

# *Chapter One*

## **T H E M A I N I N G R E D I E N T S**

“An intelligent person learns from their own mistakes, but a genius learns from the mistakes of others.”

- Anonymous

Everything in my life is based on two basic fundamentals and one mission. This is the lens that I view the entire world, both physically and spiritually. These foundational principles are in place to drive every decision and possible reaction along the journey. I'm definitely not perfect in my pursuit to follow them, but they are there to guide me. The fundamentals are to love your neighbor as yourself and love the Lord God with all your heart. These simple, yet wise and edifying teachings come directly from the Bible. Lucky for me, my parents taught me this early on. Mastering these two fundamentals will lead to a life of purpose and fulfillment. Using these teachings as a guide on your journey will bring joy and many opportunities. It's not a matter of being less so those around you can be more but a matter of being your absolute best, so you can improve and be a blessing to the lives of others.

In striving to live out these two fundamentals, I am again far from perfect. There are many times when I fall short. There are many times when I don't treat people the way I should. However, I don't beat myself up for my shortcomings. I try, fail, learn, and then hopefully improve so I don't make the same mistakes again. In order to learn, I need to see my failures from different angles. This is a great example of why I need great people around me that can speak truth and life into situations. The circle you have around you is incredibly important. The company you keep is vital to your success and well-being, both physically and mentally. You need wise and caring people around you to live the life of a professional failure. Great people speak truth and wisdom into your failures, not lies and deceit.

Beyond these two fundamentals, I have a heartfelt mission and discipline to be a resource. Not to just make money for me, but to be a resource in life that people can turn to when they have questions: questions regarding business, money, life, and many other things. I want to be an open-source platform that exists to better those around me. I once heard a pastor say that when God pours out blessings, people around that person receive overflow blessings. I want to be an abundance of blessings to help guide others and motivate them to do the same.

Loving your neighbor as yourself is not easy. It might be simple, but it's not easy. It's not easy to love your neighbors when they don't see things the way you do. It's not easy when they have different political views. It's not easy when they're disrespectful and try to bully you around.

You are not required to get along with all people, and there will always be someone who doesn't like you. I've come to understand that's just a part of life. It's definitely not easy, but with an eternal perspective in mind and a perspective of learning and growth, it's more than worth the effort. You will show your neighbors respect by seeking to learn from them. You will give them value by asking questions and listening. You don't have to agree on every level with others to learn from them. In fact, I don't know anyone that I agree with 100% of the time, not even my wonderful wife or God-fearing parents. Once you realize this, it can be easier to look past the faults of others and see them for the gifts they can be. I will repeat this often, but it cannot be said enough: no one is perfect. That status is not attainable. Learn to see and value

people's imperfections in order to treasure the amazing abilities and talents they offer.

It's also not easy to love God with all your heart all the time. It's not easy to be grateful to God when seasons are overwhelming and depleting. It's not easy to love God when you don't get what you think you need. Again, it's not easy, but it's worth the effort. What I've come to realize is that God sees things in a different way than you and I. Just because we don't understand what He's doing, doesn't mean He's not working and trustworthy. When you realize this truth, it can be easier to allow God to open and close doors for you. Doors that you think should be opening, don't open. Doors that make no worldly sense and should be closed, sometimes open. Lean into this. It becomes a little easier to trust and be grateful for the difficult seasons in your life.

The hard times will come, but if you can endure them with the right mindset, the hard times often produce the best fruit. Trials and tribulations provide the best learning opportunities to take to heart and pass along lessons learned to others in desperate need. Loving God with all your heart takes discipline and consistent trust. In the end, it's worth the effort.

When I seek to be the resource I desire to be, I desperately need wisdom. Not just knowledge, but Godly wisdom from other people's unique experiences and musings. I seek this through conversations, books, podcasts, and the Bible. Without wise content flowing through your mind, it's nearly impossible to be a good resource. Just as simplicity is often the apex in design, true wisdom is actually simplicity in its greatest form. True wisdom is being able to take a complex thought

and communicate it in a way that anyone can understand. If you are truly wise, you are figuring out the puzzle and showing someone where the pieces are. You're taking a 1000 piece puzzle and turning it into a 10 piece puzzle to share. The mentee receiving wisdom then has put the pieces together for themselves. Effort is needed on both sides.

