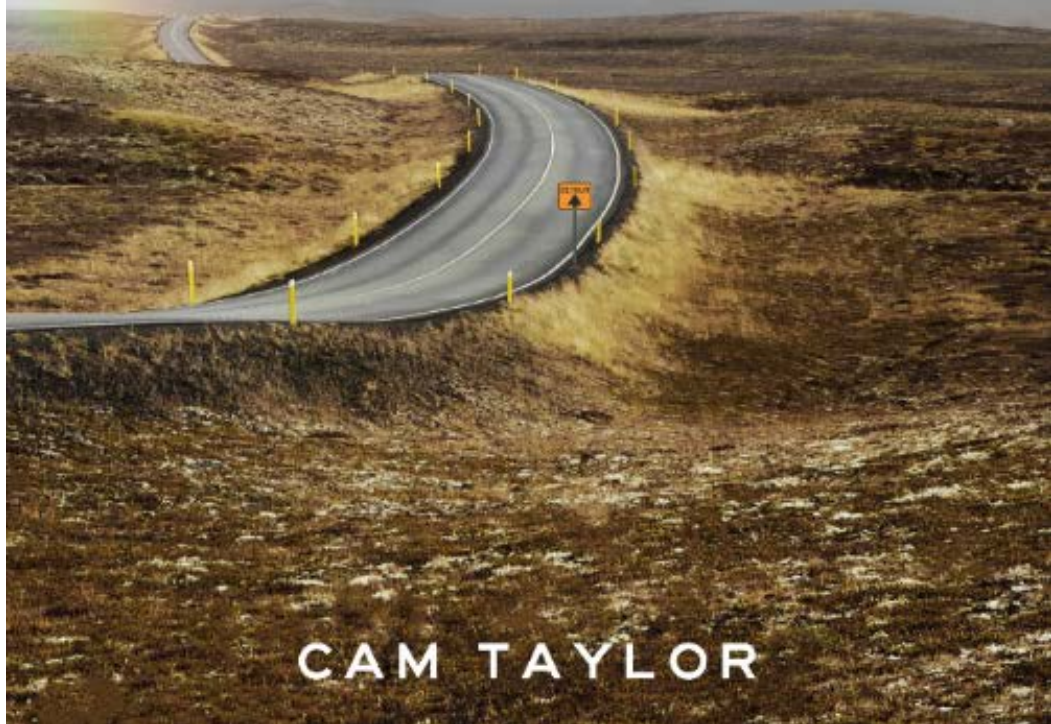


DETOUR

A ROADMAP FOR WHEN LIFE GETS REROUTED



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Introduction: The Day the Lights Went Out

I had no idea what had happened to me, but one thing I knew for sure – no matter how hard I tried to wake up, I couldn't do it. But the questions remained: "How did I end up in this land of fog where everyone seems to be dressed in white? Who turned out the lights? Why am I stuck in this dream?"

It wasn't until two days later that I started to piece together the story of what had happened that day.

"What a great day for a ride," I told myself that sunny Saturday morning. My wife Vicky and I had been anticipating this day for several weeks, knowing that in British Columbia's Lower Fraser Valley the middle of April is a great time to license the bike and get back on the road for some riding pleasure.

One of the reasons I enjoyed summer so much was the memories we created on our road trips. Putting on the leathers, shining up the bike, planning the route, and riding in the open air – it was all high on our summer to do list. We had folders full of pictures and hearts full of memories from this hobby we loved.

The plan for our first ride of the season was a simple one – ride from our house to Harrison Hot Springs (about forty minutes away). Once at Harrison, we would view the lake, drink a hot cup of Americano, breathe in a few whiffs of fresh mountain air, and then head back home in time for supper. At least, that was our plan.

What started out as a picture perfect day would not end that way. At roughly 1:45 p.m., I closed the garage door, mounted the bike with Vicky, and rode off into the sunshine. At approximately 2:30 p.m., the lights went out.

As we cruised along Highway 7 close to the small town of Deroche, a Cavalier approached the highway from our right. The driver intended to make an uneventful left-hand turn onto the

highway and go off to enjoy his afternoon cup of soup at a local restaurant before starting his shift at a local dairy farm. Instead of taking the necessary precautions, the driver of the Cavalier looked to the right but failed to look left. He pulled out right in front of us. Having no place to go, I slammed on the brakes, laid twenty feet of rubber, and then laid the bike down. In the blink of an eye, the bike had bounced off the side of the car. My broken body was left pinned under the engine, and Vicky was lying in pain on the shoulder of the road.

