**Say Something**

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I’m good at the art of making small talk, if you want to get into a deep conversation that might invoke emotions in me or you, that’s typically not my thing. However if you’re on a long road trip and you need a companion who can talk the entire way to the destination to help you stay awake, I might fill the need, just ask my parents who drove us back and forth between Ohio and Florida when I was a kid.

Today though, today I make an exception. Today I pray I’ll say something of importance, even if there’s only one person who hears my message and benefits from me getting uncomfortable, it will be worth it, I might sprinkle in a joke here or there just so I don’t explode from doing anything too drastic. It’s fitting that Terry is here today, I can remember telling him right before Charleigh and I’s wedding ceremony started that one of my biggest concerns was that I might cry some while in front of everybody. I don’t know if it’s because I have all these kids now or what but my emotions show a little easier than they did back then.

This is a message I first formally started to share about 5 years ago, but at this point it’s well over 20 years in the making. I know what you’re all thinking Kris can’t be a day over 20 himself, the dark rings under his eyes and early signs of wrinkles must just be from all those kids he referenced earlier.

I want to start by sharing something with you I recently found while preparing for this. It’s from a message I wrote shortly before ending my attempts at a professional football career. “My family and I still believe that God has a plan for me to fulfill my dreams. I think getting to the NFL would be inspirational and empowering to my entire community. Once my story gets out it would also be an example to every small town kid who has the odds against him, or anyone else who has a dream that most people find crazy. It will be proof that if you don’t give up, work hard, and do the right thing it will pay off in the end. Not only would I also be fulfilling a 19 year dream but after my journey it would mean a lot for me to be able to tell people to look at what I did because if I made it, then they can too.”

This is not that story, I did not achieve my goal. I did not play in the NFL. I failed that challenge.

My attempt to carry out my plan of playing in the NFL began in 1995 playing for the Champion Little Flashes. I fell in love with the sport and that was all I wanted to do, I participated in many other sports as well over the years, basketball, soccer, baseball, track, and even briefly speed skating but none of those things would change my goal. There were some tough decisions to make along the way. When it came time for me to go to high school the decision on which school to attend was up in the air. I could attend Champion High School, a small school with limited success of putting players into NFL, very limited, there had only been 1 Champion alumni play in the NFL and that was in the 1970s. Or I could attend one of the other high schools in the area that had a long successful track record of producing high achieving players both at the college level as well as professionally. I went to a couple of those other schools, saw the facilities, met coaches, it was fun. I knew I was going to play in the NFL though and it would mean more to do it after graduating from Champion. I also knew that if I stayed at Champion I would be able to play varsity as a freshman and I probably wouldn’t get that opportunity at a more competitive school. Sure I was also told repeatedly by people that I wouldn’t get the opportunity to play varsity as a freshman at Champion either but come on, I’m a future NFL player, and part way through my freshman season when I got to be a starter on the varsity defense it didn’t matter that it was at a position I had never played before, it was just part of the plan and I would do anything to get on the field.

A decade into My plan and everything was right on track, I hit a little bit of a caution sign with my heigh freshman year but I asked God to take care of it and he did. You might be wondering what in the world that means, Kris’s height? Wasn’t he always tall? Yes, potentially almost too tall. See I was always reading, watching, and soaking up any information about football I could. I read an article saying the average height of a running back in the draft that year was 5’10” I was already a couple inches past that! I did not want to keep growing, I figured being a tall white guy would mean that I’d have to play tight end in the NFL but I wanted to play runningback. So I did everything I could, which meant I began to pray every night that I wouldn’t get any taller. And I didn’t. See I had no doubt whatsoever that I was going to be in the NFL I just wanted God to help make sure it was at the position I wanted to play. My plan was doing great.

