

MY VIRTUAL MENTOR



DAVID'S JOURNEY

From Porn to Pastor

DAVID ROBERTSON



CHAPTER 1 : THIS IS ME

I was born in 1960 in an obscure little town in Illinois. About the time I began Elementary School, my father, mother, and older brother and I moved to a suburb of Chicago. I have good memories of my childhood: playing sports with neighborhood buddies and exploring the nearby woods. School was easy for me and I made good grades.

I remember enjoying a melting ice cream cone with sprinkles purchased from the ice cream truck that roamed our subdivision on hot summer days and sledding and ice skating with friends until our toes were numb during the long, cold Chicago winters.

Our family life was good and loving. Mom was a good cook and decorated for holidays, and had the stereo playing country music during all waking hours. Dad was a hard worker and handyman who could fix anything and remodeled everything. I grew up thinking my father was a super hero. Saturdays were all about mowing the lawn and doing chores and then going to A&W for a root beer in a frosty mug. Sunday nights mom popped some corn, and as a family, we huddled around the TV to watch "Wild Kingdom" and "The Wonderful World of Disney."



Meanwhile, my brother worked hard on his Eagle Scout badge. Yep, life was good. And then came seventh grade - the worst year of my life.

Adolescence is a tumultuous time under normal circumstances, but my difficulty increased by the biological fact that I was a late bloomer. Imagine me, in the gym class shower, in all my prepubescent glory. This unfortunate quality turned out to be an irresistible opportunity for my classmates to tease me mercilessly.

Never underestimate how cruel middle school can be to anyone who looks different in any way, shape, form, or fashion. And so, the wounding began. Body image issues followed. What to do? I don't like myself. I don't want to go to school. I wanted to throw up most of the time and had to see the guidance counselor frequently.

Mercifully, seventh grade ended, and summer vacation began. It was that summer that my folks decided to take us boys to church. They chose Calvary Temple Assembly of God. I sat there for several weeks squirming and bored. That is until summer vacation was ending and soon I would be returning to Thomas Jefferson Junior High.



That thought helped me focus on what the preacher was saying. And then it happened -- I met Jesus, and I got born again. I mean, I got genuinely saved, and the peace of God flooded my heart, displacing a bunch (not all, but a bunch) of hurt in my mind, will, and emotions.

I returned to the eighth grade, not biologically different, but a brand-new Christian, with a new mindset.

Physical changes didn't happen until my Sophomore year in High School, but God had changed my mind and heart!

I went on to high school and graduated in 1978. Then my father got a job in Middle Tennessee, and so we packed up and moved on.

In the next chapter, I'll tell you how enrolling in Middle Tennessee State University to earn a degree in higher education morphed into what I call "The Dark Years."



CHAPTER 2: DARK YEARS

In the opening chapter, I shared with you about my early years growing up in the Chicago suburbs, and how I came to accept Jesus Christ as my Lord, and Savior, and the difference that this decision made in my young life. Now at this point in my story, I'm 18 years old and the family has relocated to Murfreesboro, Tennessee, the exact geographical center of the State.

I got a job at Kroger as a checkout clerk and enrolled in my freshman year at Middle Tennessee State University. Yes, sir, higher education was going to be my ticket to a great career and high quality of life. That was a smart choice, but my poor choice in friends disrupted my strategy. The Bible is clear, "...bad company corrupts good morals" (1 Corinthians 15:33). It's almost impossible to live the right life when you have the wrong friends. Craig Groeschel, Senior Pastor of Life Church rightly observed, "Show me your friends and I will show you your future."

Like Jonah running from God's call on his life, I too was running away from God, and before I even turned twenty years of age, my life was in a downward spiral. A typical Friday night with my friends included Bud Light, Marlboro cigarettes, Domino's Pizza, and MTV. I thought the college party scene was the way to acceptance and fulfillment. Things went from bad to worse when I started dating.

I went from one immoral relationship with women to another, complicating my life with ungodly soul ties. Sexual sin is unlike any other; it is a sin against your own body (1 Corinthians 6:18). Uniquely, and especially for men, it skews our ability to discern between right and wrong on moral issues. I had enough of God in me to be miserable in my sin, and enough of sin in me to be miserable in church. And yes, I was still attending the local Assembly of God church regularly.

