

PRESENTATION TO MANHATTAN CHAPTER
NEW CANAAN SOCIETY
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ED MORGAN

Thank you, Richard. Good morning guys.

It is an honor to be up here as kind of an inside speaker—But Richard, I'm sure we'd all be willing to kick in a little extra to get a real speaker. I mean if it's a matter of budget—then you could just let us know.

I see I have three of my distinguished Board members here this morning. I'll have to be on my best behavior and cut out some of the real story...

Actually, I want to do just what the previous two guys from the Bowery Mission have done and tell a story of how God has dealt with me and how I went from civilian Christian to combatant status.

I'll start with a story sent to me by one of our friends of the Mission - who also happens to be Jewish, so this story is for you, Richard...

A frail 80-year-old mother is celebrating her birthday and her three prosperous sons each give her a present. Harry gives her a new house. Harvey gives her a new car and driver. And Bernie gives her a huge parrot that can recite the entire Torah. A week later, she calls her three sons together and says: "Harry, thanks for the nice house, but I can only live in one room. Harvey, thanks for the nice car, but I just can't stand the driver. Bernie, thanks for giving your mother something she could really enjoy. That chicken was delicious."

Believe it or not, that story actually makes a spiritual point. We're often clueless as to what to do with God's gifts to us. I was – more on that in a minute.

So, if my story – full of mistakes and hard lessons, can help in any way, I'm grateful.

I grew up in Princeton, NJ – eldest son of a pastor – heir of five generations of Presbyterian pastors – including a grandfather who ministered here at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church.

I didn't want to rebel openly but I didn't want to be a pastor either. I was the model "elder son"—for those of you on the retreat---looking good but pretty far from God.

I went to the state university, Rutgers, at the height of the Vietnam War.

I enrolled in Air Force ROTC because the alternative was going to be the draft.

I graduated in that very useful major, philosophy,
and immediately turned into an Air Force second Lieutenant.

I had been active heading up the Intervarsity Christian Fellowship Chapter at Rutgers.

So that first winter in the Air Force, stationed in Illinois, I decided I'd suffer for Jesus, doing IV's beach evangelism project in Ft. Lauderdale at Spring Break. It was there on the beach that I met this terrific Midwest girl named Judy. We've now been married about 40 years.

So to shorten the chronology...

I got engaged,

I got orders to Korea two weeks later,

We got married in a hurry,

I took Judy on a supposedly unaccompanied tour to Korea

where she taught at a mission school while I commanded a radar site near the DMZ,

We came back to the States,

I went to grad school at Illinois—got my Master's in Mass Communications and Journalism,

We moved to DC,

I got a job working for a consultant, who was arguing cases in front of the FCC,

And a year later, in Washington, joined General Electric.

That was the beginning of a 19 ½ year career that was all in God's plan, as it turned out – but at the time it was my plan.

Within two years I was invited up to GE headquarters at 570 Lexington here in New York to edit the worldwide company magazine.

We settled in Fairfield, Connecticut and had two of our three sons and I continued being the model elder brother...church, Christian school, all the right stuff.

One day in 1977 my boss said to me, “there's this crazy guy, the youngest VP GE ever appointed—who is running GE plastics and materials and medical in Pittsfield, Massachusetts—and he wants someone to help him with his first external analyst meeting. You're fast at synthesizing business plans into prose—you want to try? His name is Jack Welch.”

So I go up there—we go to lunch at the Pittsfield Country Club. He gives me a copy of the business plan for plastics, materials and medical; he writes three words on a cocktail napkin and says can you give me a draft on Tuesday?

That was the beginning of a six year association.

I ended up flying around the country doing analyst meetings, employee meetings, the RCA/NBC acquisition and most memorably—intra-company lobbying.

GE had a management meeting every January in Belair, FL (later Boca) where candidates for Chairmen each presented –sometimes with 16 projector slide shows. The competition for “best in show” was fierce.

For instance, one year after Jack made Vice Chair and took over GE appliances—I rented an empty house in Weston, CT—turned it into a “house of the future” and a 16 projector slide show—in two weeks. Cost was no object. There were appliances in that house that still haven't been invented twenty five years later.

These were the early days of the Citation business jet—a marvelous machine—that I would occasionally be dispatched on—to create a presentation or such.

Along the way I met and subsequently created communications pieces or whole meetings for:

Bob Wright – later head of NBC.

Larry Bossidy, who went to Honeywell as CEO,

Norm Blake who went to USFXG,

Bob Nardelli, who went to Home Depot, perhaps lost a little of the business discipline he learned at GE and went to Chrysler and of course the notorious Gary Wendt.