Wisdom is being able to know the entire dictionary and then simplifying it down to everyday words for anyone to understand. What good does wisdom do for you if you never pass it along and share it with others? It can easily become an idol and can be held over people for selfish gain. The, "I'm greater than you because I know more than you," mentality is not wisdom; it's acting like a pharisee and trumpeting your intelligence. It's acting like someone that's insecure and has to put others down to lift himself up. Don't be a pharisee. You're better than that.

## ABUNDANCE MINDSET

Success is defined differently from person to person, but whatever the ultimate goal may be, an abundance mindset is critical. This simple concept can change the world. I'm not just talking casually about changing the world as many do, but actually taking the steps to do it. If in your mind you have something to share, whether it be money or wisdom, you can joyfully pass this along to others and lift them up to become more successful themselves. It's an endless loop. The more you give, the more you can receive. You can be highly successful and still

place your neighbor ahead of yourself. It's not one or the other.

What does an abundant mindset look like? Someone with an abundant mindset is an overall optimist and is genuinely happy for others when they achieve some level of success. This individual knows when someone else is enjoying success, it's not just a one-off event. There is plenty of success to go around. Success is not finite but rather infinite. Most people don't understand this and focus on what they need to become successful. When your attention turns to helping others achieve, you build on the endless supply of success. The supply will never run dry. If everyone on the planet shared in successful moments, there would be no scarcity of success but rather a building of community and positivity. The world would look a lot different and ultimately be a better place.

On the contrary, someone with a scarcity mindset sees a finite amount of success in the world and tends to be jealous of others' success. This person thinks if someone is experiencing success, that means she has taken it from someone else. That's a boldfaced lie directly from the devil. This is detrimental not only to your growth but also to the growth of others around you. It's difficult to be around people who have a scarcity mindset. They tend to take from others, whether it be money, knowledge, or time, and often only share when it benefits them. When you think of a positive and uplifting person to be around, it's generally not someone with a scarcity mindset.

An abundant mindset is often applied to money, but it can be just as applicable to wisdom. I remember being around my grandpa growing up in Missouri. He was a wise man, but he never made you feel

dumb for your lack of knowledge. He was a reserved listener, but when you invited his wisdom into your life with a question, he would open up his database of knowledge. He knew an incredible amount about farming and plants, so much that he could have written books on the different subjects. One simple question to him about a type of tree would lead to an abundant education session. Even though he was busy with the farm, he seemed to always have time to answer a question.

How did my grandpa become so knowledgeable? He gained his wisdom through experience, reading, and constantly learning. I remember him still reading magazines and learning new farming techniques as he was entering his 80's and 90's. He was filling himself with practical knowledge so he could confidently pass it along at the right time. He was then more than able to pass that wisdom along to others, wanting nothing more than a good conversation in return.

People with this abundant mindset tend to have a heightened ability to continue learning. Hopefully, they're passing that knowledge along to others as they learn and grow. People with an abundance mindset don't see knowledge and wisdom as something to be protected and held onto for their own selfish gain. There's no need to store up wisdom to use it as a weapon against others. People who share wisdom freely don't have to be know-it-alls, but if someone asks and is willing to take the time to learn, they share. It's a tricky balance, and that's why it's so hard to execute. People don't like know-it-alls. They're arrogant and off-putting. However, freely sharing wisdom and experience with others (when they ask) goes beyond the know-it-all mentality.

