



Running Rabid

Balancing the passion to pursue with the pressure to produce.

The Pressure from Society to Produce

Contentedness versus Complacency

“Anything worth doing is worth measuring.” I will forever hear those words ringing in my ears as I think back to my upbringing, school, my time in the Aggie Band, growing businesses, and even much of my career. Establishing metrics is probably the most central element of what “determines” success in most everything we do. Whether playing golf, rooting for our favorite football teams, and job satisfaction – practically every aspect of our lives involves identifying how we measure up relative to society, competitors, or even ourselves. Unfortunately, in the “Madison Avenue” world in which we live, the metrics by which we are often forced to measure ourselves are the exact opposite of what God has called us to do. As the Lord told Isaiah, *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways* (Isaiah 55:8).

Recognizing our ways are not like God’s ways means we have to “re-program” our way of thinking. Changing our way of thinking and living, absent a catastrophic event, is the greatest challenge many of us will ever face. A good friend of mine once stated the best way for us to for change in our lives is to experience “pain motivated change.” Imagine if you will for a moment that you were to lose your eyesight. Consider the story of a West Point Ranger named Scott Smiley.¹

According to the Blinded Veterans Association, 138,636 service members suffered eye injuries between 9/11 and March 2013. The majority were minor, but about 4,000 were severe, usually as the result of a blast. About 2,000 service members were left with low vision and about 200 were blinded. Of those, the Department of Veterans Affairs provided inpatient treatment to 180 severely disabled blind Iraq and Afghanistan service members and veterans as of July 2013.

With great determination and perseverance, however, a handful of service members, including Maj. Scott Smiley, have fought to return to active duty service. Smiley was injured in April 2005 in Iraq. Barely two years out of West Point and then Ranger school, he was in his first assignment as a platoon leader with the 25th Infantry Division. His new bride, Tiffany – his high school sweetheart – waited at home and a promising life stretched before him. Then he was given an assignment to find a car bomb in Baghdad. He split off from the main company with three Strykers, and then, on a side street, he found a car whose rear was sitting lower than its front. Smiley cordoned off the street before ordering the driver to get out of the car twice. The driver shook his head twice, then started to pull forward. Smiley raised his M-4 and managed to get off two rounds before the driver “disintegrated the car and my world went black.” Smiley’s rear gunner and one of his squad leaders received relatively minor injuries and quickly returned to duty, but within an hour, Smiley was on a helicopter to Balad, which had the most advanced medical facilities in country. They removed his left eye and then performed a craniotomy because some of the shrapnel had made it past Smiley’s helmet and through his skull, and his brain was swelling. There was shrapnel in his right eye as well, but at the time, surgeons thought they might be able to save it.



After a stopover at Landstuhl and another surgery, Smiley woke up in Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington a week and a half later. Even through the haze of painkillers and sedatives, he knew something was wrong with his eyes. “I knew my left eye was gone, and at the same time, I couldn’t see anything,” he said. “I went

¹ <http://soldiers.dodlive.mil/2014/03/the-day-the-world-went-black-soldiers-blinded-in-the-line-of-duty/>

through an eight-hour surgery to take the metal out of my right eye. The doctor came up to me and he said, 'Sorry, Scotty. It's sad that I have to do this, but I have to inform you that you're never going to be able to see again.' That's kind of when reality hit me." The thought of the men he had left behind bothered Smiley. Only 25 when he was injured, he worried about what the rest of his life would be like, how he would work, how he would support his wife, but he was also concerned about his men. He wanted to go back. He had a responsibility to them. "I felt like if I could fully recover, I could deploy again and be with my men," he admitted. "There was still a part of that denial that I just wanted to recover, get better, go to blind center and boom, maybe I could go back to Fort Lewis, Wash., and they'd deploy me again. **So there was still a disconnect between reality of what had truly happened and what my life was going to be.**"

Since the day he was told he would never see again, Scotty Smiley has surfed in Hawaii, skied in Vail, skydived, climbed Mount Rainier, completed a triathlon, and graduated from Duke University's Fuqua School of Business with his MBA. The Army Times named Captain Smiley its "Soldier of the Year" in 2007, and in 2008 he won an ESPY as the Best Outdoor Athlete. Scotty, a recipient of the Bronze Star and Purple Heart, recently taught the core course in leadership at West Point and commanded the Warrior Transition Unit at West Point's Keller Army Medical Center. Captain Smiley was recently named a recipient of the Army's prestigious MacArthur Leadership Award and currently holds an honorary PhD from Mount Saint Mary College in Newburgh, NY. Captain Smiley is the author of a memoir about his experiences entitled: *HOPE UNSEEN: The Story Behind the U.S. Army's First Blind Active-Duty Officer*.

Where is the "disconnect" in your life? Do you feel a sense of pressure to produce that seems to be inconsistent with what God wants for you? In looking at this point let's consider Contentedness versus Complacency.

In many regards "contentedness" is a sign a spiritual maturity, while "complacency" is one of the greatest dangers facing men and the modern church in America. In Hebrews 13:5 (NIV) we read, *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."* On the other hand, in Proverbs 1:32 we read Solomon's words regarding complacency, *For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them.* So here is the \$10,000 question – how do we achieve a life balanced between being content with what God gives us and not being complacent to the point where we are not working to our fullest capacity?

In some regards this is a question best answered through personal, in-depth prayer with the Lord; however, I will provide an insight that has been helpful to me. John Quincy Adams once stated, "Duty is ours, results are God's." I have taken this quote very seriously in my life and it has helped me achieve some semblance of balance. What seems appropriate is that we must do the best we can with what we have been given and leave the rest up to God. The key phrase here is *doing the best we can with what we have been given*. It is my observation that many people, including some Christians, are not hard workers. They do what it takes to get the job done and that's it. As Christians we should have reputations for working hard and being trustworthy with the responsibilities we have been given. However, the flip side is that we must not become obsessed with success and be consumed with work. **We should work to live and not live to work.** Getting those backwards is a nasty mess!

Questions for the Week

1. As you look back at your life over the past 5 years, where do you believe God has made the biggest changes in your life?
2. What keeps you up at night? Do you feel a sense of pressure to produce for your family? What about the future?
3. In your life do you trend more towards complacency or do you struggle with contentedness? What are "signals" in your life indicating that you are struggling?
4. **Food for Further Thought** – explore Matthew 6:33 and Jesus' words about seeking first the Kingdom of God.
 - a. What does it mean to "Seek first the Kingdom of God"?
 - b. Think about your own life, or perhaps others you have known who did not put Jesus first in their lives. What are the consequences for us as followers of Jesus when we do not put Him first?