As you can imagine, this accident scene created quite a stir on that country road. In seconds, people started arriving from all directions. I was groaning in pain and asking for someone to lift the car off my head while Vicky was coming to realize her leg was bent awkwardly in front of her face.

Second on the scene was an acquaintance from our church, Tom Cassel. He didn't realize it was me under the car because he couldn't see my face behind the helmet. But, being the caring person he was, he proceeded to comfort and support me while I lay there broken and in a state of shock. Tom had the shock of his life when, the next day in church, he saw our faces flash onto the screen with a request to pray for us.

While lying there on the pavement, all I can remember is feeling as if a heavy, warm fog had settled in all around me. The lights were out, and I felt no pain.

Eventually, a helicopter came, and the paramedics stabilized our broken bodies as best they could. They assessed the damage and determined the best way to move us safely was by helicopter, with the destination being Royal Columbian Hospital (RCH) in New Westminster, B.C. RCH was chosen because it was the trauma hospital for our region.

It had become clear that my injuries were life-threatening, as a large quantity of blood had already been lost due to internal hemorrhaging. The compound fracture of my right femur was also a big concern. After our leathers and clothing were cut off, we were

strapped to backboards, loaded into the helicopter, and flown away to RCH. The last time I had taken a helicopter ride was to see the scenery. This time, all I saw was darkness. I kept wishing that someone would turn the lights back on.

There were many prayers offered that night, and there was much anxiety in the hearts and minds of our family and friends. The hospital staff did what they do best. They attended to our wounds, ran a battery of tests, and got us stabilized for the night. The next day, we underwent the surgeries necessary to put our broken bones back together with the necessary pins, plates, and screws so we could start the long road of healing and recovery.

So, who turned out the lights? I began to learn the answer to that question two days later when I woke up out of the darkness. The first thing I remember is my two kids, Caleb and Elena, standing over my bed in the intensive care unit (ICU) with tentative smiles on their faces. As the lights slowly came on, I heard the story of how our ride had ended abruptly that Saturday afternoon.

It took a few days for the full impact of that traumatic event to sink in. I did not know at the time how long and arduous the journey would be. One thing was true, however—at least, I would take it with the lights on.

Why I Wrote This Book

I wrote this book to help people prepare for and navigate adversity and the setbacks that come in life. The content for this book came largely from the blogging I did during my recovery. The theme for that blog was: “Hoping for the best and dancing with the rest.”

The process of writing turned into daily therapy. It gave my life purpose and resulted in considerable personal growth. The writing also gave me something to do while I waited for my detour to end. Initially I wrote to help myself, but eventually I realized that what I was learning might also help others who were on their own detours.

A new word I discovered was “*opporversity*.” It may not be in the dictionary, but it has a definite meaning: “the thriving partnership between opportunity and adversity.” That word said to me, “Instead of trying to get out of your adverse situation prematurely, decide to lean into the challenge and search for a deeper purpose while on the road you’ve been asked to travel.” I said, “OK.”

This book looks at adversity, perseverance, change, recovery, forgiveness, suffering, grief, and a host of other themes that describe our experience when life is rerouted. Everything I talk about in this book was lived out in my personal experience.

Whether you are on a detour now, have been on one, know someone who is on one, or need to prepare for an upcoming detour (which is going to come, sooner or later, by the way), this book is for you. My hope is that you will be encouraged by my story, find a connection to your own story, and be able to take the steps necessary to keep growing and moving forward.

Chapter 1: Control

You may think it's true, but it isn't. The last two lines of the poem "Invictus" by William Ernest Henley say: "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul." These words couldn't be further from the truth.

Now, on one level, we do have control. We make choices that have predetermined consequences. We guide our own vessel through stormy and calm seas to a predetermined destination. We take initiative. We lead people. We go about living. But (and it's a very big but) if you think you "actually" control the outcome of where your life will go or not go on any given day, that's a problem.

My "I'm not in control" story

It was a beautiful Saturday morning. The weather forecast was for sun and warmer weather, the first we'd had after a long, damp winter. Our plan was coming together. It started with a morning run and then a trip to Superstore with Vicky for our weekly grocery shop. After we returned home, I went down to the insurance office to buy six months of insurance for our 750 Honda Shadow motorcycle. Plenty of summer riding pleasure lay ahead.

Now, I didn't think about it at the time, but in my subconscious I was assuming things that day would go according to my plan. After all, I had been riding for twenty years without incident. Vicky and I wore the proper riding gear, I had learned defensive driving skills, and I watched every car in sight for the slightest hint that we had not been seen. I had learned to control my reactions and actions while driving my motorcycle, so I was in control, right?