It comes from a place of humility and with the intent of adding value to the other person. Make it a goal to add value to people's lives. It creates an infinite return. A return you might not see right away, but like planted seeds, the fruit will come later. There is more wisdom in this world (and beyond) than anyone can ever hold at one time. It doesn't matter how smart you think you are, no one has the capacity to learn everything. Even if someone tried to accumulate every ounce of knowledge available, he would run out of time. We are all mortals, and we will all eventually die. With that in mind, why not share as much as you possibly can, helping others along the way, and in turn, gaining wisdom yourself? As the saying goes, "When the student is ready, the teacher appears." Students with an abundant mindset will grow exponentially. They will open their eyes to see all that's available around them and the endless opportunities to grow and become a better version of themselves. And then one day, they will become teachers. It's a beautiful cycle.

Let's also look at the other side, which is a scarcity mindset. For example, if you have one pie and someone asks you to share, resources are scarce. You only have one pie to share. Once it's gone, there isn't anything else to share. You're more stingy with how you share and who you share with. This can easily lead to greed and possessiveness. This benefits only you (on the surface) and will not benefit others. For most people, this is how they view capitalism and making money. They make money at the cost of someone else. There's only so much to go around and once it's gone, it can no longer be made. This is dangerous thinking. When contemplating a scarcity mindset and how it



pertains to wisdom, it's even more dangerous. When people withhold knowledge on a subject or general wisdom, they are essentially holding power over others. They often don't want them to share the same level of thinking, either because they have a higher position in a company, or are older, therefore they should be more experienced. This damages relationships and potential in other people. The goal should be to lift each other up, not beat others down.

A scarcity mindset will be detrimental to you and those around you in the long run. It only empowers the individual on the surface. When a person wants, he/she takes a finite resource from someone else. There's not enough to go around and there's no reason to share with someone who doesn't deserve it. On the contrary, an abundance mindset will lead to greater success within yourself and others. It will build relationships. It's a short-term trade-off for a long-term gain, and it's a win-win situation. The infinite flow of knowledge and wisdom is where freedom lies for you and those around you. Make a conscious effort to freely pass along wisdom when others ask, and you'll soon discover the limitless benefits of an abundance mindset!

## THE ELUSIVE MINDSET

One of the hardest things to break free from is how you view the world. We are beautifully created, but we are made up of little habits and triggers based largely on our upbringing. How we interact with certain subjects, both physically and mentally, also plays a big part. If

you get your mind right, there are very few things you can't accomplish. If you believe you are worthy and ready, you will be worthy and ready. Just like an individual's definition of success can be different from others (and not necessarily wrong), mindsets can vary as well. That is the beauty of individuals and freedom of thought. But for the context of this book, we are specifically talking about the elusive mindset of learning and growing rapidly from mistakes: learning from your own mistakes and, more importantly, learning from the mistakes of others.

If you can train your brain to see the potential of a situation rather than viewing it as a hindrance, you will have unlocked a world of possibilities! It's like having access to a secret room. You don't have to have a key, you just need to know where to find it. Learn to embrace the hard times, because it's the hard times that lead to a bountiful harvest.

Let's play out a made-up scenario and break it down with two different mindsets. The day starts off fine, but when you go from your bedroom to your kitchen, you trip over a shoe that you left in front of the door. It angers you, so you kick it out of the way and wake your spouse. When you go to start your coffee, you realize that you forgot to buy more coffee filters. No coffee for you this morning! You fumble through your clothing choices and realize you're out of socks. You need socks, so you wear a dirty pair that doesn't smell that bad. You rush out the door and get in your car. You back up in a hurry and forget that your spouse parked behind you this time. You smash into her car and damage both vehicles. You sprint back into the house to grab the other set of keys but can't find them. At this point, you're frantic

and losing your cool. After five minutes that seem like thirty, you locate the keys and move the other car out of the way. You'll deal with that mess later. You're finally on the road and reach work late. Your boss isn't happy because you didn't text or call to inform him that you would be late. You also forgot to eat and are very hungry. You grab a donut from the break room and gobble it down without breathing. One hour later, you're tired and ready to call it a day, but you still have a full day of work left.

