the needy and limited as well. The deepest and most intractable examples of suffering are communal and multigenerational. Communities may exist in a state of continual vulnerability. We must restore proper authority to individual persons and to whole communities. For many communities marked by suffering, when the gospel begins to transform individuals and communities, it doesn’t just relieve immediate needs. It also restores hope and dignity.

The Savior of the world began life swaddled in his own infancy—protected from both action and risk. The greatest challenge of our success is our freedom to avoid risk. We begin in Safety, but to cling to it in adulthood is folly. An ocean cruise is as pure a return to the quadrant 3 of childhood as you could ask for. I found this quadrant 3 notion pervasive in the retirement communities of FL I visited, where children are banned (except for short visits), crime is rare, and taxes are low because of few schools and few poor.

Most moves toward vulnerability are a step in the right direction. Choose to go to places—the ocean, the mountains—where you feel small rather than grand. Travel to encounter those who have been sanctified by suffering. Tyranny/suffering and exploiting/poverty are usually found together. Most of us are far more willing to move up than to the right. As you purpose to risk, God will give you authority.

Scripture calls **idolatry** the use of created things to pursue godlike power without risk or limit. Control is the very essence of authority without vulnerability, but it is an illusion. Because crime depends on secrecy and violence, it can never offer the real flourishing its perpetrators seek. Vulnerability shed by one group is usually borne by another groups’ suffering. The pursuit of authority without vulnerability multiplies vulnerability without authority. Criminals cause a whole community to suffer increased vulnerability. The scathing biblical

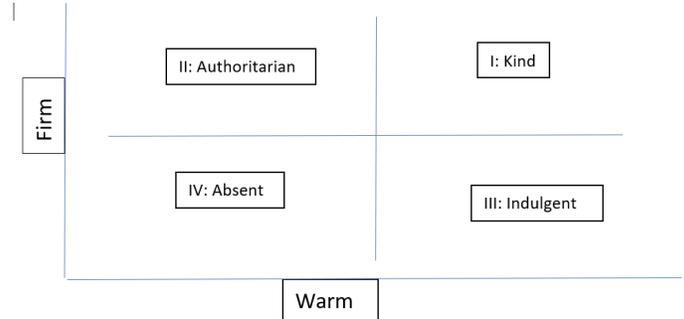
critique of idols and their makers is that those who make them become like them—dull and ultimately dead.

Liberation from false quadrants comes from Christ alone. The place Jesus went we must also go. We must choose the way of Suffering, exposing ourselves to risk without authority. Idols are the forces that whisper promises of control, invulnerable power, and independence. We are so enslaved by these idols that we can’t comprehend, let alone attain, the flourishing that God brings. In the world, acts of authority often insulate us from risk rather than opening us up to it. But when we take responsibility for others’ flourishing, we become even more exposed to the power of these forces.

Our competence is helpful—but our vulnerability is transformative. Communities need people willing to move decisively down and to the right, surrendering authority while taking up risk. The 4-2 line describes the line of false choice—the world we often live in. Flourishing comes from doing both dimensions well. Idolatry is the use of created things to pursue godlike power without risk or limit. Leaders take responsibility for others’ flourishing and affirm them in their identity and calling.

Parenting

A similar chart may be constructed around parenting with the axes of **firm** and **warm**.



Loans

When people ask me for a loan I usually ask them to wait a few days until I hear from God. Then I may respond in one of several ways: 1) Help them find a way to fund their current need with better access to personal finance, i.e. charge a credit card (no interest if full balance is paid each month) until cash flow is restored or else convert a short-term, unsecured debt into long-term secured debt with lower interest rates. 2) Give them what is needed to avoid any risk to our relationship that borrowing may incur. Or 3) Loan them the money on condition that they repay it to someone else in need, as they are able. This makes them directly responsible to God and avoids the risk that either of us fall into a wrong attitude regarding debt and/or debtor.

Habits

Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny. Before something can become a habit it must first be practiced

as a discipline. **Holy habits:** doing what we can (spiritual disciplines) in order to receive from God the power to do what we cannot (love our enemies). The second half of a man's life is made up of the habits he acquired during the first half (Dostoyevsky). **Bad habits** are like stones rolling down hill; the further they roll, the faster and more ungovernable is their course. **Good habits** save effort, increase efficiency, and release power. Habits create a framework that God fills with His grace. Habit is to life what rails are to railcars, lain down toward given ends. Good habits are virtues and bad habits are vices. They function in our being as if they were biological. Habits become values. Choose what you want to learn. The chains of habit are too light to be felt until they're too heavy to be broken. A habit can't be eradicated—it must be replaced. Exercise is a keystone habit that triggers widespread change.