I had one foot in the world, and one foot in the kingdom of God. Jesus had a word for that: hypocrisy! I was a double-agent, and I was lukewarm. But then, things went from bad to worse again. My unbridled lust led me down into the matrix of porn. In those days, cell phones, personal computers, and the Internet weren't around. But back then, I had to get my fix for porn the old-fashioned way - I had to go to 7-Eleven to buy a magazine or to the video store to rent an X-rated VHS.

It was embarrassing, but my lust overrode my timidity. That's the nature of addictive behaviors. I have heard that sin will take you farther than you ever intended to go, keep you longer than you ever intended to stay, and cost you more than you ever intended to pay. Welcome to my world in that season - the dark years.

I had no mentor. I had no coach. I didn't allow a pastor, church leader, or a godly Christian friend to influence me. My situation deteriorated so much that I even told one of my girlfriends that I loved her more than I loved God. Can you imagine? How low can you go? I was out of shape physically, a junk food junkie, a pervert, making just above minimum wage at a grocery store, having no goals and no life purpose. Heck, I didn't even know what I wanted to be when I grew up! But that was the point: I wasn't growing up. I resisted real manhood and chose to remain a boy.

Robert Lewis writes in *Raising a Modern-Day Knight* that a real man "rejects passivity, accepts responsibility, leads courageously, and expects a greater reward." I knew real men, but in the dark years, I refused to pursue them, submit to them, or allow their influence to shape my worldview and lifestyle. So, I crammed four years of college into five and a half and graduated from MTSU with a "B" average and a generic degree that qualified me to do absolutely nothing. I didn't realize that real higher education for me could be found in my dusty Bible and hanging out with mature men in the faith who had been through some stuff and had the scars to prove it. Isaiah 59:1 says, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short that it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear" (NASB). In the next chapter, I will tell you how the gracious hand of God plucked me out of the mess I had made of my life and set me on a path of transformation. I hope you are encouraged. If God can use a messed-up guy like me, He can use anybody.



CHAPTER 3: BREAKING THE CHAINS THAT BIND

This story is my reality – warts and all. I wish I could tell you that I never smoked a joint, never said a cuss word, or never lied to my boss to save my skin. I have done all those things, and worse. My Bible doesn't hover over my desk, and I don't play gin rummy with an angel every other Tuesday. Thank God for the cross of Jesus and forgiveness of confessed sin! Even today, as a Christ-follower, I find that I am plodding along one unglamorous, controversial day at a time. Perhaps you can relate.

In the previous chapter, I shared about the dark days during my undergraduate program at MTSU. But I had one crucial thing going for me that was in my favor -- my family and concerned friends were praying for me. In response to their intercession, I began to awaken slowly from my ignorance and apathy. I was living in deception, and as Bible teacher John Bevere teaches, "The problem with deception is that it is so deceiving."

Dr. John C. Maxwell says that people only change when one of two conditions exist: they either hurt enough that they have to change, or they are hungry enough they want to change. I was somewhere in the middle. Like the parable of the lost son which Jesus taught, recorded in Luke 15, I was in the process of a spiritual awakening. In a moment of clarity, I headed to MTSU to a park bench between Peck Hall and Cope Administration buildings.

It was that very spot where I cried out to God in total desperation and absolute surrender. I repented of my willful sin and passive indifference. I had an encounter with the truth of the Word of God, and a power encounter with the Holy Spirit in response to my godly sorrow that led to repentance. I got up from that bench determined to work a freedom plan going forward. The program I continue to work from then until now includes: running from temptation triggers, running to freedom strategies, and running with trusted partners.

Porn was now in my rear-view mirror, and I was looking at a hopeful future ahead through the windshield. I broke up with my girlfriend. I got my butt into the church for real this time, and a small group. I returned to my first love, Jesus, Whom I'd met in seventh grade, and began devouring my Bible. It was not long after this turning point that I met a drop-dead gorgeous girl at church named Monica Lambert.

Our friendship eventually became a courtship, and on July 4, 1987, I married my best friend. Our wedding night was the first time we enjoyed sexual intimacy, this time, as God intended. Five years later, we welcomed our first and only daughter: Abigail Grace. Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted! Jesus came to set the captives free! Jesus came to break the chains that bind us to our past!

