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I want in these next few minutes to share with you a little of my story – one of not being able to get an idea out of my head. Maybe along the way I can share with you some of the things I have been learning too.

So, I may sound very English, but I am in fact an American citizen by virtue of my mother's nationality. I grew up all over India and the Middle East as a missionary kid going to American schools and till I was a teenager I had accents much like you guys. I think I'm stuck with this one now! Since leaving college about 17 years ago I have been in secular jobs the whole time, nearly all of it in telecoms and software. About 4 years ago I began to get very uncomfortable with lot of things in my life – how I was as a father, a husband, a supposed follower of this radical person Jesus Christ. I was playing the usual game of saying that I was trying to 'balance' all the different priorities in my life but, in reality, almost my whole life's energies had been poured into my secular career. It's such a pathetic story - working far too many hours in a day, spending more than 50% of my time away from home, usually in another part of the world and on long-haul flights – Asia, the US or mainland Europe. And to cap it all watching the golden payout gallop off into the distance as stock option values plummeted after the tech crash! A friend gave me Bob Buford's *Half Time* book. I liked the idea that one could start to look at phases in your life when you could move '*From Success to Significance*', but it seemed a bit of a cruel joke to look on my 1st half as 'Success'. After much soul searching, I decided that I needed to make a change and let go of my plans for my life, and trust the one who has a bigger sacred script into which my life can be grafted.

So I made some changes – small ones at first. I went back to my company and negotiated to cut my work down to 3 days per week to free up time to decompress and listen to God. And it took 2 years of pretty much nothing but listening and searching. Reading, talking, praying, more reading, networking, seeking out wiser people who had gone down paths that I respected.

And here is what I found when I slowed down for long enough to listen to what God was saying. I found that to take part in Christ's work, to be a part of his body, is in many ways like the sacrament of the Eucharist. We are taken by God, broken, offered back to Him in thanks, and only then given out to others. I learned that his heart aches for a broken world – broken in so many ways that I couldn't see from the aircraft cabin at 39,000 ft or from the fast lane – broken spiritually, socially, environmentally, economically. That the poor, at the bottom of this pile, have a very special place in his heart and his intentions. And that a gospel that does not take very seriously Jesus' insistence that it is Good News to the Poor is, I think, not authentic. Let me say that again. A gospel that does not insist on the poor seeing it as good news is heresy. Here are some of the facts that gripped me.

- 1/6th of the world's 6 billion people live on <\$1 per day and cannot satisfy the most basic human needs
- More than 8 million die each year because of polluted water or air
- 6 million die from malnutrition or starvation
- 2 million die from diarrhoea or related diseases
- Aids has already killed 10's of millions of Africans & is projected to kill 25 million more in the next decade
- 1/5th of the world's children spend less than 5 years in school
- 1/5th of the world's children are undernourished.
- Worldwide, the top 20% of high income earners account for 86% of all private consumption
- The poorest 20% account for only 1.3%
- Americans spend more on cosmetics and Europeans more on ice cream than it would cost to provide schooling and sanitation for the 2 billion people who go without both.
- The top 358 billionaires are collectively richer than ½ of the world's population.
- And yet still 30,000 die every day from extreme poverty. That's one child every 3 seconds.

Mother Theresa named poverty as the worst evil in the world. And when you see the dehumanisation that it causes, you begin to understand why. If you have barely enough to survive on, you at least have sex. You can create assets that can be liquidised. And the trade in human beings is bigger now than it ever was in Wilberforces' day. Someone told me last week that there are whole villages in Cambodia turned over to sex tourism where a child virgin sells for \$3,000. The precipice that extreme poverty holds people over brings out the darkest side of human beings.

My friends – these things scandalise the God of Compassion and Justice that we worship. Compassion literally means *to suffer with*. God suffers with the refuse of our world. In a very special way he is present in the poor. Read Matthew 25 – probably one of the most disturbing passages in the Bible when Jesus tells a story of who makes it into heaven. What are the sole entrance requirements? Not the right theology. Not membership of the right denomination. Not saying the sinner's prayer even. But.. you gave a cup of water to someone who is thirsty. You fed someone who was hungry. You visited the sick. Why? Because when you did this to the least of these – the un-noticeable, the invisible, the refuse – you did it, he says, 'to me'. God is sacramentally present in the poor. Think about that.

And then there was this curious, and I guess rather obvious, connection made in my head between my background in business that creates jobs - and bringing good news to the poor.

So I set about trying to discover how business done by people motivated by their faith is being used by God among the poor. During the last few years my wife and I have made various trips to India, Malawi and Zambia, and we have seen about 25 different ventures on the front lines that were using business to bring jobs to people otherwise on \$1 / day. The profound and lasting transformation of the communities reached in this way made a very deep impression on me.

