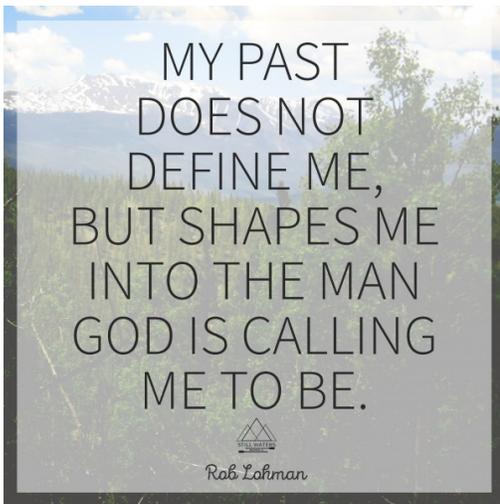


The Rollercoaster Ride to God's Calling in my Life...Part 1



My past does not define me, but shapes me into the man God is calling me to be. Ever wonder how you ended up where you are? I have. Are you not living the life you imagined as a child? Definitely not! I believe my journey involves the divine plan He has had for my life....to help others believe in themselves. I believe His path for me involved going from A to B with a few detours, but I chose to go from A to Z over to C then down to F around to W

across to P and eventually made it to B....where He was calling me to be all the time.

The path God has me on is definitely a calling, because this is not the path I would have chosen nor dreamt of as a child. I wanted to be a doctor, a veterinarian, a marine biologist, and an ADDICT?!? Hold on...where and when did becoming an ADDICT enter the picture!?

Here is the backstory through my addiction into my professional calling as an Interventionist and Addiction Recovery Coach! Along the journey, God showed up in so many wonderful ways where His beauty was seen in and on the other side of the trial...trials that sometimes seemed never ending or hopeless. I believe He called me to help people struggling with addiction and remind them that God does not make junk!

As a child, I was wired differently than most kids, feeling less than or greater than and scarcely in between. I was the kid with braces, glasses and a witty sense of humor. Being the center of attention counterbalanced my insecurities. At age fourteen, a light bulb went on, or possibly off as some might say! Alcohol became my subtle master. I allowed alcohol to steal my joy, my heart, my identity and my passions for life. I lived like a chameleon, blending into any social situation to "feel" accepted.

Fifteen years later, my life started spinning out of control faster than I could lower my standards. My tolerance had grown to the capacity of two bottles of scotch in a twenty-four hour period. Hallucinations of my death illustrated the depths of my hidden pain. I did not

WANT to die, but my subconscious was telling me differently. The more I WANTED to change, the strongholds in my life strengthened. Satan did NOT want me FREE...but deep down I KNEW God had more for me and had a calling in my life to help others.

On June 7th, 2001, I was hanging out in a bar in Fort Wayne, IN....like I did eight nights a week. Suddenly the bar became dead silent, I heard "YOU'RE DONE!", then the bar noise escalated. Unsure what just happened, I said to my buddy "Sean, I gotta go!", so I immediately drove home.

Moments after entering my apartment, my back horizontal on my workout bench.... my heart beating out of my chest..... eyes staring at "the gates of hell".....sweaty palms gripping the 300+ pound steel barbell.....elbows unlocking to drop the crushing weight upon my chest to "take me out of the game"...death imminent ... quickly God intervened through my amazing dog, Jake. Jake's eyes gazed into my soul, penetrating my heart while doing that head tilt thing dog's do. My initial thought "Who is going to feed you in the morning?". Second "What about my parents!?". Third "My brother!". Lastly "What the hell am I doing?".

In that moment, the strength of my Father placed the barbell back on the rack. I know this because I couldn't even bench 225 pounds, much less 300+! Together, God and I poured out every drop of liquor. I felt His arms wrapped around me..comforting me with a peace I had not felt in years. I knew He had more for me. My desire to drink or drug has never returned...that is a MIRACLE! No detox. No withdrawals. Just gone! No more desire. I wanted to tell the world.

Upon awakening, my mother received that phone call she prayed about for years "Mom, I need help! I cannot stop drinking or gambling.!" Sixty-minutes of emotional release followed. Shortly thereafter, my aunt took me to my first recovery meeting. I met people who were laughing and talking about how great their life was in sobriety. I listened. I believed. I believed them because last night I tried to kill myself and today I realized there was a huge great life ahead of me. Obviously sobriety was part of God's plan for my life.