Good Government

I transferred from Buffalo to Richmond in 1999, partly to continue a relationship with Mike and Midori Shepherd, who preceded us in the same move by about 2 years. Mike lived in an apartment for a year so that he could evaluate the best place to live in the greater Richmond area.

He chose Hanover County over Chesterfield County, where the DuPont plant is located, because of Hanover's better government, as evidenced by good schools with lower taxes. At that time Hanover had a standing offer to any employer in the state to pay for additional schooling for any of their high school graduates who were ill-prepared for their job. Mike built a house in the Milestone Community and so did we. I later attended an open meeting of the Hanover Planning Commission, as well as other open meetings to learn more about the processes of our county government. I recommend these meetings. They are a wonderful education on local government.

In the 1990s, home building was exploding in Chesterfield County with little planning. Chaos ensued for the next 10 years as they wrestled with inadequate schools, roads, and utilities. It took years of traffic jams until they widened Hull St. and built more schools and infrastructure to support the growth.

On the other hand, Hanover limits growth to just 2%/year and annually selects just a few from hundreds of business applicants who wish to move here. It limits new businesses to the corridors off the 7 exits from I-95 & I-295. This business density enables 70% of new infrastructure costs—roads, internet, and utility expansions—to be paid for by businesses. The result is a AAA bond rating (bond ratings are the government equivalent of a credit score). Only 10 out of 3000 counties in t US have a AAA rating and it means cheaper borrowing and lower taxes. The relative peace and order of our county is as much a result of good planning as who lives here.

Jesus' parables were metaphors to aid understanding and to recall truth. Hanover county is a metaphor for AIM church. I view 2020 as a difficult sifting, a period of God's planning for blessing. He needed to clarify those aligned with His plan for AIM to move us to a place (physically and spiritually) for growth.

Building Your Storybrand

[This book is what compelled me to build and launch my website]. Words sell things. **Story is a sense-making mechanism. When we use a story, we create a map.** No one can look away from a good story. It is the greatest weapon we have to organizes information in such a way that compels people to listen. A good story is "life with the dull parts taken out." People buy solutions to internal problems. Our website isn't the only tool but it usually does the heavy lifting.

Opposites

In the early '00s *The Economist* included an article describing research at University of California-Berkely on personality types. They used the 'Myers-Griggs personality test' to evaluate couples--and discovered a clear pattern. Unmarried couples living together often had similar personality types, whereas couples with opposite types had married. The researchers concluded that those with similar types found it easiest to get along. But those looking for permanent partners looked for someone who would complete them, rather than be easiest to live with.

Globigisms

Several years after leaving Buffalo, I was invited back to visit the people and operation I had help start. I was in a wheelchair on my return, but it was a wonderful experience as I toured the manufacturing line and saw many changes where operations had been streamlined and upgraded. There was a pizza lunch and a chance to share memories of our hard times, failures, and successes during startup. One of the great surprises to me was what they called "Globigisms"--my sayings or ways of speaking. Apparently they were distinctive enough to be remembered and labelled as such. We never know what people will remember about us.

Meta-Narrative

The story of Kingdom advance is a narrative moving from a garden to a city. **Cities** are a mechanism of wealth creation helping to accumulate and transmit to future generations both physical and human capital. Of the 3 elements of civil society, **business** draws people together by specialization and economies of scale, while **government** and **religion** embody culture. Synergy and efficiency grow from density. Business is the reason for cities--what sustains us and our way of life. Businesses are not only our neighbors but are commissioned by God to serve our needs.

Trauma Stewardship

If we are truly to know joy, we cannot afford to shut down our experience of pain. Commit to persevere through trauma with reflection. Reflection is a powerful antidote to the helplessness we may feel as a result of trauma exposure. **The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.** Kids have a preternatural capacity to read our natural state, because their survival depends on intuitively

reading the emotional state of the adults in their lives. If we're emotionally shut down, they'll know it.

Redeeming Sex

Grace is a counter-balance to shame. Sexuality is one of the least graced areas of the church, but it is our most vulnerable.

