

The Gathering Church
Russ Ferry - message 9/20/26

My Story Matters
Discovering Who I am
Deepening My Journey
Seeing God in Every Step

God Controls Everything
Live Your Life
Love Your Life
Here We Are
Cord of Hope
Keep It Taught

It is a privilege and honor to be before you today

As a whole I have had an easy life.

I had never slept in a hospital bed until I was in my sixties.

About 6 years ago I had a joy ride to the hospital where the Dr in ER said he had good news and bad news for me. I asked for the bad news and he informed me that I had multiple pulmonary embolisms in both my lungs... how about the good news....you are alive, most patients that arrive by ambulance in ER do not make it here alive..

This is not a sermon it is a story - my story.

God is not finished with me yet nor is he finished with you.

Isaiah 55:8-9 ⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways

However, based in the scripture how big is God, how big is your God.

I believe a lot of our issues in life are because we put God in a human box and as the scripture says His ways are not our ways His thoughts are not our thoughts.

How can the clay say to the potter why have you made me like this?

Isaiah 45:9 "What sorrow awaits those who argue with their Creator. Does a clay pot argue with its maker? Does the clay dispute with the one who shapes it, saying, 'Stop, you're doing it wrong!' Does the pot exclaim, 'How clumsy can you be?'

1. **God Controls Everything**; No matter how you think you can mess it up, He is still in control.
2. He orchestrates. He is putting together our stories every day. Each of us has an instrument to play in this great symphony called life.
3. My story is not your story. And your story is not my story. God has a story for you to live and tell. It is unique and He gave it just to you; **Live Your Life** and **Love Your Life**.

You get to hear a little of my story and some examples of how God works and has worked in a **History of me:**

Born in 1952 (I know it was a long time ago) in Greenwich, CT;
Grew up in a small harbor town called Southport. I am the youngest of 3, yes the baby in the birth order and I agree with Dawn's comment last week, I was three - verry, verry young!



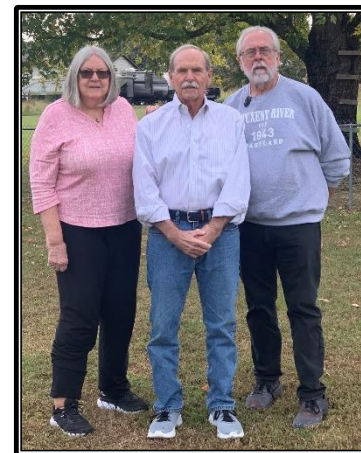
My oldest sister Lynn (who just passed in late June), had a home in NC and Alaska.

Brother Ted lives in St Augustine. Lost his wife to dementia 1 ½ years ago after a 7 year battle. Yes, we fell directly into the Rules pattern on the slide to the T.



Lynn was the rule maker, the big sister who called the shots Ted was totally the reason we had rules. He suffered for "short man disease" but with a heart of gold. I disagree with the slide for the youngest. I think I was the reason my parents stopped having kids, because they finally got it right.

Here is a picture of us - Three very old!



Dad got a job at the Cape, and we packed it up and moved to Titusville, FL in 1967. I was 15 (don't do that to your kids – it is a tough time of life to move) I was just interested in female relationships and a sophomore in HS! Ted was senior in HS (Move when you are a senior in HS. What is up with that?)

Lynn had the easy part because it was her first year in college and the college was in FL.

I went to work at the Space Center in 1973 as a Technical Illustrator. I had a local architect that took me under his wing and taught me drafting ... I had no formal training, just used my artistic abilities and natural talent...

Married in 1974 (my bride Joretta of 52 years in November)
We have 3 incredible kids

Aaron 1976 (50) is the lead Pastor Northside Church of God in Jacksonville, FL. His wife Katie, son Kaleb who graduated from Indiana Wesleyan University and is a Worship Art Pastor in Lakeland, FL, and Leah who is finishing up her athletic training degree.

Selah 1979 (46) Sr. Paralegal and partner of a Law firm in Orlando lives in T'ville (My favorite daughter!) She has two boys: Trey who graduated from Stetson University last year and is working in NJ, and Brockton a senior in high school.

Micah 1984 (42) retired after 21 yrs as a Master Sergeant in the Marine Corp 21 yr. He works in Maryland and is married to Vanessa, and they have one child - Marshall 13.