Unfortunately, at 2:30 p.m. on April 23, 2011, the control myth I adhered to was shattered—and so was I. I probably did see the Cavalier that turned into our path from a side road, but the driver

did not see me, and there was nothing I could do to stop what was about to happen.

The counterpoint

You and I do not control our lives. We do not control with certainty the outcome of any given day. We make plans. We try our best to stay out of trouble, eat healthy, make wise decisions, and drive safely, but unfortunately (or fortunately) we are not actually in control.

Who is really in control? Is God? If he is, what's your reaction to that news? Do you get angry and quit reading? Do you look up at God and say, "If you are in control, why don't you stop the suffering, the accidents, and all the pain in the world?" That's a reasonable question in light of our tendency to blame someone else for our lack of control.

As I reflected on our out-of-control reality, I came to the following realization: We live in a broken world where stuff happens that is outside our control. Therefore, our best option is to put our trust in a reliable God who lives outside of time and keeps our best interest in mind in the long run – the eternal long run.

This perspective does not answer every question or satisfy every "why" you and I struggle with, but it does take the pressure off our need to always be in control. Another perspective that helps us to overcome our desire to be in control is to learn to tell time other than by a clock.

Learning to tell time

The ancient Greeks had two words for time—*chronos* and *kairos*. Our ability to be more comfortable with a lack of control is influenced by our ability to set our clock to the time that best serves a life out of control.

Chronos time is defined as something we measure with a stopwatch. It's what we race against and number our days by.

Kairos, on the other hand, defines time as something we measure with a heart rate monitor. *Kairos* time is movement that can't be counted. It is more about seasons and less about days.

Both *chronos* and *kairos* have a place. However, when we are rocked by adversity, loss, and life-altering circumstances, what is important is the ability to tell *kairos* time.

Solomon used the language of *kairos* when he wrote: "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance..."

An out-of-control life appeared where the road ended

When the crash occurred, time stood still. For two days, I was heavily medicated so I wouldn't wake up. When I did wake up, I realized very quickly that the life I thought I had by the tail was now beyond my control. Not only had I been unable to stop the accident, I couldn't stop all the consequences that would come next.

My life before the accident was measured. I had plans—seminars to lead, people to help, bike trips to take. After the accident, all my plans were put on hold. I was on God's timetable, thrown into unmeasured *kairos* time. My neatly packaged, well-planned life had been tossed up into the air, blown apart, and scattered randomly across the landscape.

Kairos moments are opportunities that take us places in our minds and hearts that we cannot reach when we live on *chronos* time. After the accident, my life was no longer governed by the clock and the need to get things done on time. Things had changed drastically, and where the big and little hands were sitting did not matter.

We will never plumb the full depth of human experience if we live only on controlled *chronos* time. It is *kairos* time that opens up

the door to new discoveries about ourselves, our world, our God, and what really matters in life. Embracing *kairos* time changes everything.

Know when your out-of-control life needs some *kairos* time

You need *kairos* time when you're feeling bewildered and lost. You need *kairos* time when you wake up somewhere between an ending and a new beginning. You need *kairos* time when your dreams have been crushed or put on hold. You need *kairos* time when a loss has left you reeling with pain and numbness.

Many of life's experiences don't fit neatly into a calendar. They play out on their own terms, and, in the process, they teach us multiple life lessons. In the midst of these experiences, if you fight living on *kairos* time, you will only increase your stress and frustration level. On the other hand, if you accept the opportunity to live on *kairos* time, it will open windows through which new insights and transforming thoughts can stream into your life. You will gain a "*kairos* perspective."

Four ways I learned to live on *kairos* time

1. I prayed almost every day the following words: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." This is called the Serenity Prayer, and it was my friend when life was out of control.
2. I connected with my greater purpose and used it as a filter to find traction when events and circumstances were beyond my control. I'm not sure where I would have been without a purpose to look up to.
3. I learned to have the mind and teachability of a child. A child learns to walk by tripping over obstacles, falling down, getting back up, making some adjustments, then starting to walk again.

4. I exercised my faith muscle and learned on a whole new level to trust a personal God who had my best interest at heart. I realized how little I really knew, and I embraced the opportunity to learn those deeper life lessons that could only be learned when life was out of control and made no sense.

Detour Reflections

- ❖ Think about times when you thought you were in control but discovered you really weren't.
- ❖ What part of your life needs to be governed more by *kairos* time than by *chronos* time?