By the end of my junior football season things started to get interesting. Recruiting. Both by colleges and other high schools who promised to get me where I needed to go. I got invited to go watch games at multiple colleges including Ohio State and Cincinnati. Those trips were pretty neat. I had never really thought much about college. I was a Michigan fan but realistically I might have watched about a dozen quarters worth of college football at that point. I just figured I would play there on my way to the NFL. However Michigan apparently wasn’t aware of my plan. They didn’t invite me to a game, no handwritten letters or calls or texts. They didn’t even send me a general mass mailed letter or questionnaire. That was fine though. My older brother was already at Harding University a Christian NCAA division 2 university in Searcy Arkansas. I had been there multiple times and really liked the university, the coaching staff, and the players I had met so far. It was the easy answer when people asked where I’d want to be if I something happened to me and I could no longer play football. To top it off, they had just put a player into the NFL, proof that I could go somewhere I wanted to be and still be right on track in my journey. I stayed at Champion, and I decided to attend Harding University.

I went there as a linebacker, that was fine. I know my head football coach in high school thought I was more valuable on the defensive side of the ball, I wanted to score touchdowns but maybe multiple coaches new better that my future was on defense. Nothing wrong with playing linebacker in the NFL. I was redshirted my first year and everything was good. I noticed that the next season there would be more of an opportunity to play that season if I could switch to being a defensive end that for the most part specialized in rushing the passer. I just wanted to play, if that’s how I was going to get on the field that was more than fine by me. I played a lot and if you saw the film that the coach replayed multiple times of me losing my mind celebrating a sack forced fumble I caused in some of my first playing time you wouldn’t have any doubt that I was enjoying the ultimate level of fun.

Then the season ended. I began to be concerned that I might not be following the right path to get to the NFL. I’m not 100% sure where it came from. I knew I was supposed to play professional football, there was no doubt about that, that’s what I was born to do and what God wanted for me to do, I just knew it. I had some concerns though that I was blowing it and not where I needed to be. Earlier in my life I had turned down multiple opportunities to attend bigger schools and schools that had a more steady track record of consistently putting out big time football players. I knew I would still make the NFL from Champion, from the small school. But what if I had gone to a different high school, would I currently be playing at a power 5 college? Did I take a wrong turn OFF of the road that God and I had planned for me for so many years? I didn’t even get on the radar of Michigan’s recruiting staff and ultimately never even got a scholarship offer from a Power 5 school. I remember the recruiter from Cincinnati telling me that they questioned my level of competition. An outrageous thing to say to me, according to me. We had played multiple schools who often produced power 5 players. We had even beaten a team with multiple players on it who were going to a power 5 college. I was always told that if you play good enough they’ll find you but I had played good, I was one of the top statistical players in the area not only in offensive categories but o defensive as well. What else could I have done? That’s rhetorical, I can still think of games that I should have done more in, it’s funny now, even when preparing this I was looking into some old articles to get some information and I laughed out loud when I saw how good my stats were in a game I thought in my mind I had played poorly in. Even though I knew we should have done better, I was part of a group of seniors that had led Champion to their first winning season of the century. It was the kids at the bigger schools though who had once again gotten the chance to play for a power 5 program and seemingly be on what many would consider the right path for someone to make the NFL. That was it I was not going to risk living my life thinking I may have destroyed the plans God and I had for me. I needed to go to a power 5 college.

I decided to spend the next semester still attending Harding but no longer being on their football team. I was going to stay there so I could train with Bruce Pearson soaking up every bit of incredible advice and coaching I could get from him to get bigger and stronger as fast as possible using his criterion equipment that to this day has yet to be exceeded. The plan pretty much went perfect I experienced gains I could have never imagined and unless you were around it would be hard to believe but I was made by God to play in the NFL so of course everything was going according to plan. Long story short for that semester I woke up twice a night drinking combinations of protein shakes and sweetend condensed milk, worked out hard 6 days a week did what Bruce said and I gained 53lbs that semester, increased my bench a little over a hundred pounds amongst other increases. Speaking of milk, I drank about a gallon to a gallon and a half everyday, it was awesome.

