



THE FREEDOM  
OF TELLING  
STORIES

# INTRODUCTION

## 1. WHO WE ARE

WE ARE TODD AND SUMMER ROUGHTON - THE PEOPLE BEHIND OUR MINISTRY. OUR HEART AND PURPOSE = TO LOVE PEOPLE WELL. PERIOD. WE MET WHEN WE WERE IN COLLEGE AND IMMEDIATELY STARTED DOING MINISTRY TOGETHER. WE HAVE BEEN A TEAM EVER SINCE. TODD IS A PASTOR TURNED STANDING STONE SHEPHERD AND SUMMER IS A GRAPHIC DESIGNER SUPPORTING THE MINISTRY + HELPING LEADERS WHO NEED TO PROCESS THEIR HURTS, HIGHS AND LOWS.

## 2. WHO IS STANDING STONE

WE ARE A NON-PROFIT MINISTRY COMPRISED OF EXPERIENCED MINISTRY LEADERS COMMITTED TO CARING FOR PASTORS AND THEIR SPOUSES AT RISK OF LEAVING THE MINISTRY PREMATURELY.

OUR HEART IN MINISTRY IS TO COME ALONG SIDE OF MINISTRY LEADERS AND THEIR SPOUSES AS A SUPPORT SYSTEM - MENTORING, DISCIPLING, LOVING THEM IN A SPACE THAT CAN SOMETIMES FEEL LONELY, DISCONNECTING, AND HARD - BECAUSE IF WE ARE ALL HONEST MINISTRY IS HARD AND BEAUTIFUL ALL AT THE SAME TIME.

THE BEAUTY OF STANDING STONE IS THAT SINCE WE ARE A SUPPORT BASED MINISTRY, THE COST TO MINISTRY LEADERS AND THEIR SPOUSES IS NOTHING. THE ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO HELP ENCOURAGE HEALTHY MINISTRY LEADERS SO THAT THERE WILL BE HEALTHY CHURCHES.

## 3. OUR MINISTRY TIMELINE

ONE OF THE COOLEST THINGS THAT WE ARE GOING TO HAVE YOU DO IS CREATE A MINISTRY TIMELINE BECAUSE WHEN WE SEE THE BIG PICTURE, WE CAN IDENTIFY THE HARD STRUGGLES MORE CLEARLY. WE WANTED TO SHARE PIECES OF OURS OVER FROM THE LAST 20-ISH YEARS. MINISTRY HAD HIGHS AND LOWS, THESE ARE JUST A FEW OF OUR PIECES.



## **TELLING YOUR STORY THROUGH YOUR MINISTRY TIMELINE**

THIS PROCESS CAN BRING UP A LOT OF EMOTIONS BECAUSE WE ARE DEALING WITH MAJOR EVENTS OR TRANSITIONS IN YOUR MINISTRY EXPERIENCE. SPEND TIME SEEING BOTH THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF MINISTRY THAT YOU HAVE WALKED THROUGH AND REFLECT ON WHAT GOD HAS TAUGHT YOU THROUGH BOTH.

**YOU CAN VIEW OUR STORY ON OUR WEBSITE OR PIECES OF IT AT THE END OF THIS BOOKLET**

## **OUR MINISTRY BEGINNING**

**GBC**

**+ GREAT FOUNDATION FOR MINISTRY**

+ LOTS OF MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

**- FINANCIAL STRUGGLES**

- SUMMERS HAD GONE TO THIS CHURCH HER WHOLE LIFE, DAD WAS AN ELDER, EVERYONE KNEW EVERYTHING ABOUT US - IT BECAME DIFFICULT AS HER PARENTS WALKED THROUGH A DIVORCE. BEGAN TO FEEL PRESSURE TO PERFORM DIFFERENTLY BECAUSE OF IT.

