

CHAPTER 11

A LIFE FILLED FULL OR A LIFE FULFILLED?

Here I was “living in the thick of thin things”, as Stephen R. Covey would put it. Being a wife and a parent was an amazing season in my life. The children and I had the days to ourselves, filled with activities, fun and friendships. The business my husband was heading up was taking off, and we would catch up, when we could, in the evenings. Pouring into Arthur and Martha to give them everything I thought they needed and could possibly want was my primary role. Alexander was consumed with his work.

We went to Parent and Child to do all the painting and creative stuff, as I wanted them to be free to make a mess and explore. This took any stress out of trying to do this at home and was so much more fun with others.

We went to Mainly Music at St Luke’s Church with Vicky, who was amazing. I even covered for a term while she went to Europe. Arthur played golf happily at home, swinging his clubs from the lawn and sending balls way into the paddock below. He learnt to ride his bike we’d brought over from the UK that had front and back brakes. He spent hours in the sandpits at pre-school and in the garden at home, digging and “farming” with his trucks and tractors. Martha was into

everything and anything, curious, intelligent and always looking for connection. Her brother was the centre of her life. One of our favourite times was at Gumboots, the play group Megan, our sister-in-law's sister had invited us to.

Arthur soon went off to Kindergarten, where he and his mates engineered all kinds of stuff in the sand pit and tool shed. It was here I met Tanya, the "Tupperware Lady." We got talking. Tupperware had pulled out of the UK, so I was stoked to see it was thriving here. I went with her to a training meeting on their products—and the rest is history. I signed up, as a part time job that could work around the children, with Alexander home in the evenings. It was a great fit. Within six months, I was running a team and within eighteen months we were the number one region in the North Island, beating Auckland and Wellington. Hawke's Bay held that title for the next eighteen months, and during that time I went on some fabulous all-expenses-paid trips, including to Hong Kong and Queenstown.

It was here that the cracks started to show. I was investing my time into the children, our home, the people around us and the business. I had high hopes of putting in a swimming pool with my earnings. I was actually working full-time—running a team and doing four parties a week was not a part-time evening-only deal. I had two children under five at home. My husband was away with work a lot, wining, dining and entertaining in order to secure some great contracts and customers. His parents would come and babysit occasionally, it was all getting out of hand and out of alignment. There was little time or energy left for Alexander and me. Our values and priorities were challenged and it transpired, when tested, that our priorities and values were quite different.

He loved the social life, hanging out with the names and faces in Hawke's Bay, the people he had been to school with, many of whom were in business together. This was a challenge for me as I didn't fit in. I was not bothered about what cars people owned, what houses or areas they lived in or what they or their parents did. It reminded me of the entitlement so many girls had at school. The arrogance and self-importance got in the way. I was more interested in who they

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were as a person and their character. I have always been a lightweight when it comes to alcohol too—one glass of wine and I am seriously light-headed; two glasses and I'm stuffed. Plus, I had two beautiful children who would be up at the crack of dawn wanting my attention. Our two worlds were starting to separate without us realising.

It is interesting, I can see that now as I look back. I didn't have a lot of friends at any point in my life. I was not one of the popular kids. Moving schools, areas, homes and parental relationships all played a part in my lack of self-esteem and identity. Much of what I saw was false to me, empty and transient. It was often focused on what I or the family owned, how I looked and what I did, not who I was as a person. The disconnect was starting to show.

I did, however, have a few good friends and families who were a real blessing. They valued me, saw me, heard me and invited me into their lives and homes. They took me in and treated me like family. Shena, Alex and Chrissie were my three at school. Each one of them and their families poured love and kindness into me, having me in their homes, including me in their overseas family holidays. I was truly blessed and loved and wanted for nothing, even then. Amy, Heather and Nicky were the three in North Dalton, that special time of newlyweds and starting a family. Tanya, Megan and Claire were my crew in this season of preschool and kindergarten. I felt alone in this busy world, and yet I was never alone. It's funny how when I was in it, I couldn't see it. It is only when we take time to pause and reflect that we get to see the bigger picture. It is only now, as I reflect that I see His grace and favour, His hand in my life, putting the right people around me at the right time.

This was my wake-up season. I was trying to be a superwoman, being all things to everyone. I believe each and every one of us is programmed for love and connection, to be part of something bigger than ourselves, to have a sense of belonging and acceptance. I was striving to find my place, to find meaning and self-worth. Tupperware had taken over, and my life had gone out of balance. My priorities were no longer in the right order.

My husband wanted us to earn more money so we could do more and have more. Me working for Tupperware was my way of trying to fill that gap and give me a purpose outside of being a mum. Yet he didn't want me out in the evenings and expected everything done before I left, including getting the children into bed. I was rushing around trying to keep everyone happy, to get all of the children's routine done before I left. It became too hard for me, the turning point being when I was leaving for a Tupperware party with Martha screaming because she wanted Mum not Dad to put her to bed. So I handed over the team and said goodbye to Tupperware in an attempt to put things back in the right order. I was burnt out and looking for love in all the wrong places again, trying to please everyone and fix everything. I was living a lie and was struggling to find the Truth.