Today, I know God, have found freedom, discovered my purpose, and I'm making an impact in my world. By God's grace, I'm saved, set free, Spirit-filled, spiritually disciplined, and a good steward of God's provisions. Nowadays, I surround myself with mentors who hold me accountable, pat me on the back when I'm doing well, and kick me in the seat of the pants when I could do better. Thanks be to God for the indescribable gift of Jesus Christ! (2 Corinthians 9:15). "For freedom, Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1).

In the next chapter, I will tell you about the three key life domains I am attempting to grow in to live a victorious Christian life.



CHAPTER 4 : MY THREE KEY LIFE DOMAINS

If perfection is a prerequisite for being your Virtual Mentor, I am not qualified! I'm thankful that while my failures and wrong choices in life may explain me, they do not define me.

I graduated from MTSU in 1984, and three years later married my wife, Monica. By the way, my wife is amazing. She has a Ph.D. in Biblical Counseling, has authored two books, and is the founder of The WAYStation, a Christian counseling and wellness center. She homeschooled our daughter K-12 (but in my defense, I taught Abigail to drive!).

I went on to earn a master's degree in Educational Leadership from MTSU, and an E.D.s. in Instructional Technology from the University of West Georgia: both with 4.0 GPA's. Currently, I am focusing my energy on growing in three key life domains. They include:

- The Secret Place
- The Gathering Place
- The Public Place

Let me elaborate briefly. I realize that I can't lead where I've not been, I can't teach what I don't know, and I can't give what I don't have. Therefore, it is incumbent upon me to grow spiritually. So, every day in the Secret Place, I pursue God diligently. Metaphorically speaking, I "dig my well" to go deeper with God. I'm digging daily, digging deep, and digging together with other men to go somewhere on purpose.

My target is to learn to live the life that Jesus lived and, with that life, teach others how to do the same. The Secret Place is my daily time with God in the alone zone. You might call it "devotions," or "quiet time with the Lord," or "manna in the morning." Whatever you call your Secret Place, it's the place you and I offer to God our first and best of the day. Psalm 91:1 says, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (NKJV). I'm convinced that who we become in the Secret Place, in private with God, will inevitably affect and determine who we are in other places and spaces.

The second domain I call the "Gathering Place." This area primarily involves home and church. First, if I'm not living up to the biblical standard of being a godly husband and father to my wife and daughter, then who am I to tell you anything? My heart's cry is to be the pastor, protector, and provider of my family.

Secondly, the Gathering Place, to me, represents the church. I am a raving fan of the local church, and I am all-in when it comes to being under pastoral authority, attending services regularly, giving in tithes & offerings, and serving on a team. To flourish in our vision, we need to submit and contribute to the vision of our pastors and leadership team. Like tithing, this is a powerful principle and kingdom key to living a biblical lifestyle of faith. Currently, I am on the pastoral team at my church, serving as Care Pastor for our growing congregation. Lastly, the domain of the "Public Place" is where, at least for me, the rubber hits the road. It's where we get outside the four walls of the church and put our faith into action. It's where we get out of the saltshaker and into the world, presenting a faith life that is authentic and genuine, not kooky and weird.

I like the way Tony Evans challenges men to live. He says that to be kingdom men, we need to live, "Kingdom down and not culture up." Amen! I want my walk to match my talk. Pastor Craig Groeschel ends his monthly leadership podcast with the following quote: "People would rather follow a leader who is always real rather than one who is always right." So, there you have it. I am focusing my energy and prioritizing my life schedule to include healthy time in the Secret Place, the Gathering Place, and the Public Place. This mindset impacts my daily rituals, rhythms, and routines. Ideally, all this is contributing to my becoming a Virtual Mentor worth following.

In the next chapter, I want to tell you about what it feels like to be thrown under the bus – literally!



CHAPTER 5 : THROWN UNDER THE BUS

Every year I choose a particular word or phrase as the theme for the year. One year it was "Good to Great." Another year, it was "Forward." In 2018, my theme was "The Comeback – better, stronger, wiser." There's a story behind The Comeback. Let me explain.

Have you ever had a crazy streak of unfortunate events happen to you or your family? Does it ever seem like one loss, pain, sickness, or tragedy after another? For me, this was 2017.

