



CHAPTER 3

The Hidden Destination

He loved his work.
That's the part of the story most people miss.

He wasn't miserable. He wasn't counting the days until retirement. He wasn't dragging himself through a life he despised. He was a third-generation bridge builder: His grandfather had started the company, his father had grown it, and he had taken it further than either of them. The pictures on the company walls told the story of bridges he had designed and built that spanned rivers and valleys across the country. He was an expert witness in litigation cases. He watched cars cross structures that existed because of him.

He was winning.

Good at his work. Respected in his field. Proud of what he had built. By every external measure—and most internal ones—his life was working.

And then one morning after a keynote I gave, he waited until the room had emptied. He wanted to tell me something he had never told anyone as an adult.

All he had ever wanted to be was a chef.

Not instead of the bridges. Not because the engineering was hollow or the legacy meaningless. But because sitting quietly alongside a genuinely good life was a room he had never opened. He had set aside this dream so early and so completely that he had almost forgotten it was there.

Almost.

When he was creating in a kitchen, he said he was in the center of what he loved. The bridges were his inheritance. The kitchen was his.

That's not a story about a broken life.

That's a story about a complete life with a hidden room.

And the question his story asks—the one I want to plant in you before we go any further into this book—is not whether your life is working.

The question is whether your life is yours.

The Hidden Destination

Most people navigating the crazy world we described in the last two chapters are not failing.

They're succeeding.

They're hitting the marks. Meeting the targets. Building reputation. Doing what's expected and doing it well. They're crossing items off the list and adding new ones and staying busy enough that the quiet question underneath everything never quite gets loud enough to demand an answer.

But it's there: the Sunday night weight you can't explain. Nothing is wrong, and that's exactly what's wrong.

Everything is working, and nothing is landing.

That feeling—quiet, persistent, impossible to argue with—is the hidden destination making itself known. It's your life telling you that the place you're headed, however impressive it looks from the outside, isn't fully where you were meant to go.

Here is the most important thing I can tell you before we go any further: Without values and purpose, you can navigate crazy. But you will always be navigating toward someone else's priorities, temporary relief, or a life that feels off even when it looks successful.

That's the hidden destination, the place most people are headed without knowing it. It's not because they're lost or broken or because their life isn't genuinely good.

They've simply never stopped long enough to ask whether the destination is theirs.

The bridge builder's life was good—really good. And there was still a hidden room.

The question isn't whether things are working.

The question is whether you want what you're working toward.

What Values Are

I want to say something about values that may contradict what you have heard.

Values are easy to claim and difficult to demonstrate.

Most people can tell you what they value. Far fewer can show you.

Real values are not found in mission statements, vision boards, social media posts, or conversations about who we want to be.

They are found in behavior. They show up in our relationships, our finances, our priorities, our commitments, and our choices.

When there is a gap between what we say we value and how we behave, behavior tells the truth.

Real values are not chosen in a workshop. They are discovered in the moments when everything is on the line, and you find out what you're made of.

They show up when the easy road is right in front of you, and something in you refuses to take it.

They show up when you can explain your way out of a difficult situation, but instead, you own it.

They show up when the pressure to be someone other than who you are is at its highest, yet you remain exactly who you are.

Values are not what you say when someone asks. They are what you do when the heat is on and the cost of living and acting in alignment with those values is real.

And here is what makes them the foundation of everything else in this book: In a crazy world—a world of noise and outrage and ambient pressure to react, conform, perform, and pretend—your values are the only thing that belongs entirely to you.

Circumstances can be taken. Relationships can change. Success can evaporate. The crazy world can strip away almost everything you've built, but it cannot take your values unless you hand them over.

Without realizing it, most people hand over their values a little bit every day. It happens in the small compromises, the quiet surrenders, or the moments where they choose comfort over truth, convenience over right, or popularity over honesty.

Not dramatically. Incrementally.

One day you feel the Sunday night weight and can't explain where it came from.

It came from the accumulated distance between who you are and how you're living.

Not the values you inherited. Not the values you perform. Not the values that keep everyone around you comfortable.

The values you would stand for if standing for them cost you something.

I want you to ask yourself, right now, about any area of your life.

Do you believe what you believe because you believe it or because you were taught to?

Questions Are the Compass

Here is what I've learned: You cannot think your way to clarity about your values. You cannot reason your way into knowing who you actually are. And you cannot negotiate with yourself into alignment.

But questions can take you there.

Questions don't allow you to hide behind explanation. They don't accept the comfortable story you've been telling. They cut through the noise and the narrative and ask you to be honest in a way that statements never can.