**SIC**

**+ GREAT RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS**

+ 1ST OPPORTUNITY TO BE "THE GUY"

**- MINISTRY HAD LOTS OF THINGS THAT THEY DID NOT WANT TO CHANGE - IT BECAME JUST SUSTAINING WHAT WAS ALREADY THERE.**

- PREVIOUS YOUTH PASTOR WAS SUPERVIROR

**- NEGATIVE LIFE CIRCUMSTANCE (SUMMERS DAD WAS DYING AND SHE WAS SPENDING A GREAT DEAL OF TIME WITH HIM, HIS DEATH, STRESS)**

- IN THE END, TODD WANTED THINGS TO GROW AND CHANGE AND THE BOARD WANTED THINGS TO STAY THE SAME. LEFT UNDER HURT CIRCUMSTANCES

**UFC**

**+ DIFFERENT MINISTRY CONTEXT**

+ LOVED OUR COMMUNITY

**+ GREAT RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF**

- STUDENT MINISTRIES WAS NEVER SET UP TO SUCCESSFUL GIVEN THE CONTEXT AND FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

**- LEFT WELL FOR OUR NEXT MINISTRY, BUT AS WE LOOK BACK, WE SHOULD HAVE STAYED IN THIS CHURCH.**

**CCC**

**+ GREAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINISTRY OUTSIDE OF YOUTH MINISTRY**

- HARD COMMUNITY TO MINISTRY IN (75% WAS A DIFFERENT DOMINATING RELIGION)
- **MAJOR LEADERSHIP CHANGES**
- FIRST CLASH WITH LEADERSHIP
- **OUR KIDS STARTED TO REALLY GET HURT BY THE CHURCH, EXPECTATIONS BEGAN TO BE FAR GREATER THEN THEY SHOULD HAVE HAD TO HANDLE**
- LEAVING - WHILE IT STARTED GOOD, THE CHURCH MADE THE EXIT AS HARD AS THEY COULD

**CBC**

**+ WE WERE BROUGHT IN TO MAKE MAJOR CHANGES AND ENGAGE IN THE COMMUNITY (HEAL THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE COMMUNITY).**

- + COMMUNITY MINISTRY AND ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY WAS AMAZING.
- **THEY REALLY DIDN'T WANT THE CHANGES**
- THEY DIDN'T WANT TO JOIN US IN BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN CHURCH AND COMMUNITY
- **MAJOR ISSUES WITH US + THE CHURCH (OUR KIDS WERE NOT PERFECT, OUR PARENTING WAS NOT AUTHORITARIAN, OUR LIFESTYLE WAS TOO HIPPIE-ISH)**
- LIES WERE SPOKEN ABOUT US
- **IF THEY DIDN'T FIRE US, WE WERE GOING TO QUIT**

**FL**

**+ GOD CLEARLY CALLED US TO FLORIDA - ZERO DOUBT**

- + GREAT PEOPLE TO WORK WITH
- **VERY SHORT**
- **STILL FEELS LIKE WE DON'T FULLY KNOW WHY WE WERE DISMISSED**
- + A BRIDGE TO OUR NEW MINISTRY

**TODAY**

# SET IT UP

**1. NOW IT IS YOUR TURN - USE THE SPACE PROVIDED TO CREATE YOUR OWN TIMELINE OF MINISTRY.** BEGIN BY WRITING DOWN MAJOR EVENTS OR TRANSITIONS (**WE DID THE PLACES THAT WE SERVED**) IN YOUR MINISTRY EXPERIENCE, THEN FILL IN MORE DETAIL WITHIN YOUR TIMELINE.

SPEND TIME SEEING BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF MINISTRY EXPERIENCE. WE WILL GIVE YOU SOME TIME TO COMPLETE THIS PART.









# EVALUATING OUR STORIES

“THERE’S NO WAY TO HAVE COHESIVE STORIES UNLESS WE TRULY EMBRACE ALL OF IT: THE GOOD, THE HARD, THE BITTERSWEET, THE SAD, THE JOYFUL, THE LONELY, AND THE PAINFUL. IT ALL COUNTS.”