Over the next several years, I learned a great deal about trials and believing that there is a great blessing on the other side of each trial....eventhough some of the trials of life can seem

hopeless at times. When I went from hating the image in the mirror, to loving the image and the potential within, a huge paradigm shift happened. I have definitely made errors in sobriety, but it is in those life lessons I have discovered the beauty in learning from my mistakes.

Getting sober was the easy part, living life-on-life's terms was the challenge. Around 2007 life started to get busy. New marriage. Children. Startup business. The ingredients for a "Recipe for Disaster" had been taking shape for some time:

1. Drifted away from recovery meetings, working my program.
2. Less than 5 hours of sleep a night for numerous years.
3. Two or three energy drinks, eight cups of coffee daily.
4. Lack of exercise, poor diet and adrenals were shot.
5. Feelings of inadequacy as a husband, a father and a man.
6. Multiple negative beliefs about myself.
7. Fear overcame my faith.
8. Lost my business.

Those ingredients mixed with emotional, mental and spiritual bankruptcy lead to my nervous breakdown on February 15th, 2012. Desperate, isolated and disconnected from reality, I lost all my senses and impulsively reacted to my fears. I had an out-of-body moment as I grabbed a box of matches and lit some boxes on fire on our covered patio in our townhouse community. Once I realized what happened, it was too late. WHAT HAD I DONE?!? I sprang into action to get my entire family out of the house, along with my adjacent neighbors. As my family and I walked out the front door, the entire covered patio exploded and fire rushed into our townhome.

My actions caused a ripple effect of destruction in the lives of my wife, my children, my family, my neighbors and my community. I know if I would have had a momentary buffer to process what was happening, the fire NEVER would have happened. Fortunately, nobody was physically hurt, but I know emotional damage ran through my family and community.

To this day, I continue to pray for the opportunity to listen to the hearts of my neighbors to hear how my actions hurt them and express to them my remorse for my actions and to ask for forgiveness.

Desperately wanting to know HOW and WHY this happened, I sought out countless hours of counseling and spiritual guidance to gain deeper insight into my weaknesses, triggers, defects of character and shortcomings. I jumped back into the rooms of recovery. I started to lay a solid foundation for my future and a deep self-awareness of my makeup. I surrounded myself with Godly people. and spiritual mentors. Time to rise up!

Not sure what the future would hold, I knew I needed to press into God and seek Him for guidance. I believed without a doubt that He was and would be in all of the details. I committed to Him that I would no longer walk in fear, but in FAITH. Uncertainties (fears) would now be opportunities (faith) where I believed and trusted He would reveal Himself, in His timing, not mine.

I opted to turn the biggest mistake in my life into the greatest opportunity to RISE up and seek God's purpose for my life, to RISE up and become the man God created me to be. The husband my wife deserved. The father my children deserved. For me to live life believing in Romans 8:28 and Jeremiah 29:11 and Hebrews 11: 1 and James 1: 2-8! Satan was not going to win again. Believing what Pastor Don taught me about my identity on Christ through Neil Anderson's book Victory Over The Darkness. Believing what Pastor Chad pounded into my head about Hebrews 4:16.

Once I chose to fully surrender to His will and walk in faith and integrity, He showed up in so many ways...miracle and blessing after miracle and blessing. God began to reveal His plan for my life. His plan for the trials my family and I endured and the ones we were about to go through. He showed up in the details. He showed up on the other side of the trials. He is here now and will forever be with myself and my family. His Word says that He will never leave me, nor forsake me. I BELIEVE that deep inside my heart.

The calling God brought me into and that I opened my heart to receive is one where I am blessed to walk through life with families who have loved one's suffering from addiction...an

addiction that tears through families like a tornado destroying everything in it's pathway. A life where I am blessed to help people break free from addiction to discover who they truly are, without substance, and to realize the beautiful life they can live to find their own purpose in life..and to hopefully change lives in a positive way going forward.

That was the backstory to my addiction. So, what happened as a result of the fire on February 15, 2012? What legal consequences came from this? Did He restore my marriage? How did God show up in the details?