Bounded set church: members are either in or out based on belief or behavior. We set up boundaries around our brokenness. A wonderful modern-day parable that depicts the difference between bounded- and centered-set approaches is captured in an encounter between a farmer and a Japanese tourist in the Australian outback. The tourist is taken aback with the sheer vastness of the outback and comments to the farmer that as far as he can see, he doesn't see any fences. He asks the farmer how he can possibly keep his sheep in without fences. The farmer replies that they don't need to build fences, they just dig a well and the sheep don't wander very far from it. Even so, if people drink from the well of living water, they won't wander very far. **This centered-set approach more accurately describes the approach that Jesus adopted in his own life and ministry.** **Centered set church:** everyone is related by heart attitude to Jesus. Centered set church leaders are guardians of the well--central truths--and they alone are required to be cisgender. Family, state, nation and business may be boundary sets; but the Kingdom of God is a centered set around Christ. We are disciples, not sanctifiers--that's the Holy Spirit's job.

Good Literature

The great works of literature are strong fortresses of the spirit which men have built through the ages. One common aspect of great literature is that it speaks to us in fresh ways no matter how many times we read it. It's not that it changes, but that we change over time and are different people each time we read it. This is especially true of the Bible. Obedience is the road to freedom; humility is the road to pleasure. Heaven is the cardinal virtue from which graces grow.

Humility

Humility is the cardinal virtue from which all other virtues flow. The mark of humility is gratitude. Humility is power under control. A mother is the world's best example of humility. Lying and malice are foundational sins, just like humility is the foundational virtue. There are 3 levels of humility: be teachable, seek counsel, value reproof.

Giving

In the first century BC a devastating draught threatened to destroy a generation of Jews—the generation before Jesus. Famous for his ability to pray for rain, a man named Honi began a circular movement with his 6' staff drawing a circle in the dirt in the public square. He called down rain: "Lord of the universe, I swear before Your great name that I will not move from this circle until You have shown mercy upon Your children," and then it rained. The prayer of Honi that saved a generation was deemed one of the most significant prayers in the history of Israel. I learned about Honi from a book Stuart recommended called The Circle Maker by Mark

Batterson, a friend of his. Mark detailed his own prayer circle experiences with God in the DC area.

In the fall of 2020, after I wrote Wendell's Notes for The Circle Maker, I prayed for God to fill my Prayer Circle, the vision for GI he gave me back in 2007. This was a vision for GI to become a significant source of funding for the Kingdom instruments I connect to. I shared my Prayer Circle with our daily AIM prayer group. Within a week I added 2 new clients that increased my advisor fees by 50%. I gave a large share of that to AIM. Then a year later God showed me a new investment tool that may triple our returns. I asked Martin to detail how he gives, for a reference on how to expand my own giving. He described how he has for many years given 2.5% of firstfruits before each quarter of fee receipts as a faith plan for the coming year. When the fee is received, he then tithes on the remainder after taxes. Since he started that practice God has wildly blessed him, increasing his portfolio by 10 times in 15 years (like the Luke 19 parable of the minas). As I was praying about how much of the new income to give, our "Word for the Herd" (the weekly reading of our AIM church) included Lk 19:8, 9. *Zacchaeus gave 1/2 of his goods to the poor. Jesus said to him, 'This day is salvation come to this house.'* God's Word to me as I read this was to give ½ of the new income to him, as well as the first fruits. So that's my current practice.

Investments

My goal in GI is to provide an optimum return to my clients and subscribers. However, an infinite return comes from investing in the Kingdom of God and its eternal rewards. *Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also* (Mt 6:21). You can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead. As our stories connect with others we can strengthen soul ties and long-term relationships by choosing to invest in a person or ministry with a rhythm of regular, selective giving.

What is Good?

We naturally believe that whatever makes us feel good is good. But God describes good differently: (Rm 8:28, 29) *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God...that we might be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might have many brothers and sisters (NWV).* Whatever makes us more like Christ is good, according to God.

Where 2 or 3 are gathered

Jesus said (Mt 15:20) *Where 2 or 3 are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* He doesn't say 2 or more, although that is also true. I first understood this principle in an exercise at a COTN workshop led by Tony and Felicity Dale. There were 32 of us separated into groups of 4 around 8 card tables. We were all given a passage of scripture to discuss with a report-out after about 20 minutes of discussion. It was remarkable that people mostly remembered and reported *what they had said*, rather than what someone else

had said in the small group. The principle: God is uniquely present in a group small enough that everyone has a chance to speak what God is revealing to *them*.

Hypocrisy

Most media operate from the narrative that your highest good and ultimate truth is to be true to yourself and that the enemy is whatever thwarts that. But God calls us to live by His word—holy, virtuous lives. Hypocrisy enters as we try to live by any other truth, to seek the appearance of good without being so. The charge of hypocrisy is the unintended compliment that vice pays to virtue.