- AUNDI KOLBER, MA, LPC  
TRY SOFTER

**1. AS YOU WERE DOING YOUR MINISTRY TIMELINE, WHAT WERE YOUR DOMINANT THOUGHTS?**

**2. WHAT WERE YOUR DOMINANTE FEELINGS?**

**3. HOW WAS YOUR BODY FEELING? (TIGHTEN SHOULDERS, CLENCH JAW, NECK TIGHTEN?)**

**I WANT TO GIVE YOU PERMISSION TO FEEL ALL THE FEELINGS. RECOGNIZE IT SO THAT THEY LORD CAN USE IT - NON JUDGEMENTAL RECOGNITION IS THE BEGINNING OF HEALING.**

**4. WHAT ARE YOUR STRONGEST DESIRES IN MINISTRY?**

**5. IN THIS SEASON OF YOUR LIFE, HOW ARE YOUR -  
FRIENDSHIP  
MARRIAGE:**

**FAMILY:**

**FRIENDSHIPS (TRUE FRIENDSHIPS):**

**MINISTRY TEAM:**

**PAUSE + REFLECT**

# PAUSE + REFLECT

THIS IS A PRACTICAL SPACE TO BRAIN DUMP EVERY FEELING OR WORDS THAT YOU COME TO MIND. IF YOU ARE THE ARTISTIC TYPE, CREATE WORDS THAT BRING HOPE + HEALING THROUGH AN ARTISTIC MEDIUM OR JUST WRITE IT ALL DOWN.

**PAUSE + REFLECT**

# **EMBRACING YOUR STORY**

**NOW SPEND TIME CONSIDERING YOUR STORY AND THE QUESTIONS YOU ANSWERED. READ OVER YOUR TIMELINE + THE ANSWERS TO YOUR 5 QUESTIONS A FEW TIMES.**

**1. DO YOU SEE A THEME THROUGHOUT YOUR ANSWERS?**

**2. ARE THERE AREAS IN YOUR MINISTRY TIMELINE THAT YOU ARE TEMPTED TO MINIMIZE BECAUSE OF HOW THEY MAKE YOU FEEL? WHY DO YOU TRY AND MINIMIZE THOSE PIECES OF YOUR TIMELINE? PERHAPS PUT A STAR NEXT TO THOSE EVENTS.**

**3. WHERE IN YOUR TIMELINE DO YOU FEEL MOST PROUD OF YOURSELF?**

**4. WHERE IN YOUR TIMELINE DO YOU NEED TO SEE CHANGE TAKE PLACE AND HEALING HAPPEN? MAYBE YOU FEEL UNABLE TO MOVE FORWARD, FEEL STUCK OR FEEL TOO FEARFUL TO BE VULNERABLE**

**5. COMPLETE THIS SENTENCE IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND WHERE YOU ARE EMOTIONALLY IN YOUR JOURNEY OF MINISTRY:**

**I AM IN A PLACE OF** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**BUT I WANT TO BE IN A PLACE OF** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**6. SHARE YOUR TIMELINE AND ANSWERS WITH SOMEONE IF OR WHEN YOU FEEL YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE & READY.**

# our story

## FINDING PURPOSE IN THE GOOD + DIFFICULT

This is our story - it is rough, difficult and has a purpose that we did not see for years. God was writing something beautiful for us, creating empathy, understanding, walking with us through some of the most difficult stages of our lives within ministry and outside of ministry - ALL for one purpose. To gain an understand for what pastors, ministry leaders and their families walk through so that we can support and love them well.

Our story is so much bigger than both of us - it is about our family, our community and the struggles we have walked through within the ministries that we were serving. It is by no means a definition of who we are, however it is the hardship of what we have gone through at the hands of the church that has defined our ministry and our mission to walk well with others.

We began doing ministry together before we even got married - working in the youth ministry that I (Summer) loved and grew up going to in Southern California. From that very point - we began to struggle and the transitions began. It is the defining moment of where our “why” begins. Todd has filled different rolls within the churches we have served in as a youth intern, youth pastor, discipleship pastor, teaching pastor and worship leader ( he served as a worship pastor while he was serving other pastoral rolls). Each of those positions has been an amazing opportunity to grow and love others, however - it has also opened our entire family up to some very extreme difficulties.

Transitions. We have made a few transitions, for a variety of reasons. Some were because we were asked to leave and others were us walking away - only one we can say we wish we had never left. As we exited our very first church, one that we left for our own growth (I grew up in that church, my dad was an elder, my parents went through a very public divorce), we knew it was time to do things on our own, away from the wonderful people who had watched us grow up - we just needed it to be us. Little did we know that this well-intentioned transition was the very beginning of our journey to walking away from church ministry in the capacity that we knew and moving towards a more supportive ministry roll.