During this process, a good friend that I made in India said "Your role must be to be a catalyst in the West. You need to use your influence, business skills and passion to get the West more engaged by connecting the rich with the poor." The consistent thing every one of those 25 missional businesses wanted fixed? 'Please tell me what I have to produce and get me access to western markets.'

And so, a couple of years later, here I stand, having started a business that exists to provide a route to the US consumer for these ventures. The basic notion of **Trade As One** is to use ecommerce and to create a customer base of people who buy excellent products from missional, transformational businesses. I want to see God's people in the west sustaining God's work among the desperate, not through more giving, but through commercial transactions. I think there is a huge market in the US for good products with a story. Products that free people from bondage. I think the opportunity to get congregations engaged is huge. Look – my wife and I started doing this 3 years ago in the UK just as a hobby. You see Rick, I have a purpose driven wife. [Nathan gave this speech at a forum with Rick Warren (author of "The Purpose-Driven Life") -- funny guy, that Nathan. Many people there laughed. Honest!] We would consistently do \$15,000 of sales per year in one church of 250 members. You do the math.

There are lots of challenges with that, and I know more about them than most people, and of course if there were no challenges there would be no opportunities. But huge strides have been made in the last 5 years in the quality of what can be sourced, in the ability to distribute using ecommerce, the internet allows good ideas to propagate very rapidly now, and – I think most exciting of all – an awareness in church circles of the gospel call to bring good news to the poor. When Rick Warren puts it firmly on the agenda as he now has with his PEACE Plan, I think things will start to change.

So we have made Silicon Valley our home to do this for the time being. We have been live as a business for just a couple of months, getting our first few orders, ironing out the processes, basically doing a proof of concept. We expected to be in proof of concept stage and battling it out for 12-18 months before attracting much attention but, my goodness, this last month has got my head spinning. I now have more opportunity than I know how to execute on.

We have a large church in Atlanta, GA partnering with us. They are 6,000 in size and don't even register in the top 25 churches in Atlanta! They saw what we are doing and said 'This is the missing link between our missions' partners and our congregation'. They support an operation run by a modern day saint in Thailand called Annie Dieselberg that frees women from the sex trade and gives them jobs making high quality jewellery. Time doesn't permit me to read you emails from her that would break your heart. My dream is to get so many people buying her product that the emails are about how to scale what she does, not about living from one donation to the next and turning away girls that come to her because her business is not healthy enough. I'm really excited about it. And if we can pilot the program in this church in Atlanta, we will attract national media I am sure.

The question for me is no longer "how long will it be before we prove the idea can fly?" The issue is executing on the opportunities that exist right now. If you feel moved to see if you could help, some ideas for you:

- If you think your church might like to engage in this program, I'd love to hear from you.
- If you want to help people with businesses like Annie Dieselberg, let me know – I can tell you what they need and plug you in
- We will be doing a funding round in early 2007 and need people committed to the vision and in it for the long haul.
- I will need to recruit people who can execute on the vision, raise awareness, drive church involvements and help out with the operations.

So if you are interested, please come and chat with me because I need people who will help me build this. If I sound a little under-prepared, it's because I am. Events have caught me by surprise and I feel out of my depth. I think that's what happens when you get out of the boat.

Let me leave you with this thought. Here's another lesson, perhaps the hardest of all, and I'm not yet sure I have figured it out, so would value your opinions. You see I think the gospel is a radical, counter-intuitive call to experience powerlessness. To trust God with everything we are. I think that is **very and especially** difficult for us business people. It is counter to all of our instincts and our training, and particularly for men, it is very difficult to understand and live by. Experiencing powerlessness? Man – that can get you fired, or sued if you run a public company surely? Not many of us parade our weaknesses like St Paul. Our whole society is based upon displays of strength, status, and power. But to lose our life for His sake – our reputations, our control, our little narratives. What do we gain? What's the trade-off? I think it's uncertain. We'd like to think that the trade off is incredible success or significance. But I don't believe it is. Necessarily. You can't negotiate with the creator of this universe. There are no guarantees that faithfulness leads to success or significance. In this life. But we are called simply to trust, like a child trusts its father or mother in its own powerlessness. Our job is faithfulness. His job is success or otherwise - to use whatever we offer to him to build His Kingdom, His way.

I frequently wonder how different my life would have turned out if only I had taken more risks on Him. One of the things I take away from these few days together is that encouragement to take more risks for Him and his Kingdom.

So let's be absurdly abandoned to Him. Let's stop asking God to bless what we are doing. Let's make sure we are involved with what God is doing, because it is already blessed. Thanks for your time.