You should know that I have been visually-impaired my entire life. I inherited a very nasty and, at this point, incurable eye disease called Retinitis Pigmentosa. Think tunnel vision. I experience life like looking through a periscope on a submarine. It is degenerative over time, and today, I am legally blind. My eyes cannot see anything at all in a dark space, and my central vision has become blurry beyond correction. I am using adaptive technology on my computer right now to type this chapter.

The implications of this eye disease have been profound and disruptive. It caused me to lose my ability to work full-time as a pastor, so now I work part-time. I had to surrender my driver's license, so I can no longer drive and must work from home. Further, my daughter Abbey inherited this dreadful eye disease from dear old dad.

To be clear, my support network of pastors and co-workers on staff at church is fantastic. My immediate family has bent over backward to accommodate my unique visual needs. My friends have seen to it that I get to the gym daily, to my meetings at Chick-Fil-A, and anywhere else I need to go.

My mode of transportation switched from my Toyota MR2 Spyder (which got totaled), then my Nissan Leaf (which got totaled), to my Trek road bicycle. That's what I call a downgrade! One of my great joys in life is training for triathlons. I love to swim, bike, and run. You don't need a license for that!

One day, I was on my bike training for a Half Ironman when I passed through a school zone. As it turned out, I was in precisely the right place in the bike lane at precisely the wrong time. A school bus driver accidentally pulled into the bike lane and hit me. The physics of a 26,000-pound bus in motion striking a 150-pound man doesn't play out too well. I went down hard, and it fractured my pelvis and broke my arm.





So, can I share with you five things I learned after getting thrown under the bus?



1. GOD IS GOOD

God is good, no matter what. You'd better settle that one upfront because life is coming at you fast and hard. God didn't cause the accident, nor did He prevent it. However, God was right there with me through it, and that's enough for me.



2. IF WE'RE NOT DEAD, GOD'S NOT DONE WITH US

People die every day. Statistically, over 35,000 people will die on U.S. highways in this year alone. When it's our time to go, it's time. However, if you and I get another day of life, this gift is a stewardship trust. Let's determine to live a full life until we die.



3. ALL SUFFERING HAS A PURPOSE

It took about nine months for me to regain full strength. Being in pain daily was a reality for me, but eventually, I got off the walker, and the cane, and back into the pool, into the weight room, and on the bike. I trust God that He will cause all things – even this thing – to work together for my good (Romans 8:28).



4. GOD IS A REDEEMER

Not only did I take a hit physically, but sadly, my wife and I took a hit financially as well. You would think that a bicyclist getting thrown under a bus would award the victim a generous payday. Long story short, the bus driver denied any liability or wrongdoing, and following a drawn-out battle between lawyers, the case was dropped, sticking me with the bills -- with liberty and injustice for all.

But here's the deal. God knows all this. I trust the Righteous Judge to do what is right in His sight, eventually and ultimately. God is a Redeemer; therefore, it is well with my soul.



5. WATCH FOR THE COMEBACK

Wait for it...the comeback – better, stronger, wiser. God did help me heal. I did come back. After my healing, I completed five triathlons, one half-marathon, and today, I am in the gym five to six days a week, stronger than ever. Glory to God!

Look, my friend, when life knocks you on your butt, we have four choices of response. We can CRY about it, but discouragement could lead to depression. We could CUSS about it, but the Bible points out that a man's anger doesn't bring about the righteous life that God desires (James 1:20). We could COPE with it, roll over, and play the victim. Or finally, and this is how I chose to approach my comeback, we can CAPITALIZE on it. Instead of asking, "Why? Why me? Why this? Why now? Why them?" The better questions are: "OK, this isn't the path I would have chosen. Nevertheless, it's the journey that I am on, so what does this make possible? How can God get glory out of this situation in my life?"

I hope my story in some way encourages you. In the next chapter, I will tell you how the Lord has taken a setback in my life and turned it into a setup to bless me.



CHAPTER 6 : MY CHAZOWN

This brief backstage tour of my journey to freedom is almost done. You are a champ to hang in there with me. There are only two more things I want to share with you to build a foundation for our relationship together in My Virtual Mentor. I hope the Lord allows me to add value to your life in some way. So you can get to know me better, I want to share an anchor verse from the Bible with you that is meaningful to me. "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he" (Proverbs 29:18 KJV).