Beginnings

In the beginning God created time, space, matter and energy. Until late in the 19th century the western world believed in creation, which was never refuted. However, another narrative then began to take hold—Evolution. This is how I negotiated this dilemma.

The beginning of my understanding of the beginning of the world and related truth was marked by The Genesis Flood, which I read while an undergrad at Ohio State. It was co-authored by John Whitcomb, ThD (natural theologian, who I later met and heard speak) and Dr Henry Morris. Morris was chairman of the Civil Engineering department of Virginia Tech from 1957-1961. He left Virginia Tech to found ICR (Institute for Creation Research). This book launched my 10-year study of Evolution and membership in both ICR and CRS (Creation Research Society). I acquired a library of their publications and could debate anyone on the subject, including my Philosophy professor at Ohio State. But I found that apologetics produced little fruit and have since abandoned the practice—but not the truth I found there.

Genesis 1 describes *the world before the flood*. The world's population was likely about 1 billion, similar to 1850. Hills were flat-topped and non-volcanic. There were 2 great water reservoirs—one below the firmament and one above. A vapor canopy over a mile thick made the earth like a greenhouse with 5-10 times the CO₂ level as at present. Plants were luxurious. Sea level was much lower and there was no rain. Little ozone reached the earth (believed to be a primary cause of aging), since it was absorbed by the water blanket. Everything lived much longer. Reptiles, which continue to grow throughout their lifetime, reached great sizes, producing dinosaurs (“terrible lizards”). People lived an average of 900 years.

The Flood (Gen 7:9-24). Geologic and hydrologic evidence: Collapse of the water canopy, release of subterranean reservoirs (*waters of the deep*), earthquakes, volcanic activity, rapid cooling (ice age), violent wind and waves. James Usher's The Annals of the World provides a biblical worldview of history. Sebastian Adam's '*Map of History*' also provides a biblical worldview and map of history. This synchronological, illustrated Map of Universal History was a favorite at the Centennial Exposition of the US in Philadelphia in 1876. These immense works describe the origins and history

of the world as most historians believed it to be until the late 1800s, when Darwin's theory of evolution was advanced as an alternate view of origins.

Norma Geisler (died 2019) wrote I Don't have enough Faith to be an Atheist. He argued from Logic, Philosophy and Scientific evidence that evolution could **not** have created the present earth, life or people. He publicly debated atheists and scientists through the 70s and 80s, besting all opponents as measured by independent judges and audiences until no one would debate him. You can view some of his lectures on YouTube.

Two great problems with evolution are **entropy** (second law of thermodynamics) and **first life**. The scientific method requires test and critique of theory and there is no evidence *ever* of movement from a lower state of order to a higher state, without agency. Entropy is skirted in evolution by the introduction of huge amounts of time using the dating processes in the evolutionary timeline—self-referencing, circular logic.

A recent (since 2000) third problem is even more compelling for most scientists than these: complexity. Life forms are filled with **irreducible complexity**. Irreducibly complex systems can't function until all the parts are present and working together. So, natural selection can't help you build such systems; it can only preserve them once they've been built. And it's impossible for evolution to take such a huge leap by mere chance to create the whole system at once. The mapping of the human Genome in 2003 illustrated the immense complexity of the DNA which make up the genetic blueprint for a human being. Relatively few scientists still hold to absence of a designer as a satisfactory answer for our origins. Lee Strobel, The Case for a Creator, is a lawyer and investigative journalist who presents recent advances in science which are compelling many in the scientific community to abandon evolution in favor of intelligent design to explain origins.

ICR produced the movie, *Is Genesis History?* which details compelling evidence of a young earth. <https://arkencounter.com/> features a theme park (Ark Encounter) in Williamstown, KY built around a full-size replica of the ark (\$100m to build) which shows how Noah may have done what is recorded in Genesis 7 with manual tools. It was built with hand tools by Amish carpenters, much like Noah might have.

Eternity

As I get older and closer to my eternal destiny, I grow more conscious of life in heaven with God. Our heavenly life and culture will be made from unlimited **time**, unlimited **resources**, and lots of **people**—all extensions of elements from our earthly life. I find it arresting to consider how those same elements are often handled here and now. Many of those with large amounts of unstructured time—ministers, salespeople, homemakers, and retired people--suffer from the highest rates of depression and suicide. 85% of those who win the lottery are found 5 years later with broken health or families,

resulting from empowerment to do to excess as they wish. We also continue to abort about 1 million babies each year in America. It seems that the very gifts of life in eternity--time, resources, and life--are turned by sin into a curse on earth.