All these people came through GE Capital where Jack sent me to head the communications there - after he got tired of me.

It was all great stuff and I learned a lot from Jack—being around him for many, many hours and absorbing how his mind worked. So in the end I could write for him and almost always hit it the first time.

With Jack I also saw a lot of local color and heard a lot of highly inventive language not suitable for mixed company.

I would say his passion to do extraordinary things rubbed off on me.

His tremendous ability to filter out the unimportant was a big plus.

His reliance on his lightening fast instincts with people was not always gentle but it was effective.

His passionate dislike of bureaucracy and people who behave like bureaucrats remains with me.

And his emphasis on speed and agility and “boundarylessness”...that also stays with me today.

As I said, the last years at GE were all at GE Capital where I learned business turnarounds. Except I didn’t actually do business turnarounds. Some of you guys have done it all—I only watched it all. I don’t qualify for Bob Buford’s book Success to Significance. Mine is more like – “staffie to significance”.

My favorite Welch quote is...

“When change on the inside is at a slower pace than the changes on the outside—the end of the organization is in sight.”

Ok, so how did a guy who was trained in journalism and spent many years helping GE’s senior executives talk to the public get into ministry?

It started with dissatisfaction and then alarm and then despair.

I was teaching adult Sunday school at our church and beginning to realize that if I didn’t do something my life might consist of (1) born—(2) raised a family and worked for GE—and (3) died.

I came across this quote from psychologist Henry James—not a man of God but nevertheless the author of a dynamite quote...

“The best use of life is for that which outlasts life”

I’m teaching this stuff and I’m thinking—I’m a hypocrite. I have to do something worthwhile with my life. I’m talking about how only two things are eternal—people and God’s word—and I’m doing nothing about it except my sons. I was not at all sure I had ever heard from God directly.

Now here comes the John Calvin part—the part where I have no idea why we did this—beyond God’s sovereignty. My wife and I decided—independently of my career angst—that we should be baptized as adults.

This made no sense—I was a former elder of the church, chairman of a Christian school we had helped found, Sunday school teacher and perfect “elder brother”—but I was missing one thing—a sense of real connection to the Lord.

I remember not going forward at a Billy Graham rally as a teenager. I was convinced I had to set it right.

So in 1986, at an evening service, in front of many puzzled friends, at Calvary Evangelical Free Church in Trumbull CT, we were both baptized.

Oh my, that's when our troubles started. I have since learned there's a cosmic war dimension to getting baptized as an adult.

When you declare which side you're on publicly—you go from non-combatant clueless Christian to inductee and, just like joining the Army, things change in a hurry.

The upside is you get to be part of the most exciting cause on earth—real stuff—cosmic stuff.

The downside is----first there's boot camp.

Within a few short weeks of being baptized

- The President of GE Capital, Gary Wendt, no longer liked my services. He didn't want to fire me because of my history with Jack, but he made it clear he was unhappy.
- I had pains in my stomach and went through a complete medical workup which resulted in a misdiagnosis—the long and short of it was I thought I was dying of pancreatic cancer and you couldn't convince me otherwise, even though that was reversed within a few weeks.
- I went into clinical depression—I had never ever imagined I could do that. GE guys are tough right? I got very acquainted with Zanax and anti-depressants and mental pain that felt worse than any physical pain I'd ever had. Depression is like a black hole.

In this state I was not in my right mind. I would try to pray and ask God why all this and for the longest time I never connected it with the baptism. Duh!

I would drag myself to work—endure—come home and hibernate. This went on for almost two years until I literally thought my life was over. Looking back on it now I see that my spirit was changing.

I started feeling totally disconnected with the people on top of their game and I started empathizing with people in trouble. I began to realize that I liked people of humble spirit best.

My kids were not sure what happened to Dad—they just knew I did stuff like cancel family vacations because I thought I couldn't handle it.

All this time I'm still in charge of communications at GE Capital, if you can imagine that—but I'm looking over my shoulder big time and knowing this wasn't going to end well.

I had a stable of outside speechwriters—and one day this Christian speechwriter guy walks into my office and throws a magazine on my desk called The Christian Herald. He says, “This book is in trouble and we're going to save it.” Now John's a dreamer—so I said, “Sure, John, now here's a speech to write.”

But he persisted and so he and I threw together a business plan and went up to see the President of this weird organization in Chappaqua, New York, called Christian Herald. CHA had a magazine, two negative option book clubs and two obscure but historic charities in New York called The Bowery Mission and Christian Herald Children.

The magazine was indeed failing...but the President threw us out anyway

Three weeks later I met the Chairman of the Board at a reception downtown. He was a Wall Street lawyer and Chairman of Central Hudson Gas and Electric.