Please read Part 2 of The Rollercoaster Ride to God's Calling in my Life to hear the incredible ways God revealed His plan for me along the journey. Hindsight is always 20/20, but to see His plan unfold "in" the journey was / is truly incredible.

You can also learn more about His calling for me at www.LiftedFromTheRut.com

The Rollercoaster Ride to God's Calling in my Life....Part 2 of 2!

In Part 1 of this two part series I discussed my journey through attempted suicide, addiction, recovery and events leading to a major nervous breakdown in 2012. That is where we pick up now and watch the journey unfold into God's calling for my life. You cannot deny that He is, was and always will be in the details!

I opted to turn the biggest mistake of my life in 2012 into the greatest opportunity to rediscover the TRUE me and to RISE up and seek God's purpose for my life...to truly secure my identity in Him.

Romans 8:28 (NASB) And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

On December 4th, 2012....six months after I confessed to starting the fire... I was arrested on nineteen felonies and thirteen misdemeanors while being held on a \$100,000 bond. God definitely entered the courtroom FIRST during the bond hearing, because thanks to the support of Pastor Don and the expressed heart of my amazing wife, the judge agreed to a

seventy-five percent reduction in bond...allowing me to be released from jail until my sentencing hearing on July 8, 2013. The bond reduction miracle floored my attorney, as he had never seen a reduction in bond like that before....but I did tell him to expect miracles along the way because Jen, our community, and myself served a big God that is in the business of doing the impossible.

During my open sentencing hearing, I was facing four to fifty-six years in the Colorado Department of Corrections. When I say "I", I should be saying "we", because my family would also be doing time with me, just in a very different way...a much more difficult way. The sound of the judges gavel rang through the silent courtroom just moments before I was handcuffed and escorted through the doorway leading to a 5 year sentence with concurrent 8 year suspended sentence to the Department of Corrections. I saw this as a gift of MERCY from my Father.

How does a wife that is left behind explain to her two young children that Daddy had to go away, unsure of when he would return? How does a wife answer the daily questions of "Mommy, why can't we just call Daddy?" "Mommy, when will Daddy be home?" "Mommy, why did Daddy have to leave?" "Mommy, where is Daddy?" "Mommy, why are you crying?" "Mommy...Mommy...Mommmy.."

I don't know how she did it. My strong and courageous wife endured alot of heartache and undeservedly had to navigate the waters of being a "single" mother within the shame of living in my mistakes. Jen dug deep to ask the questions "Who is this man I married and how do I handle this situation?" "How do I stay with this man who has caused so much harm?" Gratitude is an understatement when I say that "I am grateful Jen chose to remain married to me, for better and for worse, and is committed to working through life together!" We both believe that our life will one day be a reflection of God's mercy and grace to be used to encourage other couples to work through the messiness to receive the blessing on the other side. We love the song my Jack Johnson *"It's always better when we're together"* and I am thankful we still are!

During the next three hundred twenty-four days, time was my number one asset in prison. Outside of the approximate 30 hours a week I worked in the kitchen, I spent every waking hour working on my spiritual and physical conditioning. God slowly started to reveal His plan for my life! The theme for what I felt God was calling me to was to help others realize that God does not make junk and that each of us has a purpose in life, a purpose that is NOT to be stuck in the shame of our mistakes, but to gain a deep understanding as to why God created us and how He wants us to use our gifts and talents.

Also revealed to me is that before I can help others, I need to be secure in who I was, or should I say WHOSE I am. For the first time in my life, I truly sought to understand what it meant to be a Christian. Why had I believed all of my life that God truly was the One and Only, that He loved me so much He sent His one and only Son to die for all of my sins? What it meant to not just be saved by grace, but to live life as Jesus lived, to live life as Jesus is my Savior **and** LORD! I wanted to know. I wanted to believe and live with conviction. I wanted be free from the strongholds and false beliefs in my life, which is part of the calling God is revealing to me.

I spent my days and nights with my nose buried in books and writing in my journals. My hunger to learn grew exponentially. I became deeply involved in the beautiful, stand-alone Chapel and plugged into every single program they offered, taking eleven life-learning classes which drastically changed my perception on life and of me. God spoke to me through the authors of the forty-two books I read and studied....authors like John Ortberg, Mark Batterson, Stephen Covey, Fritz Ridenour, Neil Anderson, Viktor Frankl, and of course the Authors of the Bible.