During that time I also needed to find my new school, my final stop before getting to the NFL. At this point in my career I had developed quite a joy for sacking the quarterback, even though I was on the short side for a defensive end or pass rushing outside linebacker in the right system, I now had enough weight on me and more than enough strength to pursue that. I even gave myself a pretty cool nickname based on a similarly built successful sack artist “White Freeny” After being in Arkansas I wanted to transfer to a power 5 program closer to home. The University of Pittsburgh had just come off of a season where they had been ranked in the top 10 and were returning many of the key players. They were also located in one of my favortie cities, and shared facilities with the most legendary NFL franchise of all time, the Steelers. They were an easy first choice.

Now this was a time before the transfer portal and everything being done quickly and easily online. I called Pitt and let them know I wanted to come play defensive end for them. I had a very brief conversation where we went over some of my information including my measurements. I was promptly told I was about 4 inches too short to play defensive end there. No problem, I got off of the phone and instead of praying that God would have me start growing taller again after asking him every night for years to stop my growth that I would give myself a chance to score touchdowns again. I looked at years and years of combine statistics and saw that I would be at or near the top of category the fullbacks were measured by, and on top of that I had a pretty good history of running the ball. God clearly had planned for me to spend most of my life playing runningback and then to go to Arkansas so that I could meet and train with Bruce to develop the strength and size I needed to excel as an NFL fullback, perfect and clear.

Now I needed to find the right school, there weren’t many who ran a pro style offense, got under center and used a traditional fullback the way football was meant to be played. There were a handful not super far from home that still used a fullback. Michigan was not one of them, they ran one of those fancy new spread offenses, but I was willing to play linebacker to play for them in the Big House. I sent my transfer papers to those schools that used a fullback still and to Michigan. Michigan had no interest in me, how about that for a shocking twist to the story. My number one school to play for as a fullback was easily Pitt, not only did they have all those things going for them that I had already mentioned but when it came to putting fullbacks and runningbacks into the NFL there weren’t many schools, if any, who did it better. They even currently had who many considered the top fullback in the country. Coach Wannstadt’s offense at Pitt was going to be the perfect fit for me. He had also recently signed a contract extension that very spring so I didn’t need to worry about the system changing. It was time to pursue Pitt. I called again, this time when I said that I wanted to play fullback and I was asked about my measurements, the conversation continued in a positive direction. They wanted tape, I let them know I didn’t have any fullback tape but that I could send plenty of film of me playing runningback. Next thing I knew I was in Pittsburgh checking out the facilities, shaking hands, and being told that I could play fullback there. There was even talk of me getting to play some runningback in certain packages and situations. This was all perfect. Without a doubt this was how God wanted me to get to the NFL, it could not have been anymore obvious or perfect.

The downside was that back then when you transferred like that you had to sit out the season, so I was able to practice and be with the team, but I couldn’t play. Fortunately, I was also still able to receive a Big East Championship ring which was neat and shiny. It was hard not playing but it gave me a chance to learn from a fantastic and proven position coach while I waited for my turn. Then, all of a sudden, after being reassured that the rumors of coach being fired were in fact, just rumors, after all, he had just signed an extension earlier in the year, the coach I had transferred to and sat out a year to play for, was fired. It’s fair to say I was surprised. To top it off the new staff was going to be switching us to one of those fancy new spread offenses. In fact it was going to be from the same coaching tree as the offense in Michigan that I knew was no place for me. Now what? I wasn’t going to transfer again and sit out another year. I wanted a chance to play so I asked if I could switch to linebacker, I was told no. The starting fullback decided to leave early for the NFL. I was told that there would still be opportunities for me to be used as a fullback and that I could still be the best fullback in the country even with limited time. Hey now, that doesn’t sound so bad. Me and God’s plan was still on track. Important timing too. See the church camp I had grown up going to, Camp Judson held a very special place in my heart. I was aware that the cost to attend that camp was about to become unfeasible. My church and the others that went with them were going to have to find a different affordable camp. Or maybe, just maybe, or even probably and even intentionally planned by God I would really be the best fullback in the country and I could also leave a year early for the NFL and then I could pay whatever was necessary to keep things going at Camp Judson just the way that God needed me to. That was even beyond something that I had planned or predicted, clearly divine intervention. That summer I was excited, I had lost strength during my short time in Pittsburgh and I knew I needed to get it back. Thankfully I knew just what to do, it was time make a short trip to Arkansas to train up on the hill with Bruce and it worked. I returned to Pittsburgh for summer workouts feeling strong and confident. Then all of a sudden during camp, not church camp but two-a–days getting ready for the season camp, it was finally time during the first padded practice to go in with the offense and start my fullback journey. But just as I was about to go in the coach made a change, instead of playing a fullback at fullback, he put in defensive tackle to play fullback. That’s fine, he loved his idea, hyped it up to the media and I knew that was probably my last chance if it counts as a chance, to play fullback. What was going on with the plan? I don’t know, I had no idea. I still wanted to play, whenever the coach addressed the team saying they need volunteers for special teams, I went right to him and let him know I’d do whatever was needed. He needed a body, anybody, anybody at all willing to do it, just not me. I just wanted to play football.