I'm not trying to impress you that I know a Hebrew word here, but the word "vision," in this verse is the Hebrew word "chazown." It also translates as "dream" or "revelation." So, where there is no vision, no dream, no revelation, people perish. I learned this from Craig Groeschel, who wrote a book entitled Chazown. My wife had me read it, and it changed my life. To summarize Pastor Craig's thoughts, every man is going somewhere, but few men are going somewhere on purpose. Don't miss this.



What is your life purpose? What have you been put on this earth to do? Why were you born in this period of history, into your family, and live where you live, and do what you do? These are all very interesting questions.

If a man knows his "chazown," then, according to Pastor Craig, a man can come closer to knowing God's will for his life and begin to lean into it. This revelation is what I have discovered about myself using what Pastor Craig calls "The Three Circles."

- Circle 1 – Your core values & passions
- Circle 2 – Your natural abilities & spiritual gifts
- Circle 3 – Your past experiences & future opportunities

When a man discovers what he is passionate about at his core, what are his spiritual gifts, and how these interact with his past life experiences, good or bad; that shapes the man he is today. Pastor Craig makes a compelling case that where these three circles intersect, and overlap, this very well could be God's vision, dream, and revelation for one's life.

For me, this formula makes perfect sense! My "chazown" is to lead men to go further faster in their faith. There it is, plain and simple. This mission is me!

I love to disciple men. It's life-giving for me to help others become fully-developing followers of Jesus. My greatest joy is connecting hungry seekers with biblical answers to their great questions. Serving God becomes fun, is filled with joy, and nobody has to motivate me to do it. I believe that God's will for my life is to help men just like you develop yourself, mentor a friend, or build your team.



CHAPTER 7 :WHY I STARTED MY VIRTUAL MENTOR

I want to tell you why I started My Virtual Mentor. Here's the reason: you. Yes, you. I believe that people matter most. Jesus came to this earth to live the life we could not live and die the death we all deserved due to sin. Not only did God so love the world (John 3:16), but God so loved you, and me, and us: individually.

Jesus commissioned His followers to, "Go and make disciples, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28:19-20). This Great Commission from the Lord is what I dedicate the remainder of my life to doing.

As we discussed in the previous chapter, my vision, dream, and God's revelation to me are that I want to do my best, my very best, to lead men like you to go further faster in their faith.

Il have been doing this for over thirty years in ministry in a local church environment. For about the last decade, the Lord gave me a power tool to help jump-start positive change in a man's life. The power tool in my toolbox -- one that I've gotten more traction out of than virtually anything else I've ever attempted in ministry -- is what I call **21-Day Challenges**.



A **21-Day Challenge** is just like it sounds: Twenty-one days to a new and improved you. I created a bunch of them to address different needs you might have. You see, if I just knew the answer to this one question, as a Virtual Mentor, I believe I could help you:

In this season of your life development process, what do you want or need, and how can I help you?

Leveraging 21st-century technology, I have created a virtual, mobile, online mentoring experience for you, and thousands of other men like you. Everything you need to know is in one place: the My Virtual Mentor website. That's home base to get started with a turnkey map to your best spiritual growth year ever.

I created My Virtual Mentor for the spiritually-hungry man with a short attention span. So many men are working a ton of hours with little bandwidth for much else. They have lots of irons in the fire, but they long to become better husbands, fathers; financially and physically fit; and free from addictive behaviors. They want to get from pain island to pleasure island.

Wouldn't it be great if there were something and someone out there who could lend a hand at the speed of life, and wouldn't break the bank, or require a big-time commitment? Oh yes! Welcome to My Virtual Mentor. I want to encourage you to explore the My Virtual Mentor website and envision how this year could be different than last year if you had a virtual mentor in your life.

Well, that's my story, and I'm sticking with it. The next step is up to you. It would indeed be an honor to lead you to go further faster in your faith. I have designed a map to help you experience your best spiritual growth year ever. It's called "My Journey." You can find out more at myvirtualmentor.org.

Blessings and favor to you and your family, in Jesus' name!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Robertson is the founder of My Virtual Mentor, an online platform leading man to go further faster in their faith. David has over thirty years of Christian ministry experience and is a triathlete. He and his wife Monica live in Middle Tennessee, and together they have one adult daughter, Abigail Grace.

To explore a map to your best spiritual growth year ever, visit www.myvirtualmentor.org.