While I was encountering God in prison, my wife was back home trying to navigate the world of being everything to our two precious children. Managing the stress of being the sole provider and continuing to do life without me home. God continued to answer my prayers that He would take care of my family. He showed up through our amazing community of friends and family by providing financially and emotionally. God always came through.

By God's grace and mercy, on May 21st, 2014 I was released from prison to a halfway house just 8.9 miles from my family. On April 15th, 2015, I was granted parole and was aloud to

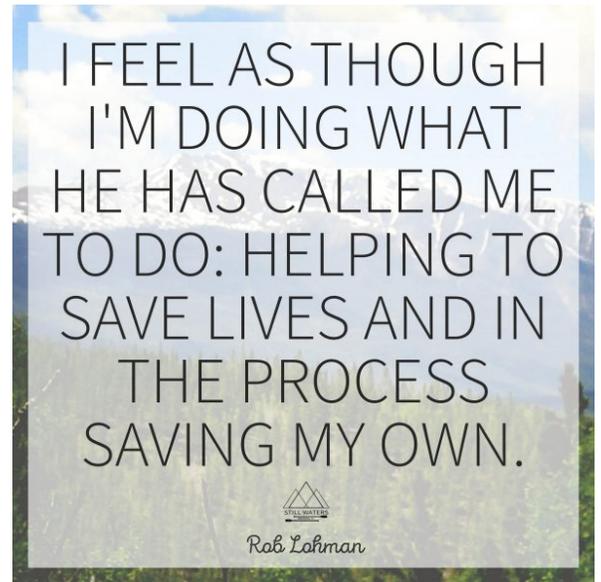
move back in with my wife and children. What was supposed to be thirteen years away from my family, God turned in into less than two years. What a miracle! What a blessing!

One of the biggest lessons I learned in this journey is that I need to have my focus on God. That God's grace and mercy are sufficient. He showed up time and time again, sometimes subtly and others in miraculous ways. Whatever the legal system had/has in store for me, God had a better plan. I have to keep my heart, my mind, my eyes and my ears open to receive what He had in store for me and my family.

I serve an amazing God and His plan for my life is so much greater than I could ever imagine. Due to the challenges I faced and face living life with a felony record, many doors were closed in regards to seeking a long-term career that could provide financially for

my family. Road block after road block, I kept the faith. Thankfully a friend reached out to me and suggested starting my own business as an Addiction Interventionist and Addiction Recovery Coach. I definitely believe that was a door God opened, because since I walked through that door, I can see that this is the path He chose for me. Since December 2015, I have now made a career out of helping other addicts get clean and sober. I now have a heart for people to spend time behind bars, that I never would have had before this experience. The name of the business is the name He revealed to me while locked up in prison.....Lifted From The Rut...which is exactly what He is helping me do: lift people out of their life ruts to become the amazing people God created them to be!

I'm living a healthy, sober, balanced life, even though I continue to struggle with keeping God first. I seek Him daily. I feel as though I'm doing what he has called me to do, helping to save lives and in the process saving my own. I believe part of my calling in life is to share my story / testimony with other men and youth who might be struggling with learning how to deal with



life on life's terms and the dangers that come with not developing the proper COPING skills to handle the challenges that life deals us.

I have become involved with Prison Fellowship, the Denver Dream Center, sober living facilities and treatment center communities. I continue to focus on becoming a better husband, a better father and a stronger follower of Jesus Christ.

I wanted to thank all of our amazing prayer warriors that have been by our side this entire journey. The support and love from my parents blew me away as they displayed so much unconditional love. I want to express my gratitude for my wife who chose to remain my wife, my partner in life and to stay true to the lyrics of Jack Johnson "it's always better when we're together". We continue to heal as a family surrounded by an amazing community of friends.

The road to recovery and healing never ends. God continues to refine me, and I am willing to be refined. He called me to help others believe in themselves, but first I had to believe in me. I believe I am a child of God and that my identity is in Jesus Christ! Nothing will ever take that away again. Thank you God!

To learn more of the details as to the miracles and blessings that resulted from this journey and in turning the wheel over to God and letting Him drive, follow my blog on my website at www.LiftedFromTheRut.com

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