I ended up on the Board of Christian Herald.

I saw that this organization would never have been selected as a turnaround candidate at GE Capital—but I was strongly drawn to it anyway.

I think God had softened me up and I was about to do something really stupid.

When the Board saw my interest and the task force I put together and asked me if I wanted to work for them full-time at a 60% pay cut with two kids in college—I said yes.

I was pretty desperate to do something real.

So here's what I inherited:

- 115 year old organization,
- posting \$500,000 deficits,
- going thru a \$3mm endowment like a hot knife thru butter,
- a failing magazine with a 38% renewal rate

- two book clubs being eaten alive by Bertelsman,
- revenue flowing the wrong way—from charity donations to a for-profit business
- a Board that didn't know what to do,
- but doing one thing very right—serving the poor in NYC. That's God's heart.

I didn't know what to do either—Judy was scared for us—we had these college bills. And then God confirmed the whole thing for us.

We had one son at Columbia, almost done, and we had one son just starting Vanderbilt.

Our second son calls up from Vanderbilt and says, “I don't know why I did this but I stopped by the NROTC detachment on campus to see about Navy scholarships. They asked my GPA (3.7) and asked if I'd like to look into a full Navy Scholarship.” Within 30 days he was on full scholarship. We never wrote another check to Vanderbilt.

We were amazed...and after that I never looked back.

So we re-organized Christian Herald completely, created a new purpose statement focused on transformed lives—very important—built a development department to fund the ministry, closed the magazine, sold the book clubs to Bertelsman, decided to focus on outcomes instead of process like a lot of charities, decided to be number one at rebuilding shattered lives in the City by God's grace (sounds like early Jack!), and decided to call our kids camp and inner city ministries to kids, Kids With A Promise (Jeremiah 29:11).

I started realizing that this was a ministry close to God's heart (Matthew 25 and Isaiah 58). Rick Warren has a great quote about that realization for him...

“I've got two seminary degrees and a Bible school degree and I'm wondering how it is I missed those two thousand verses in the Bible that talk about the poor”

I started realizing that this ministry is a perfect way to reach New York's leaders too—when they see what miracles God can do for “the least of these”—it's much more effective than preaching.

We started a gala in the Rainbow Room to put these unlikely two crowds—recovering homeless and business leaders—together.

I met this character B.J. Weber early on. His word to me was, “Brother, you'll never get this thing up to its potential working it from Fairfield County. You and Judy get in here and live here and it will take off.”

He was right—we moved in. In 2001—two weeks after our youngest son went to Wheaton College we moved to Murray Hill, living over our headquarters—and leaders started thinking of us a lot more. (I'm pretty slow)

Thank you, BJ!

So—to be a name dropper—city leaders started thinking of the Bowery Mission as something they could support. First the CEO of New York Life—Harry Hohn – God bless him.

Then Rudy-

Then Ray and Veronica Kelly-

Then Diane Sawyer and Mike Nichols and Candice Bergen and Meryl Streep and Jack Rudin and John Catsimatidis and Katie Couric, to name a few.

Income has grown 3 times in the last ten years. But more importantly – over 1500 men and women have had their lives completely transformed...

- *connected to Christ*
- *connected to family*
- *a job and a place to live*
- *a plan for the future*

It's a constant struggle because it's spiritual warfare. When you work for GE, the dark side doesn't really care what you do—you're not a threat.

When you're snatching back people who are already in the enemy's body count that's a different story.

So – in conclusion—what have I learned?

- We men were built to be warriors, whether it's in the Navy Seals or thru the arts. When we get to do something for the real cosmic battle—it's like nothing else.
- When you think your life is over it's probably just beginning—if it were really over, as my wife told me, “you'd have dying grace—and you definitely don't!”
- If you're dissatisfied—that's great—it's probably the Lord, gently trying to help you focus on real stuff, the thousand year view.
- Bill Hybels talks about how all the great characters of the bible were fueled by holy discontent – men like David, Moses and him. So use discontent to look at the big picture.

So what am I thinking these days? That's a different talk.

I will say this. Time is racing faster and faster for me and I want to use the time well.

Some of you remember Tom Tewell, a highly talented brother who was with us in the City—as the senior pastor of FAPC. My favorite sermon of Tom's began and ended with this poem—recited as only he could recite it:

*The clock of life is wound but once
And no one has the power
To know just when the hands will stop
At late or early hour
Now is the time we have, my friends
To live, love and work with a will
Don't wait until tomorrow
For the clock may then be still.*

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Thanks!

