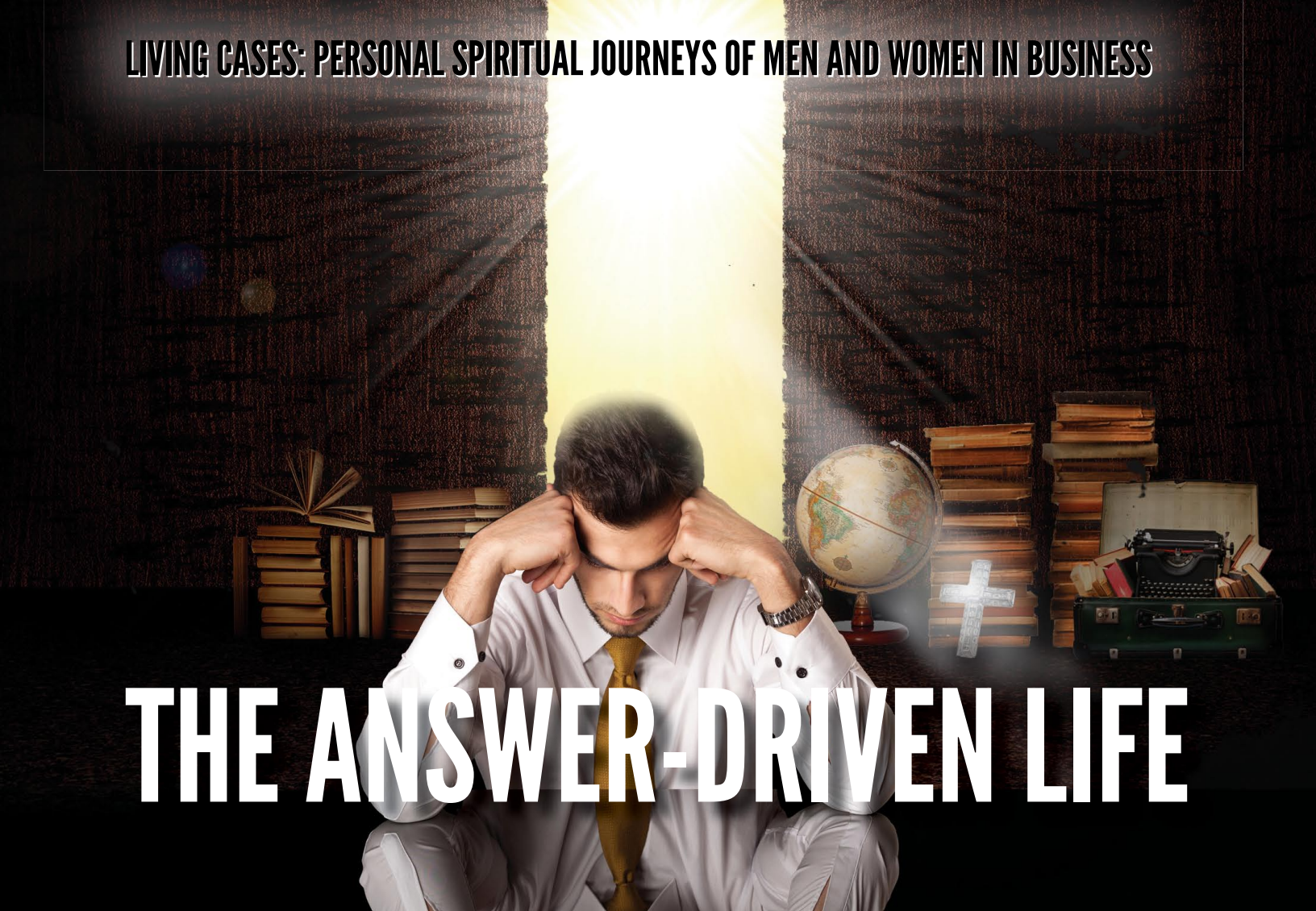




THE ANSWER-DRIVEN LIFE

by Bruce Taylor

Life's vicissitudes. How we cope with unforeseen, unpleasant events in our personal and professional lives often defines who we are in the end. Most people feel utterly lost when circumstances hit, often downright fearful and act accordingly. They grope for answers that are elusive.

I run a private equity fund that invests in oil and gas extractions. How did I feel when the after-shocks of the global financial crisis crescendoed at a time right after we raised capital for the business and had begun investing? How must I deal with panicky investors who witnessed one of the biggest, fastest slumps in oil prices in history? How should I manage wild portfolio value swings when there is no clear vision of geopolitical forces over which we have no control and that hit at the core of our business? And amidst all these, how could I cope with the mounting pressure from employee morale and office politics that are unique in every organization?