I think.

See for the first 17 years I was on track to complete my plan, I never had any doubt or took my eyes off the goal. God had put me on Earth to play in NFL. Without a doubt. Well, without a doubt until now.

I could not get on the field, there was nothing I more I could do. Also, just the season before a player from Rutgers, a team in our conference was paralyzed and a year later it was major news that he still had not fully recovered. I wasn’t playing but I was practicing hard still, hitting constantly, if I can’t get on the field, why am I putting my body through this? Why would I risk such a serious injury to myself. Why was I at Pitt at all? What was happening to my plan? I wasn’t really willing to walk away from a lifetime of working, sacrificing, and following what a plan that was perfect 99% of the time I was? No, I was obviously being tested by God, why? I don’t know but I needed to show my perseverance and trust in him and stick with, give 100% in practice and in the weight room and stick to the plan whatever the test was. Coach Lanning had me and other scout team players over is house one with his family. It was huge for my morale. It was the type of comradery I hadn’t experienced since I was at Harding. What I was doing was noticed and appreciated.

Then, as quickly as that new staff with a spread offense had showed up, they were gone. With the interim head coach I was given the opportunity to play special teams in the bowl game that year, and that’s when it happened, me and Champion both getting mentioned on ESPN. When looking over my bio for the season I was asked if I wanted any changes made, I asked if it was possible to say that I was from Champion, Ohio instead of Warren. During that game I recovered a fumble, and while I was celebrating and expressing my clear love of the game like a mad man, the announcer said that I was from Champion. It was so cool and meant so much to me when I found that out.

We got our new coaching staff, and it was one that was going to use a fullback! I was even told I would be given a chance to run the ball. My faith in God’s plan had been tested but I didn’t give up, I trusted that I was going through that tough time for a reason and that I was inevitably going to be in the NFL soon. My plan was so close to being realized. Hebrews 12:11 says “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” That discipline must’ve been what I just endured and now I was going to get my harvest.

Springball started and I wasn’t getting any reps. I was surprised because I needed to actually play so that I could go to the NFL in less than a year. I spoke to my position coach and he let me know that they would rather play young guys who can develop instead of a senior unless the senior is clearly better. I told him that I needed some reps so that he could see what I had. He agreed to give me a chance, as soon as he gave me that chance I went out, lined up, fired through the hole, made great contact, and sprained my ankle. Now what. There were still more practices and the spring game left. I could run some, but I couldn’t hit, I had no power, and hitting hard was an important part of my job description. I needed to get reps but I couldn’t risk being evaluated while pretty hobbled.

I guess I was going to have wait all summer to earn the job during camp. That summer was a great summer, Charleigh and I got married, it was, and still is awesome. I got a ring for that too, and technically since I have it now, that means I haven’t lost it like my currently missing Big East Championship ring.