**“NEW BEGINNINGS ARE OFTEN DISGUISED AS PAINFUL ENDINGS.” LAO TZU**

Transitioning through the new beginnings was an experience that nearly destroyed our marriage, our children’s emotional health and myself as an individual. I (Summer) turned to suicide as a way to get out and save myself from all the hurt and stress that I was experiencing. Todd had to work through some extremely difficult feelings and emotions - anger, resentment, bitterness, feelings of failure. Our kids have had to struggle individually with their identity and if they wanted to be apart of the church - at this time only our youngest chooses to go to church. It breaks my heart to have to see our kids hearts destroyed by what they saw the church do to us and what they experienced.

We decided to share these things as a way to grow, heal and support those that are going through similar church experiences. While this is not an exhaustive list, it is the highlights of what we have grown through in 21 years of full time ministry. We have seen it all and been through a TON after leaving the safety of that first church ministry job in Southern California.

- Following a youth pastor who had been there for 20 years and was going to be Todd's boss. (Why did no one tell us this was not a good choice?) We grew in understanding of how it is important to have a healthy work environment with boundaries that set someone up for success.
- Spending time in a church that felt like home, but leaving because we thought we knew better than Jesus. BIG mistake. We left people who felt like family and a church who loved their community so well. Learning that just because it sounds like a good opportunity, doesn't mean that it is what is best for your life, family and ministry. It is the one spot we would ALL go back to.
- Exiting a church because of being pushed out. After a leadership change within the church, both the church and us realized that the our trajectory of our ministry was different and we all knew it was time to leave. Circumstances quickly changed and the remainder of our time became extremely difficult.
- Amidst our adoption and being stuck in Ethiopia (desperately trying to get back) a text comes through one evening asking when we are getting back so that Todd can clean out his office (we already knew we were leaving, but a 2 week, last minute trip quickly turned into getting stuck in Ethiopia trying to bring our son home). UHMMM we were stuck in Ethiopia with our son and trying our hardest to get back. Due to a variety of reasons, Todd had to board a plane alone and clean out his office.
- Taking a position out of desperation is never a great idea. This is where a great deal of trauma occurred. We stepped into this position because they wanted to bring in someone different, someone who was going to push their ideals and expand their reach into a community that struggled to see them as valuable. We stepped into our new roll by loving those that were around us in our community, quickly fell in love with the people in our city and within two months realized that the church really did not want us like they thought they did. FALSE accusations began to run around the church, I was church disciplined for my social media and views, our kids were harassed in Sunday School by elders, they did not like our gay friends in our community that we were inviting to church or our love for those that they deemed too different. The church nearly destroyed us. Todd left for a meeting that he knew they were going to fire him in, but as he left he asked, "if they don't fire me, do you care if I just quit?" DO IT. It was time to get out.
- Transitioning into the church we thought we were going to be at for a VERY long time, but only were there for 9 months. Left feeling isolated in a city that we loved and alone because we were abandoned by the church family in the middle of a pandemic.

Does this feel like a piece of your story? Similar to your story? Please reach out to us, we get it and you are NEVER alone in anything you are walking through. Let us support you in every way possible.

**WITH GRATITUDE,  
TODD + SUMMER ROUGHTON**



# thank you

**SHARING YOUR MINISTRY JOURNEY IS DIFFERENT FOR EVERYONE. EMOTIONS OF GRATITUDE, JOY HURT, STRUGGLE, BLESSING, REGRET, HEALING, GRIEF, ANGUISH, STRESS, GRACE, LOVE - THE LIST OF ENDLESS EMOTIONS - IS SO DIFFERENT BASED ON THE MINISTRIES EACH OF US HAS WALKED THROUGH.**

**THERE ARE BEAUTIFUL MOMENTS, YET THERE ARE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT MOMENTS. EACH MOMENT IS A BEAUTIFUL LESSON OF GROWTH, ADJUSTMENT + DEVELOPMENT. EMBRACE THE BEAUTY OF BOTH THE AMAZING AND THE HARD - BOTH TEACH US AND MAKE US BETTER.**



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