

When the Mess Becomes the Message

In this session, I am going to share with you my story and why we do what we do at Guidestone. My story is a story of pain, of desperation, of failure. And it's a story of hope, and success, and freedom.

Until recently, I had never shared some of these details publicly. So, today I want to share with you my story.

Michael: People decide to change at one of three times:

- They've heard it enough.
- They've experienced the pain and they say, "Hey, this is really painful and I'm pushing everybody out of my life and you see that over and over again."
- They've hurt enough.

Sharon: I remember rebuking him over the top. I do remember him falling down on the bed and I picked up my house slipper. But I didn't realize that it had a plastic heel. I just remember flailing him with it, telling him, "What were you thinking?" And I was smacking him on the head, probably much like I had been as a child.

Michael: It wasn't until she saw blood coming out of my head that she stops. And of course, then she's alarmed. What just happened? What have I done?

She rushes me to the hospital and there were stitches on my head and things like that. Well then, what do you say? What do you tell the doctor happened? What do you tell other people what happened?

All these things started going through my head. Am I going to lose my parents, or are they going to lose me? All these things you go through and it just really felt like for me one mess after another, one low after another.

As hard as I would try to problem-solve around the situations, I just never got it right, and the abuse continued.

Sharon: I think in a lot of cases he became a scapegoat for a lot that went on. I had a lot of anger that I didn't realize then. And when I stopped, it was like I woke up. What was I doing? What did I just do?

Michael: There's not a whole lot that I could have done as a kid to keep the abuse from happening. It's just part of my story, it's part of my journey. I don't know that I could change that.

Sarah: Some of the experiences that he had with abuse – obviously those were pain points and they communicated things to him that he's carried with him.

Michael: But I remember making the decision or at least trying to make the decision that I can spend the rest of my life frustrated about this, or I can learn to value and appreciate what this is doing in my life and how it's shaping me as a person. I became a problem-solver as a kid. So, everything I did was problem-solving around things.

In fact, I became such a good problem solver. I learned how to solve problems that weren't yet problems.

Early in my career, I was working in higher ed, I was brought into an organization. They've experienced significant decline, they needed to turn things around that was why I was brought in and why we needed to develop a team that could turn things around. Things started moving, but really I couldn't see any end in sight. I couldn't seem to make progress, so I kept pushing harder and faster.

I remember one day standing in the kitchen with my wife — I came home right after work — I was telling her about my day and just expressing to her the frustration that I was feeling because my team was feeling frustrated, and my peers and the organization were feeling frustrated.

Sarah: I just looked at him and I was like, “I feel like there's a part of you that's dying and you're not ever going to get that back.” Hitting those brick walls was not allowing him to be who he is, and helping leaders move forward and helping individuals.

Michael: I was still trying to solve problems, and I began to realize I can live the rest of my life problem-solving. Or I can actually live the adventure that my life was meant to be – live the calling that my life was meant to be. It was during this time that I really became a student of my wife and of my kids. I started thinking, if my greatest legacy is not something that I do — building companies, multiple companies— if that's not what my life is all about, if my life is about developing people; then what worth do we want to do? What can we do to best give myself and to best give the people around me a chance at living with purpose and leading with passion and leaving a legacy? How can we work in a way that helps them simplify their life?

Sarah: For Michael, it really isn't whether it's an organization, a team, or just an individual; it really is all about growth and becoming who we're meant to be, and the best version of that.

Michael: What I began to realize is that the mess that we had experienced as a couple, and for me and my work, and the mess that I had experienced in adolescence and early adulthood, and the mess and the pain that I had experienced as a child was really becoming the message.

At Guidestone we're helping people find healing, and we're helping them find hope for the future. We want to see them be able to simplify their life, work, and leadership. In fact, everything that we do is to help people live with purpose, lead with passion, and leave a legacy.

Sarah: Guidestone is different from any other place because you're taking a group of individuals who believe in the coaching and the counseling side, and we're putting that together. We've all been down the road of struggle

in our work life, in our personal life. We know what it feels like. We've experienced the pain, and we've come out on the other side. Now, we're willing, and we're ready to help everybody else who's ready to do the same thing.

Michael: Even though there are things in my childhood that I wouldn't wish on any other person, there are things that I experienced as a leader in businesses, and in organizations; I wouldn't go back and change it because all of those things are what led us to the point today, where we're able to help people get the help they need; at times even if they can't pay for it.

The mess has become the message.

In the next session, we're going to look at the number one reason why we experience so many challenges in our life, work, and leadership and what we can do about it. I look forward to seeing you in the next session.