

CHAPTER 10

L.I.F.E. ALIGNMENT

“If you are working on something that you really care about, you don't have to be pushed. The vision pulls you.” - Steve Jobs. This was definitely a season of pull motivation.

By the time I was thirty-five, I was a mum with two children without any of my family close by to connect with or support us. My brother and his family had moved back to the West Riding of Yorkshire to be close to friends and Jane's family. Mum and I were still struggling to connect, and she had no intention of ever visiting us. This was a sad time in my heart. I yearned to share and for my family to be part of my children's lives. Dad was amazing, he too was over an hour away and still working full-time.

The draw of this ready-made family in NZ, who were all delightful and welcomed us with open arms, was strong. Hawke's Bay had stunning landscapes, a warmer climate and a genuine outdoor, rural lifestyle. People took time to look you in the eye and ask you how you were. Alexander's father had competed in two Olympics in hockey. Alexander loved his sport and was a handy wicket keeper and hockey player himself. If either of our children were going to take up sports, NZ was the place to be. And for me it was the heart of the people.

They were warm (just like the climate), friendly, open and took time for you, home from home. It was like having Yorkshire, salt of the earth people, in NZ. The writing for me was on the wall. All that I yearned for and valued was there.

We finished the renovations on our beautiful home. Martha was born in April. Life in North Dalton was ticking all my boxes. The music group for the mums and tots was thriving, the playground rocked, the community of mums with children was pumping. I was in my element, loving every moment, but it wasn't about me any more; it was about us and the children. It was about what was the best for our children not just now, but also in the future. Alexander and I finished the work on the house that winter and then in the spring of 2005 we put our house on the market, with Alexander, his mum and sister actively looking for a place for us to buy in NZ.

This process was stressful, being up in the middle of the night putting offers on properties, having open homes here and being in "chains" with buyers, where if one house sale fell through in the chain, so did ours. I vividly remember praying to God for us to be able to buy a property in Central Hawke's Bay and was absolutely gutted when we didn't get it. Then again a stunning property in Havelock North, which was a stretch, also slipped through our hands. Sales on our end weren't going to plan either. It was all taking time.

Getting my residency was a testing process too. It took six months and a plethora of information and supporting documents. We needed rental agreements and bank accounts, Valentines day and birthday cards going back five years plus, all to demonstrate we were in a genuine relationship, married and had two children together. I was so grateful that our lives were amazing in North Dalton, that we had incredible, beautiful friends and a lifestyle that was idyllic. The stress of keeping the house tidy with a toddler and a baby and the ups and downs of almost-sold, almost-bought was a rollercoaster. Having the life and people around me kept me grounded.

In October 2005, we had a breakthrough. We bought 100 Longlands Road West, with the help of a bridging loan from Alexander's parents.

THE GREAT EXCHANGE

This stunning villa was in the middle of an orchard, in rural Hastings. We were blessed to have tenants to rent Longlands for three months to cover the loan while we finalised the sale of the cottage, booked a container and the tickets to NZ. Alexander handed in his notice at his work, and within a week the owners had created him a job to head up their new NZ arm of the business. It had already been on their radar; they just brought it forward eighteen months. This was a miracle and a real blessing for us. After the waiting period, everything was coming together.

We left the UK on 12 December 2005, having filled a forty-foot container to the brim. I watched my handbag fill the last hole before it was closed. We were off. We had five days in Hawaii, which I was super grateful for. It gave me time to grieve leaving my dad and family behind. Funny, how despite the lack of depth or quality in the relationships, I loved them all dearly. I needed a decompression chamber before going into the celebration of being with Alexander's family, who were super excited to have him home for Christmas and going forward.

We lived with Alexander's parents for six weeks while the container made its way over. His mum kindly lent us her car. The children and I were not used to the heat, and a car with no air-conditioning was a challenge. Finding a manual European car with air conditioning was the first job on the list.

When the container arrived on 17 January 2006, we moved into our new home and never looked back. We hosted Christmas that year, bringing together two full families. Alexander's family made me super welcome. They had gone out of their way to invite me to the local play group and help me settle in. They were, and still are, outstanding people in my life. I am truly grateful for them.