When the summer was about to start though I had a strange conversation with my coach. Only a certain number of players can attend camp, and if I wanted to attend camp it was going to be as a defensive end. If I wanted to stay at fullback I could join the team after camp. Well I hadn’t grown those 4 inches taller that I had been told were necessary to play defensive end at Pitt, but things had changed some there and not going to camp sounded like the opposite direction of heading towards the NFL. So I went as a defensive end. It didn’t seem like I would play much but I worked hard, stayed late, practiced my pass rush moves and learned all of my assignments. My future in the NFL was still at fullback but I still wanted to earn some playing time even if it wasn’t going to be much. First game of the season, because of unexpected circumstances I ended up in the two deep at defensive end, the defensive line rotates, and we were playing a small school we should beat big, I was going to get to play a good amount that game. The first line was in second line standing by, the moment came, we were told to go in. As we start to run onto the field my arm is grabbed, my coach holds me back. He doesn’t even keep the first string guy in at my position, he has a defensive lineman that plays a different role on the line stay in. We lost the game, we got upset, I didn’t play a single play, I was upset.

Long season short I get told by yet another coach that they want to give the playing time to the young guys who can develop. That’s that. I decided I was better off not playing at that point. I needed to just worry about myself and stay healthy. I wanted to not play, no more volunteering, no more being willing to try new positions, just workout and stay as healthy as possible. Playing could hurt my plan of making the NFL if I got injured and were unable to perform at my best when the Pitt’s pro day came up. NFL team’s take long shots on fullbacks all the time, there aren’t many in college anymore so the NFL is left searching and trying to find someone that fits the role. I knew that showing my skill set and measurements at the pro day would be how I got to the NFL and fulfilled what I knew was God’s plan for me. I couldn’t wait for the season to end.

You can guess where I went as soon as the season ended. The bowl game was in Birmingham, Alabama. Getting to Birmingham still is a bit of sore subject for Charleigh. I flew first class while eating free Chik-fil-A. While she had bronchitis and was driving on winter roads with all of our belongings down the east coast of the United States. I was about to make it worth it for her though, she would be living a life of luxury soon. Instead of flying back to Pittsburgh we drove to Searcy, Arkansas. I had lost a ton of strength during my few years at Pitt and I needed Bruce’s help to at least get back to where I was when I initially enrolled at Pitt. We would stay in Arkansas for part of a year. I would crush the pro day and shortly be signing an NFL contract. I lifted, I worked with a speed coach, I went back to Pittsburgh.

The pro day went nearly perfect. I got to the facility that morning nice and early, or so I thought, the start time had gotten moved up and instead of having a bunch of time to get ready stress-free, it was time to hurry. Bench press was going to be the first test. I wanted to keep my usual routine, nearly every time I had lifted over the past few years I had eaten a Reese’s and I wasn’t going to change that today. The problem was as I got changed and ready in the locker room I started to feel the nerves. I knew that God was with me and. I know Philippians tells us not to be anxious about anything. I love that and I knew I was prepared and had I put in the work. I also knew that if a piece of that Reese’s even touched my lips I was going to throw up. I’ve know some guys over the years who that’s their thing before a game, but that’s not how I roll. I kept the candy in my pocket because I was determined to eat it at some point before laying on that bench. I walked into the weight room and all of the scouts from the NFL teams were there. After all these years of preparing the time had come. I didn’t begin to relax, and I did not want my first impression with the scouts to be of me with a chocolate bar in my pocket so I did the only rational thing I could. I found a familiar face, an old teammate already in the NFL who had come back to watch and I discretely passed it to him so that he could hold it for me until later.

The rest of the day went fantastic. An NFL scout told me that even though I had most recently played defensive end, he knew I was a good running back in high school and would like to see me perform fullback drills. That was a super convenient request for me because that was what I had pretty much spent months preparing for. I hit or exceeded my minimums on every test and I was very happy with how I performed in the drills. I was ecstatic, the day and gone so well. This was what my entire life had been leading up to and I showed up and did what I needed to. I even told my old teammate that HE could eat the Reese because I don’t need it, which was great news to him because apparently he thought I didn’t expect to receive it back because he had eaten it already.