Reflect and Reframe

What a season. I was in the thick of things, desperately trying to keep the wheels on the bus. To be all things to everyone and do everything. I knew I couldn't keep it up. Yet I had no idea how to sort it out. There I was doing my best to fulfill my role as Mum, a home technician (gardening, cleaning, cooking etc), running a business and a team, and then somewhere at the end was my husband. I was rushing around taking the kids here, there and everywhere. I was a hundred miles and hour in my work and loved it. However, I was exhausted and had no time or energy to invest in my marriage. Alexander was living the high life, wining and dining, and I was 'slaving' away at home trying so hard to meet the expectations of him and others.

I was starting to lose myself, lose my grip and get lost in the lies that I believed. The things I thought would make me happy, fill my buckets and bring me peace and joy did not. I was looking externally at the shiny objects like the amazing Land Rover Discovery I drove and the house we had, rather than internally, where all the gold is stored. I had no idea of the treasure within, my priorities or lanes.

I was always busy; one of our friends described me as an Eveready Battery. I never stopped. I re-focused on getting my marriage and

family back on track. Energy, grit, determination and passion were never in short supply. The Tupperware business had brought in some extra funds and a lifestyle of trips and gifts, it had, however left me empty and unfulfilled. The recognition and accolades I was getting there were not a great substitute for the lack of love at home. I had created my life this way. I needed to get back into alignment.

I had everything: the European car, the beautiful villa in the country, two amazing children, the dog, the cat, the GM husband. We did all the activities from music, to Kindergarten to playgroup... yet something was missing.

Dear Reader

An amazing friend of mine and spiritual mum, Maryann, shared a couple of really pivotal truths in our early days walking together. One was that God was the **God of the uncomfortable** and the other was to **stay in my lane**.

I am going to unpack these both a little for you, and I encourage you to consider how they apply to you and your life.

1. God of the uncomfortable

I always wanted an easy life, not to be a bother to anyone. Just to be happy, have enough, be at peace and go quietly under the radar. Unfortunately, there are people, governments, environments and natural events that often get in the way of this. When Maryann shared that God was a God of the uncomfortable, I got it. When we get comfortable, we stop moving, growing and learning. Our lives become less than rather than more than. It is when we are challenged that we are stretched and we grow (more than) if we choose to. Many pull back and withdraw (less than) shying away from the step up to the next level. The choice is always ours and the battle is often won or lost in our heads.

I encourage you to look back in your life and consider the times when you have sat comfortably and not stepped out and how that has worked out for you. I encourage you to think of all those times that you wanted to do something new, to be brave and courageous but didn't take the step. How did this make you feel afterwards and what was the long term consequence?

Then consider where you have stepped out in faith when it has been uncomfortable and how that has worked out for you. I am reminded of the book *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway* by Susan Jeffers. I have found every time I have taken uncomfortable action I have learnt something new and stepped up to the next level. How about you?

2. Stay in your lane

We touched on this in Chapter Five, when we looked at all the beautiful people we have had in our lives to sow into us. When we work fluidly in unity and one accord, being who we are, knowing our place and lane.

I was running in my lane and many others. And the cracks were starting to show. I encourage you to consider what your lane is today. It may well relate to your identity words, your values and the desires of your heart or vision.

I encourage you to consider what your lane is. Where are you gifted? Where do you find favour? Where do you flow and run effortlessly? Sometimes it is easier to define your lane by what you are not and go from there.

Call to Adventure:

Lane work is key. I now know my lane, which runs in alignment with my priorities and L.I.F.E. alignment discussed in the previous chapter.

When we run together, we can go further, often further than we ever thought possible. I remember a good friend of mine, Theresa

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Kowalczyk, saying, “You can’t read the label from inside the jar.” And I was so wrapped up in my lack in this chapter in my life, in “my not good enough”, I had to do everything to prove my worth. I couldn’t see it. However, I am sure that many could. We need others that we trust to talk to, those who are often older and wiser, who love us, and genuinely want the best for us. They will let us know when we are going off track and will be there to support, love and lift up.

Now I stay in my lane as an Alignment Coach. I help to clear the confusion and clutter, to bring clarity, peace and harmony back into people’s lives, restoring them to the Master’s setting. I am no longer trying to be a gardener, marketer, copywriter, elder, publisher or IT specialist. Which means I can run with others who are in those lanes and we can all go much further and have fun at the same time.

There is nothing more exciting than achieving your dreams, and having others on the journey with you to celebrate with. I encourage you to take some time to think about your lane and the lanes others run in. How can you run together so you can all achieve more? Enjoy.

“...and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:19, NIV)