We had twenty-two people on Christmas day, and everyone "brought a plate", which is part of the rich Kiwi culture—everyone chips in and brings a food item to share. Those in our generation brought meat/fish, a salad and a dessert. It was a real banquet. Everyone came and went at times that suited them. The kids and dads played cricket

on the wicket my husband had mowed out in the paddock. I was in heaven. It was so far from my past experiences of Christmas. No rushing. No stress.

Everyone got on and had space to go into other rooms or outdoors if they had had enough of someone or just wanted a change. Absolute gold. We rotated hosting every year with Alexander's brother and sister and their families, so we got to host once every three years while enjoying being on the farms for the other two families. The relationships built in this time, especially for the cousins, were incredible. I had never had an extended family growing up as neither of my parents had siblings. It was a joy to be part of a wider family and community, for me to have people I could trust and for Arthur and Martha to have older cousins to play with and look up to.

Reflect and Reframe

This chapter in my life demonstrates how beautiful, fulfilling, freeing and fluid life is. When we live in the right priority, it flows. When we get married, we leave our mother and father and become one. In other words, we surrender to each other, are there to serve and honour, to support and be there for each other in all seasons and to be the strong foundation on which to build the next generation. The key was to become a family unit. I saw Alexander's role as one of provision and in some ways protection for his wife and children. My role in this season was to support my husband and provide a warm, loving home for him and our children. In England we say it takes a village to bring up a child. And I believe this to be absolutely true; we need family and community. Quality time with family and extended family is a key to building character, inner strength and self-belief. Creating a safe environment full of love, encouragement, peace and joy enables everyone to thrive.

The priority of Faith, Family, Finance, Fun and Friends was so clear at this time. I was stepping out in faith, moving to the other side of the world, leaving my family and all I knew behind. I was putting family first. It wasn't about me. It was about offering the best life and lifestyle

we could in order to set Arthur and Martha up for success. Giving them cousins, aunts and uncles was more than I could ever have dreamed of. And we were blessed with the finance to do this, having invested in my first property at twentyone and then bought, renovated and sold properties along the way. Alexander's step up into the GM role was also part of this blessing.

Dear Reader

I really encourage you to consider what the main areas of focus in your life are. Where do you spend the most time? What is most important for you to have in your life? What gives you the most meaning? What are you passionate about? What brings you the most joy? In the season of my life that I shared about in this chapter, I was a mum, a wife, a friend, a household engineer, an organiser and a gardener. It would be great to write down all your roles you fill or different hats you wear and then work out the order of importance they are for you from most important to least important.

I encourage you to then consider whether these are in the right order or whether you need to change the order to come into alignment with the desires of your heart and your true identity.

All progress starts by telling the truth, because the truth will set you free. When we are honest with ourselves, we become aware of where we are at, and we are then able to change. After all, nothing changes until we change.

Call to Adventure: L.I.F.E. Alignment

It is interesting that during this season my order was in alignment. However, as you will discover in the coming chapters, things can start to subtly shift, and the next thing you know, molehills have become mountains and the landscape has changed. Many of us have been told that putting ourselves first is selfish, and yes, if we always put ourselves over others, this may be true. However, if we put everyone

else first before ourselves, we can end up burnt out, frazzled and no use to anyone.

I was so busy with my mis-beliefs that I was not good enough, I put my own health and well-being last. My children started to come before my husband. This wonderful dream and idyllic lifestyle was about to be up-ended by a misalignment in my priorities.

My Five F's are the order of play for me these days.

Faith: my beliefs and personal development (my dreaming BIG)

Family: my husband, then my children (wife and then mum)

Finance: work, investments, stewardship (business leadership, property management)

Fun: activities I enjoy, hobbies and lifestyle (reading, sport, band, walking, podcasts)

Friends: those I do life with, in the above spaces (tennis ladies, church family)

Life flows freely when our lives are in the right priority. This is a key principle that brings complete freedom to our lives. It massively reduces stress, worry and anxiety in my life. When my life is in alignment with my values and priorities, I am at peace, at rest and on fire.

I encourage you to consider your priorities and whether you, like me, may need to make some changes to come into alignment with what is noble, right and true for you. Enjoy.

"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1 John 4: 7-8, NIV)