The feedback was great, I got interviewed after about my surprise performance and couldn’t stop spreading the message of how it had always been God’s plan for me to play in the NFL. Proverbs 3:6 says “In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your path.” That’s what I was doing, acknowledging him and continuing down the nearly two decade old path I had been on towards the NFL.

After the draft I thought I’d get a call for a free agent deal. That never came, I was told to stay in shape in case someone gets hurt. I waited for that call, but It never came. What I thought God had planned as my rookie season was over and all I did was workout and stay in shape. Was I wrong somehow? Was I not born and put on this Earth to spread God’s word from the platform that is the NFL? This was another test and wow was it going to be a great example of faith and trusting God once I made it to the NFL the next year.

I went to a couple NFL regional combines and performed the way I needed to and measured great. I had no interest playing any football other than for the NFL. I had gotten invited to run and do drills for a Canadian football team as a defensive end, I let them know I hadn’t done those drills in a long time and wouldn’t be sharp but I was assured that if I put up the numbers I did at the Pro Day I would be just fine, they could sharpen me up. I went, I don’t know what I would have done if they offered me an opportunity but they never offered.

I had no idea what to do. Since I was 5 I knew I was supposed to be in the NFL but here I was, a grown man, a husband, and not in the NFL. What else could I be supposed to do? I knew God had a plan for me to prosper and not to harm me (Jeremiah 29:11) That meant our plans had to have a lot in common because my plan was for me to prosper and have a great future. For 17 years nearly every day I had no question that God and I had the same plan for my life. It was a great feeling. I was never concerned I’d be swallowed by a whale for not doing what God desires for me to do with my life. The whale isn’t literal, you can ask Charleigh and the rest of my family, it’s no secret I don’t like to go in the ocean, mostly for sharks, but whales may deserve some consideration. Isaiah 55:9 tells me that God’s ways are higher than my ways and his thoughts are higher than my thoughts. I was starting to wonder if I really had no idea what God had planned for my life. I began to even wonder if perhaps Jonah really had it good by being given such a clear assignment from God that he was able to intentionally disobey God’s plan and meet that whale. See I was beginning to wonder “Could all of the obstacles and challenges that I have faced and tests that I’ve passed that will help to fulfill OUR plan for me to have a great story to share, actually be God trying to clearly give me signals that I wasn’t following OUR plan? Had he actually been wondering why I was so stubbornly following MY plan despite many signs that I wasn’t following HIS plan? Was there a whale out there waiting for me?

I began to experience a lot of frustration. And it was frustration, I wasn’t worried, I had no concern about covering the basics and being able to eat and find shelter. I was growing frustrated that I was asking God repeatedly for an answer on what he wanted me to do, and in my opinion I wasn’t getting an answer. I was so frustrated that I was willing to do whatever God wanted me to do, if he would just tell me what he wanted me to do. I can remember driving back to our apartment in Beebe after finishing yet another workout and “Say something” by a Great Big World and Christina Aguilera came on. It hit me hard, harder than the time Aaron Donald ear holed me during a drill in practice. I wasn’t giving up on God but when the singer pleads “Say something I’m giving up on you and, anywhere I would have followed you, say something and I will swallow my pride!” I had been praying repeatedly and pleading with God to simply say something! And I was starting to give up hope that he would tell me what to do.

There are multiple stories in the bible of people who don’t know how good they’ve got it by getting a direct clear order. Wouldn’t things be so simple if like Moses we all had a burning bush in our backyard?

Or a wool fleece in our house so that we have clear answers about any questions, what job we should pursue, which degree we should get, where to live and anything else we wonder about? Reading Judges 6 though makes me wonder if I’m missing something about how clear and convenient this would be.

Starting at verse 11 An angel proves he’s an Angel to Gideon by touching a staff to rock, creating fire that burns up an offering then vanishes.

Verse 36 reads, Then Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said, **37**behold, I am laying a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said.” **38**And it was so. When he rose early next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water. **39**Then Gideon said to God, “Let not your anger burn against me; let me speak just once more. Please let me test just once more with the fleece. Please let it be dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground let there be dew.” **40**And God did so that night; and it was dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground there was dew.