Here's where the differences in mindsets become evident. The first mindset is seeing events and happenings as a hindrance and annoyance. Bad things happen to you because you're just unlucky and things will probably never change. It was just another awful Monday morning that happens all too often. You think to yourself, "*There was nothing I could have done. It wasn't my fault.*" The random shoe and the absence of coffee filters are your spouse's fault, as she was supposed to take care of those. The sock monster ate my sock—they're always randomly disappearing! The car parked behind you and the temporarily lost keys are also clearly your spouse's fault. Excuses are in abundance, and you're not any better for it. If you want your future to be different, you need a new mindset.

The elusive mindset is learning in the moment coupled with learning retrospectively. After you stumble over the shoe, you know you need to not ignore that you saw it the night before and assumed your spouse would take care of it. That's your fault. Lesson one. When you realize you're out of coffee filters, you need to think to yourself, "It would be wise to always have a backup stash of filters somewhere in

the house for emergencies.” Lesson two. When you can’t find any clean socks, you realize that you should probably be more proactive the night before and prepare for the next day. Lesson Three. Check your rear-view mirror before backing up. Always. Lesson four. When you’re late, it’s kind to let your boss know so he’s not worried about where you are. Lesson five. After your tired spell at work, you’re now thinking donuts probably aren’t the best energy source and long-term healthy breakfast go-to. Lesson six. There are valuable lessons all around us, and that’s just from things that have happened to you. Now imagine the conversation you could have with your coworker at lunch about what happened to her last week. Think of her story in the same way. What lessons can you learn from her without having to actually experience the mess she had to deal with? Once you are able to switch your frame of mind, you can then learn to take action. And remember, knowing is not enough—you must put what you’ve learned into practice for it to make an impact in your life and those around you.

A friend once sent me a video of Rick Warren’s personal book collection at his home. He was standing in his library when he grabbed a book. The library was large with many beautiful wooden shelves, all filled with books. Any reader would be proud to have this as his study. The man opened the book and pressed a button. A secret door opened into another room. This room was massive with rows and rows of books on each side and a walkway in the middle. It looked like a public library and seemed to go on forever. As he walked back to his second study, he told of how much he loved reading and showed off his private and signed collection of rare books. Rick says that he has read a book

a day since he was fourteen years old.<sup>3</sup>

That's a lot of books! Reading is the key to unlocking wisdom and ability within yourself. You can read a thousand pages a day, but if you don't put those teachings into practice it becomes a wasted effort. My point is that it doesn't matter how much knowledge you accumulate if you don't put that knowledge into action. All the knowledge in the world means nothing without action. The secret combination is knowledge plus action. Knowledge and action have a linked and highly dependent relationship. They don't work well without each other. Learn to never use one without the other.

Sometimes things are out of your control; I'm not arguing that you have control at all times. But you can always control your reaction to those circumstances. Your reaction is something you can control every single time. You can either try and learn from your situation or you can ignore it and move on, only to possibly make the same mistake again and again. When you repeatedly make the same mistake, you are simply wasting time and most likely growing in frustration. Sometimes the stress we face in our lives is due in large part to the habits we create and not what's happening to us. I can't stress to you enough how important it is to never stop learning, from yourself and more importantly others. When you begin to realize the potential of this mindset switch, an exciting new world will open up for you. You will begin to see the potential of each day and view each moment as an opportunity.

There's so much to learn in this lifetime and there are so many new experiences and lessons to be had today. To some people, this can be overwhelming. They like being comfortable, and they know that

when you grow, it's uncomfortable. Learning and growing can be very uncomfortable, but they can also be embraced. Learn to embrace the uncomfortable and set your mind on enjoying the tough seasons of life. Don't let the fact that you don't know everything be discouraging to you—let it be a motivation.