The unlikely answer was found in the beginning steps of a 12-step Drug Abuse Program for teens that my wife and I were

involved in more than a decade ago. Our involvement centered around helping parents cope with their teens in drug rehab and recovery. The program helped the teens, but was in every way helpful to the parents as well. After some time I became the

leader of the men's parent support and study group. As I got more immersed in the methodology, I was amazed by the "answer" I

found in the first three steps of this program:

Step 1 - I admit that I am powerless and that my life has become unmanageable

Step 2 - I come to believe that a power greater than myself can restore me to sanity

Step 3 - I make a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand God

It was a stunning discovery. For much of my life, I have drifted in ignorance, insecurity, self-absorption, and dread. I ran hard in a race that lacked purpose and lasting satisfaction,

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and my life was driven by external circumstances that I had little, or should I say zero, control. The essence of who I am was stitched together by the influences (some welcome, others not) that shaped the outcomes at pivotal moments of my life.

It was sheer Providence that, in the mid-2000s, I met and married a Christ-centered woman who took the time to gently introduce me to her faith. Our subsequent involvement with the addiction rehab program finally opened my eyes to what was missing in my stewardship of a life in drift.

The core tenet of those beginning steps in the 12-step rehab program was echoed in Philippians 4:19: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." In other words, the sufficiency of Christ is what I have been searching for all these years. The "answer" was there all along – God has given me everything I ever needed – but first I have to turn over the sovereignty over my life to Him.

When I began to do that, I started finding peace in my heart with the understanding that God has a plan for me. I only need to be an effective instrument in carrying out His plan. This realization is life-transforming. I began to apply this principle not only to my personal life, but professional life as well.

Backward induction is the process of reasoning backwards, from the end of a problem or situation, to determine a sequence of optimal actions. Being armed with God's answer is like applying backward induction to all our decisions in life. Focusing on God and His sufficiency led me to focus my efforts on things I do control, where I can make a difference, for His glory.

God looks at the heart, only men look at the appearance – outcomes measured by human scales. What matters is whether the step I take, the decision I make, is pleasing to God. If it is, then the outcome must be right. Often too, it is surprisingly rewarding.

Case in point: when we started our fund, we had a limited amount of resources and time in order to raise the needed capital. Knowing that God was in control, we worked hard, and despite many disappointing moments, when it truly looked like no one would invest in our business, we kept the faith. I refused to live in fear of "what if we don't" or "what happens if we can't."

We needed only a small number of investors who would believe in our management team and who desire to balance out their portfolios with our type of investment. With time being of the essence, we acted with discernment, isolating viable candidates from "maybe's" and "no, thank you's." Approximately three months before we were to run out of capital and be forced to "put pencils down," we got an unsolicited email showing interest in our fund. Shortly thereafter, eleven more investors were lined up. We closed our fund fully capitalized. That was no luck as we had been at this for two-and-a-half years.

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Trusting in God's big plan also allows us to integrate the thought process of backward induction into our management tool kit. We develop projects, budgets, and work plans by first defining the desired final result. From there we work backward to lay out the roadmap for ideal solutions covering everything from manpower to budgetary requirements. The overarching premise in these decision processes, however, remains in what constitute proper stewardship that honors God.

We worked tirelessly to keep our business dealings beyond reproach, having to make difficult but necessary decisions affecting untimely personnel and partner changeovers - decisions that could easily have detracted from our singular focus on creating value for our investors. Likewise, at times when changing economic environments renders us helpless in steering the business in the direction we sought, we focused only

on God's promise and gave it all with honest and sincere efforts. The true blessing is as much in the process as in the outcome.

I have been blessed with the opportunity

to start up, own and run my own business along with my partner who is also spiritually driven. Together we have learned to adopt a Christ-centered business model. It has helped us navigate through many stressful and seemingly insurmountable trials and tribulations.

We strive to "take the high road" and treat others as we would like to be treated, which could be challenging in an ever changing and highly competitive environment. Yet even though we might not have perfect foresight of the "game plan" that guarantees success, we have THE ANSWER – GOD'S plan, for all of us. As President George W. Bush once said, "God is good....all the time."

About the Author



Bruce Taylor is Managing Partner and Co-founder of Blue Tip Energy, a limited partnership that makes direct investments in on-shore oil and natural gas assets in the United States for a select group of private equity investors. Bruce has over 35 years of energy industry experience, with a focus in operations management, land and legal management, including contract compliance and environmental work. Bruce also has extensive asset turn-around and work-out experience, with a focus on organizing and developing startups and underperforming assets.