As a side note the birth order in our family did not work out like Dawn's slide. Our baby should have been the middle child or some kind of combination

Our kids went to PABS and were home schooled for a few years.

Moved to Massachusetts in 1998 (for 8 years) when Micah was starting high school and both Selah and Aaron were in college (freshman and senior respectively).

Moved back to Titusville for a couple of years.

Moved to Waco, Tx for two years; job required me to be there. (Back story - In 1971 had a leather shop in the Miracle City mall, put it aside and had kids and developed multiple careers.) This move to Texas rejuvenated my love for the craft. I bought some equipment and started enjoying the artist in me again, developed my skills and is sort of my main gig now!

And back to Titusville. And **Here We Are**.

Career history: As I mentioned before, I was a tech illustrator, IT manager, Software practice manager, remodeler, franchise owner (failed... I will talk about that later), Director of franchise coaching, IT director and Director of Franchise Systems Innovations. My final hurrah was when I had the privilege of leading a team both in-house and outside the company to develop a software system for our franchises that included estimating, job cost tracking and analysis and interface with financial software; a complete system to run a franchise.

God is in control!

At about 55 I felt like God finally orchestrated all my life experiences together.

I was working for a small franchisor when all my past experiences had come together and made sense: My experience as a carpenter, handyman, franchise owner, and IT Director. My successes and failures had all come together and were all requirements for me to be the best person to do the job. It would have taken multiple people with the each of the skill sets and experience to do what I had to do.

God is in control, all life experiences (good and what we think are bad) can and will work together. God put the pieces of my life together!

Disclaimer here: You may never come to this grandiose revelation, but rest assured He is in control and knows what He is doing and it is for your good.

It may look really bad, but are we doubting that He knows what he is doing?

Remember: Isaiah 55:8-9 ⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways.

My Spiritual Walk: saved in 1975 in a small church in t'ville. The key factor in my spiritual growth was I was well disciplined. I had a pastor who was an evangelist by gift but was also majorly concerned about Christian growth. I became a Sunday school teacher and served on church leadership. Kids went to Park Avenue Baptist School, and we eventually started going to church there. Served as a deacon at Park Avenue Baptist Church and served and chaired the school board (during Joe Ferguson's tenure as principal of that school). Active in a church in Massachusetts and Waco. Returned to Park Avenue Baptist Church, to the Grove Church and now here.

Examples of God being in control
French class

Was scared to stand in front of people, like most folks, and recite a paragraph from the French curriculum; to the point of making myself sick on the way to school.
God was in control and saw my way out with strength
During my time working for Rockwell, I was required to make presentations to military leaders and NASA officials – God was in control
My final job before retirement was Conference speaker and trainer for a Franchise company

Job in Massachusetts

Take a job that stretches/challenges you.

I lived on this scripture and well as others because I was way over my head.

Isaiah 54:4 "Fear not, for you will not be ashamed; be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced"

I got up every morning asking for wisdom and grace.

If I can give a word of advice: you may not think that you are qualified, but the person who hired you saw something in you and God placed you there for a reason.

Franchise owner Failure

I bought a Handyman/remodeling franchise and I failed miserably within 3 years. I think I did everything wrong and paid the price. But God had other plans.

I was taught the "You are not a failure. You just failed. Failures don't define you.

Have a **Cord of Hope** and **Keep It Taught** (with no slack)!

Director of Franchise Coaching

A year or so after closing the franchise a friend of mine called and said they were looking for a franchise coach at the company he was working for. I thought he was a little crazy since I had a failed franchise. I went to TX for an interview with the president of the company and God used the failures that I had as lessons learned on how not to run a franchise as the tool that got me the job. Within 1 year I was the director of the Franchising coaching department.

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Joretta and I have been richly blessed, we have been married for almost 52 years, no cancer no divorces, no major drama. Joretta is a prayer warrior, loves kids (still works with 1 & 2-year-olds at her sister's daycare). She is a great Mom and wife and she has a story. We have had our struggles and issues, and God only knows how and why we have lasted 50+ years together. If there is anything the I have gotten out of this series of "Our Story Matters" is that we all have a story. (Again, "your story is not my story.") After Joe spoke a few weeks ago, I was thinking about their story. Folks, it is not remotely like our story, and in fact it is almost the opposite. But it is ours. And you have yours...