### BE BETTER

I am a highly competitive person, and anyone that knows me probably thinks that's an understatement. It doesn't matter what I am doing, I want to win any game I play. In my mind, there's really no point in playing a game if you don't strive for victory. And winning is a lot more fun than losing. It could be a game of pickleball, a board game, or simply a made-up game of throwing rocks against a trash can. It doesn't matter - if I'm doing it, I want to do it well and try my best to win. I've learned there's nothing wrong with this attitude, but I have also learned over the years that there can be an unhealthy side to competitiveness. You can get so upset when you lose that you lose control of your emotions or even worse, damage relationships with the people you're competing with. I've had times where I'm playing a game of tennis, and I get so mad at myself for losing that I walk off without saying a word. Of course, I'm mad at myself for not playing well, but my silence speaks loudly.

I've had other times where I say too many words, and I speak negatively to myself or my friend I'm competing against. It's obviously

never a good thing to throw a temper tantrum when you lose. What good does it do? You might temporarily release the built-up anger, but it's a short-term solution for a long-term problem. It's just a band-aid. I've been there before—thrown my racket and cursed out loud. It's just awkward for all those involved when you throw a temper tantrum over a bad shot or losing a game. I do hope and strive to never be there again, but it is very difficult when one is competitive.

Over the years, my competitive drive hasn't diminished. In fact, it's probably gotten stronger. But I've learned to harness that competitive drive into accelerated learning and hopefully helping others excel at whatever it is we are competing in. If I learn something that is helpful, I'm happy to share what I've discovered. And the biggest thing I've learned is that making your counterpart better will allow you to become better. It will strengthen your weaknesses and allow you to not put so much pressure on yourself. It will also allow you to have more fun in competition. Competition is meant to be competitive, not one-sided.

In recent years, I have actually learned to root for my opponent during play. I genuinely mean that, and there's good reason for it. I'm not necessarily rooting for them to win, but for them to compete and play at a high level. This doesn't mean I don't want to win or don't care, but the exact opposite. I want people around me to play at their best level, to elevate me to another level as well. It's a winning relationship. You can be highly competitive and still care for others in the process. It's definitely not one or the other.

In my experience, the best times in competition are when you

are evenly matched with an opponent. You are pushing each other to make a better shot or execute a better move. You know that if you are off that day, your opponent will probably beat you. You have to focus. In order to win, you need to play your best, and therefore, your evenly matched opponent tends to bring the best out of you. The games are usually close and oftentimes they go into overtime or drain every ounce of physical and mental energy you have. Your opponent should be respected and revered, and she often is. She is playing a vital role in you becoming the best you can be.

Speaking of tennis, I remember watching the Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal rivalry. The two tennis stars would battle it out on the court, both physically and mentally. Some consider it to be the greatest rivalry in tennis history. The two stars were evenly matched, with both having their own strengths. Nadal preferred clay, while Federer preferred the hard court and grass. Federer was machine-like, while Nadal could chase down anything. Matches would seemingly last half the day. Sometimes Nadal would win, and sometimes Federer would win. It also stood out to me how much they respected one another's competitive drive and ability. It was another level of respect. Both men genuinely hated to lose, but when they did, they often spoke highly of the other person and were grateful to have competed against him. Nadal knew that playing Federer made him better. Federer knew that playing Nadal made him better. They were both fiercely competitive but at the same time fiercely grateful for one another.

The worst is when it's one-sided and one competitor demolishes the other time after time. The losing side loses motivation and the



winning side gets complacent. This scenario is not helpful to either side. It only boosts the ego of the winner and demoralizes the loser. When two sides are equal in skill, it pushes each side to be better. When you root for your opponent to improve and play well, you improve yourself. As long as you're willing to work and learn, both sides can push each other to become better. This continues as far as both sides are willing to go.

I've seen this first hand since my days in middle school. I have two close friends with whom I have shared numerous competitive battles. We have played basketball, baseball, video games, darts, cards, and plenty of made-up games. We have shared profanity-laced tirades, physical fights, heated arguments, and massive successes (when we played on the same team). What I love most about our competitive relationship is that we made each other better. We fiercely competed, but at the end of the day, we were still friends. We would talk about strategies and techniques, which in turn made the other two better. If one of us became hands-down better at something, through hard work and knowledge, it would propel the other two to work harder or figure out how to compete. We all made each other better. Our wives may not understand our relationship to this day, but we do, and that's all that matters.

