

Live Where Love Leads You

So, I ended up with a publishing company. I'm not sure how it happened. I was helping a friend with a book he had written. I helped rewrite some of it with another friend, then represented it to the publishing industry. I wasn't a very good agent. I couldn't find anyone in the industry who thought it was worth publishing. So the author, another friend, and I decided to publish it on our own.

And we did. Then *The Shack* started climbing the best-seller lists and other companies wanted to buy it from us. To our surprise one of the largest publishers in the world approached us to enter a partnership with them, not only to help us get *The Shack* to a larger audience but also help with my books and others we think are worthy of publishing in years ahead. They bought into the vision of what we were doing and thought there was a significant space in the reading public for that vision.

So we formed a partnership with the Hachette Book Group, where we maintain our unique identity as Windblown Media. We can do just as much publishing with them as we want to, and yet are not obligated to put everything we do through the Hachette machine. They made it clear all along that they wanted to help us not hinder us. And while we were working things out with them, *The Shack* rose to the very top of the New York Times Best Seller List.

How did all this happen? Believe me, we have had some amazing laughter about it all. No one saw this coming and yet simply responding to him each day has brought us into a place we could not have conceived or conspired to get to.

But that's true about everything I'm involved in at the moment. Nothing I'm doing today, I set out purposely to accomplish. My plans for my life were very different than how things have turned out. Funny how that is! As a twenty-two year-old, freshly graduated from college, and newly married I had so many dreams and visions of the things I thought God wanted me to accomplish. I had confused my ego with his calling, my dreams for his and had assumed I knew what outcomes God had in mind. My first twenty years on that course proved horribly frustrating as I could not convince God to honor my agenda. The last 14 years have been filled with ever increasing joy and gratefulness as God's purposes have overrun my own. And in every way he did something immeasurably beyond anything I could have asked or imagined.

BridgeBuilders began because God asked us to go love people at my children's public school. That one decision started a chain of events that has allowed me to sit in rooms at the most incredible gatherings of deeply conflicted people and help bring about peace. Lifestream started as a way to encourage people to experience a closer walk with Jesus and more relational engagements with others. That led to books, travel and website resources. Windblown Media resulted from simply helping a friend to tell a story God had put on his heart.

Perhaps being fruitful isn't a matter of starting something, following a five-year plan, and achieving it. Perhaps it is a matter of simply being able to respond to the people and situations around us with his love in our heart and his voice in our ear. For most of my life I have drawn too direct a line between what I think God wants and what I must do to get it. It seems Jesus warned us about that: If you try to save your life you'll lose it. If you try to be first you'll end up last.

He only asked us to love, one day at a time, whoever is before us in whatever circumstance we meet them. Everything else he wants to do will flow from that simple reality.

We have filled the world with ministries people have started to accomplish some great thing for God. Many of them never go anywhere. There are a lot of people who come to Hollywood to be a chaplain to the stars. They set up a ministry, beg for money to fund it, and then try to find a way to connect with those people. We do the same with missions and youth ministries. Start a program, fund it, then try and try to get people to take advantage of it.

What if we just started loving the people God puts before us each day, can you imagine what would spill out of that in terms of opportunity, ministry and even growing fellowship?

I think we have it all backwards. Jesus didn't ask us to start ministries. He didn't ask us to accomplish great things. He simply asked us to love others the same way we are loved by him and that will be enough for the whole world to know that we belong to him and that they can too.

People ask me all the time how they can start a house church or connect with other brothers and sisters on a similar journey in their region. Many are frustrated at past attempts that haven't worked out. While I think we can take advantage of Internet forums, email lists and directories to see if we can find people in our area growing in the same realities, that may not be the best way. I now encourage people just to listen to Father every day and live in love toward the people right in front of you. This has worked for Sara and me in our two recent moves and has brought a wealth of relationships locally that have just grown out of taking an interest in the people around us and discovering others who are passionate for the God we love. We don't have to start or join anything for that, unless of course he asks us to.

I am more convinced than ever that everything God wants to do in the world will flow from us learning to live in his love and listening to him as we walk through life. This allows the opportunities in our lives to grow organically, rather than through the artificial means of organizing, promoting, and manipulating others. That may be why he told us his new command would simply be to love like we've been loved.