Really? The angel speaking to you him wasn’t clear enough for Gideon? But could the same be said about me? I don’t know. Why was I blessed with the ability and desire to use it if I wasn’t supposed to? Why did I get the opportunity to be trained by Bruce, why was I able to progress so well? Why did I get to go to Pitt? There were so many rare and hard to explain factors making me believe I was doing exactly what I was supposed to.

And while I’m having those thoughts and feelings and frustrations I’m seeing others who are not doing the right thing, not trying their best and not bringing glory to God. They’re getting arrested while also succeeding at my dream. Why? I would have used that platform for good and for God why am I not the one on the platform. Since then I’ve become much more comfortable knowing that if God has a blessing meant for me, no person on this Earth can steel or take what he has intended for me. One day while still trying to decide if I should continue to pursue the NFL I was expressing these things over the phone to Robert Brooks who had been the chaplain at Pitt at one point while I was there. I explained how generous I would be with NFL money and how I’d bring attention to God and how I had intended to further God’s kingdom by giving the money necessary to Camp Judson. He said “so you’re telling me God needs Your money?” The way he said it made me pause immediately. It kind of made it sound like I thought I was in charge, it made it sound I had this brilliant plan to help God out and he just needed to let me do it for him because I knew what was best. Woah. I can still here the words clear as day.

Eventually I decided I wasn’t going to spend another season staying in shape hoping for a call. If I didn’t get a call soon before the season starts I was going to start holding up my end of the bargain and be the financially contributing husband Charleigh deserved. She had done the heavy lifting so far, obviously that’s metaphorically not literally. I started looking for some sort of good paying work and I found it in the most unsuspecting way, in a oil field in Colorado thanks to Marchel Morningstar, a connection I had made years prior while at Harding University. It was time to move on.

If you look in the bible you will not find any list or direct guidance on what a Christian should do for employment. Many of us have struggled with wondering “what” we are supposed to do. It doesn’t say Christians have to be welders, insurance agents, doctors, or a delivery drivers. We are told in Colossians 3:23-24 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the lord Christ.

We are told in Acts 2:38 Peter said, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We also have the greatest commandment in Matthew Chapter 22 vs 37-40 that my boys read from earlier. “Jesus said to him, “”You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”” This is the first commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

It’s clear to me that it’s not so much about What we do but How we do it. I’ve learned (1 Thessalonians 5:18) to “give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Thankfully (Proverbs 19:21) “Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.” Because I stand here today having failed to accomplish MY plan yet I’m blessed beyond measure. Football is something I’ve played, watched, loved, and enjoyed immensely. Now thanks to Kannon and Kruze I’ve even coached it. But Football does not define me, it is not my identity. My identity lies in Jesus, as a husband, as a father, as business owner, it all stems from an attempt be an imitator of Jesus as we as Christians are instructed to (Pause) This is much easier to say today, in my 30s a decade removed from my playing days. When I tell Charleigh that I could not be happier, even if I was sitting in a bigger house or playing in the NFL, I absolutely mean it. As Christians we don’t accomplish our goal of going to Heaven based on our own efforts or works (Ephesians 2:8), being willing to drink protein shakes in the middle of the night won’t do it. It is by faith. Accomplishing life’s goal will not be because of something I’ve done or earned but it’ll by God’s grace through Jesus.

I asked a lot of questions that I don’t have an answer to. The song “Farther along” became very meaningful to me on my journey. It’s not a sad song as some may think, to be a song of optimism, hope, and comfort. Farther along I’ll know about the reason my journey was what it was, farther along I’ll understand why.”

I mentioned a few names today but I certainly did not and cannot recognize all who were part of that journey. My parents and brother never tried to make me doubt myself and supported me the entire way. My aunt’s and uncles, grandparents, family, friends, and in-laws could not have been more supportive. And my wife who willing chose to be a part of the wild cross country journey. I can’t say thank you enough.