We still compete to this day and often do business together. We aren't as active as we once were, but the competitiveness is still there and has mostly transferred to business. We are all striving to be the best version of ourselves by collecting knowledge, wisdom, and widening our business intellect. When we learn something new and advanta-

geous for ourselves, we pass that information along to the other two. There is no selfishness in wanting to keep it all to ourselves, but instead, we strive to make each other better—*better for our spouses, kids, friends, and family*. It creates a bond in trust and friendship that is not easily broken. We can still be highly competitive with one another, but we all know that at the end of the day, we are all in this life together and striving to be the best we can be for those around us. We share accomplishments and share in our struggles. The hard times make us better and the accomplishments give us a reason to celebrate. Having trusted friends or family around you as you grow is as vital to your growth as food is for your body. You don't want to go too long without it as it will greatly hinder your ability to function.

On the other hand, competition doesn't always go smoothly. Even when you have a growth mindset, you can still get upset with yourself or others. You can create triggers within the competition that lead to bad habits that, if not kept in check, can lead to more negative outcomes. One bad habit I got into early was using profanity when I competed. It started in high school during my baseball playing days. It became a way of releasing tension and frustration during the game or practice. It made me feel better as I was saying the words, but I felt like I had lost my control soon after. It became a habit. When I messed up a routine play, struck out, or even when an opponent scored a run, I would get frustrated. That frustration defaulted into a profanity-laced tirade. To say the least, it didn't help me. The profanity made me feel better for five seconds and then the words would sink in. There was a time that I could actually feel the weight of these words weighing

me down during competition. I had called myself a f\*\*\*\*\* moron for messing up and soon realized that I had hurt my own feelings. It's laughable now, but it made me stop and realize that words carry meaning, especially words spoken to yourself.

If the goal is to encourage and build up, speaking words of negativity do not help in any way. It has been said many ways, but Lisa Hayes once said, "*Be careful how you are talking to yourself because you are listening.*"<sup>4</sup> That is such an undervalued quote for most of the people in this world. If you don't believe in yourself, who will? If you don't see the positive aspects of learning from failures, who will? It's something to ponder and think about the next time you get frustrated in an activity, sport, or job. How you respond to yourself is vital in your path to becoming a better version of yourself.

Once I realized how harmful speaking down to myself could be, I needed to do something different going forward. As an alternative to degrading myself, I started repeating the words, "*be better,*" to my inner self. I know my inner warrior is always listening, and ripe for encouragement. Most people will never hear the encouragement I speak to myself, but it doesn't matter. What matters is that I hear it. This simple pivot in reaction shifted my mindset in an impactful way. I began seeing poor shots or mess-ups as lessons learned and began trying to dissect them in my mind. This not only allowed me to rapidly improve in new areas but also gave me an appreciation for the great shots my opponent made against me.

Sometimes, people just make a good shot or a great decision in life. It shouldn't be demeaning to you and it doesn't have to be a compar-

ison to your ability. It's simply a well-executed shot in gameplay or a great decision in life. Learn to appreciate it and grow from it.

When someone does make a perfect shot or gets that job promotion you should have received, it can still be frustrating. You think to yourself, "That should have been me", or think, "That was just lucky." But was it lucky? Or is this a situation where your skill level is not where it needs to be? Asking yourself, "Why?" is a great starting point. Try to come back to the mindset of learning from each and every situation or play.

There are times when your athletic ability isn't at the level where you can make the shot you want, and you may not have the wisdom to make that key business decision. But you can get there. The first step is fully believing you can get there. The shots you see professionals make are misleading; they seem effortless. It seems that way because they've devoted so much time to improving and becoming the best they can be. They may know something or have skills that you don't yet have. Open your mind to learn and grow. Seek mentors and learn from others. Make mistakes. Lean into those mistakes and realize they are there for a reason. Become better in the future by consciously learning from the present.