Heaven

God never gave up on his original plan for human beings to dwell on Earth. God promises to those who follow Jesus a resurrected life in a resurrected body with the resurrected Christ on a resurrected Earth. Heaven isn't an extrapolation of earthly thinking; Earth is an extension of Heaven. Rather than ignore our imagination, we should fuel it with Scripture. The present Earth is as much a valid reference point for envisioning the New Earth as our present bodies are a valid reference point for envisioning our new bodies. What we call heaven is life in a perfect world as God intended humanity to live it. **Perhaps the whole creation came under our curse because it was under our stewardship.** Nothing is more often misdiagnosed than our homesickness for Heaven. What we love about this life are the things that resonate with the life we were made for. The King will delight to entrust the rule of the nations to those who served Him faithfully when Earth lived under sin's shadow.

Imagine Heaven

In heaven you still have your senses intact; in fact, all your senses seem turbocharged and multiplied. What I experienced in heaven was so real and so lucid and so utterly intense, it made my experiences on Earth seem hazy and out of focus—as if heaven is the reality and life as we know it is just a dream. The whole point of this life is the creation of a spiritual family for God. You had instant access to everything you've ever said or thought or felt or written or believed in your life: past, present, and future. God created Earth in the image of Heaven, just as he created mankind in his image. God has a fantastic sense of humor; I never laughed so much in all my life. Everything seemed to produce its own light. Jesus was speaking inside my mind and I was answering with a rapidity that can only be imagined. The highlight of many NDEs (near death experiences) is this mystical Being of Light who fills them with a love beyond imagination. Love requires freedom, risk, and choice. Even in Heaven, God accomplishes his will through freewill cooperation of angels. You'll never be bored!

Reflections

Since 2006, Martin and I have connected with monthly phone calls, Zoom, or MS Team which provide snapshots he has pieced together into a narrative of sustained and growing fruitfulness in my life. He asked me what I thought was the source of my fruitfulness. He also has repeatedly observed that he knows no one else so diligent and organized around the collection and retention of knowledge. Upon

reflection, I've come to believe these may be related. In my high school Physics class, I was energized by the notion that we can mathematically model and predict the behavior of the real world--and then observe it in the lab (real life). This energy led to my training and a career in Mechanical Engineering, an arena of applied science. In hindsight, perhaps my life is a great experiment for which I'm still collecting and connecting data. Since I was about 15, I've journaled everything I see, hear, read and think that I don't want to forget--about both God and the world. I've been piecing that data into a narrative, as evidenced by 3 decades of Globig Investment Newsletter, WendellNotes, and Journal on my website. My calling--*to discover the currents (flow) of God in the world*--describes that process. The intellectual humility and curiosity to understand what God is doing is being extended to certain notable young people I meet as I wonder with them what God is doing in their lives. Beginning by listening carefully to their spiritual journey, I engage with them in debriefing their life processes to help them discover their identity and calling--and help them navigate their next steps.

I have written this narrative of the Flow as a letter or message to my younger self--what I would have loved to know as a 20-something. Perhaps you will find it helpful to further your journey and know how to navigate the ways of God more quickly than I have.

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[I have written this narrative of the Flow as a message to my younger self--what I would have loved to know at 20-something]. If you want to know your place in the Kingdom of God, follow the dream in your heart. And if you want to know how to get there, follow the relationships you're in. If you're going to lead, you need to write and tell your own faith story. What makes you vulnerable makes you beautiful. Our competence is helpful—but our vulnerability is transformative. You can either impress people or influence them. Those who influence you are those who believe in you and think the best of you. Integrity, beauty, hope, and love are all in the same category as prayer. You can't define them because they are too close to God's image. The downward journey is the gospel story. Since Jesus' death, no one has been able to tell a better one. Flow is an optimal state of consciousness where we feel and perform at our best. Group flow is considered the most pleasurable state on earth. Adults learn best from their own experience. In a Culture of Honor we develop a process for problem solving and create or dismantle culture--defining and refining our values (what's important). A healthy APEST culture may sustain the next revival. Free people are difficult to lead and require Apostles and Prophets to show the way. They establish both an *environment* for others to gain freedom and a *government* for them to keep it. The gospel doesn't take the poor out of poverty; it takes poverty out of the poor. Story is a sense-making mechanism. When we use a story, we create a map. The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes. Perhaps the whole creation came under our curse because it was under our stewardship.]