A good question is a mirror. It shows you what you believe when you stop performing. It reveals what matters to you when you're no longer defending your choices. It exposes the gap between who you say you are and how you're actually living.

Most people avoid these questions. They're uncomfortable. They demand more than an answer—they demand a reckoning.

But the people who sit with them, who stay present with the discomfort and answer honestly, discover something essential: Their values are already there. The questions don't create them.

Questions reveal them.

Here are a few worth sitting with. Don't answer them in your head—answer them out loud or on paper. The ones that make you uncomfortable are the ones worth the most attention.

Where would you go if no one was watching?

What would you stop doing tomorrow if no one would be angry or disappointed in you?

Where in your life are you performing instead of living?

When was the last time you said yes when you meant no?

What are your values? About how you lead. About how you parent. About what success looks like. About what you owe other people and what you owe yourself. About what kind of life is worth living. About the answer you give when a friend asks you a question and you don't want to hurt their feelings, so you don't tell the truth.

The bridge builder answered that question in the back of a conference room after everyone else had left. He had known the answer for years. He just needed someone to ask it out loud.

What's your answer?

What Are You Pretending Not to Know?

There is a question I ask in almost every keynote I give. I've watched it land in rooms of thousands of people the same way it landed in that conference room with one.

What are you pretending not to know?

Not "What don't you know?" but "What are you pretending not to know?"

The bridge builder knew. He had known for decades. Knowing wasn't the problem. Pretending was.

Most people who feel the Sunday night weight know exactly what's causing it. They know which relationship needs an honest conversation. They know which work is draining them and which work is calling them. They know which values they've been compromising and which dreams they've been quietly burying under the weight of what's expected.

They're pretending not to know because knowing requires doing something about it.

And doing something about it is scary in ways that are completely understandable because of the security at risk, the people who depend on you, and the identity you've built around the life you're living.

I'm not dismissing any of that. Those stakes are real.

The constant friction of a reality that isn't completely accurate costs you every single day. You're making decisions as someone you don't fully believe you are. You are building a life in a direction that isn't aligned with your values and vision of your life. That gap, between what you know and what you act like is true, requires energy to maintain. Not someday when the bill comes due. Now. Every conversation you have where you don't speak truth to yourself and others. Every choice you make based on a version of your life that doesn't fit anymore. That's the tax of pretending.

Pretending isn't always a problem. Sometimes it saves you. A medical diagnosis that would paralyze you if you sat with it fully—pretending you're fine long enough to get through treatment can sometimes be the only way forward. Denial, for a moment, can be a survival tool. *Fake it till you make it* has real power: You build con-

fidence through action, through showing up as the person you're trying to become before you fully believe it. This is real. But there's a line. That is when temporary becomes permanent.

I understand why people pretend. They're afraid of disappointing people who depend on them. They are afraid of losing the identity they've built—the role, the status, the version of themselves that everyone recognizes. They are afraid of economic security disappearing. They are afraid of judgment. Those fears are not small. They are the reason people pretend. And, in the short run, it's much easier. But at some point, the cost of maintaining the pretense has to be weighed against what becomes possible when it is stopped. When you are not spending energy pretending, you are freed to act and choose with clarity and less obstruction.

Here's what I know about the cost of pretending: It doesn't stay quiet. It gets louder. The Sunday night weight gets heavier. The gap between the life you're living and the life that feels true gets wider. And the longer you pretend, the more expensive the eventual reckoning becomes.

The bridge builder stopped pretending. He hired a CEO for the engineering firm, went to culinary school, and within two years owned a restaurant and was its head chef. The road was turbulent. The family he thought was addicted to the lifestyle jumped on board. There were doubts, fears, and moments when the whole thing looked like a terrible mistake.

But he was no longer pretending, and that—not the restaurant, culinary school, or outcome—was the victory.

The Destination Revealed

I want to tell you what it feels like when you stop navigating toward someone else's destination and start navigating toward your own.

I walked into a cathedral in Europe some years ago. I didn't walk in expecting anything, but the moment I crossed the threshold, something indescribable happened.

I felt still.

Reverent.

Quiet.

Centered.

Nothing told me to feel those things. No one instructed me. The feeling wasn't the product of belief, doctrine, or obligation.

It was resonance. Something in that space met something in me that was already there and recognized it belonged.

That is what commitment to your values feels like, not perfect alignment. I want to be honest about that because perfect alignment is a fantasy, and anyone who tells you otherwise is selling something. You will make choices that contradict your values. You will have days when the noise or the easy road wins and you look back and wish you had done it differently.

That's not failure. That's being human.

But the genuine, examined, chosen commitment to knowing who you are and what you stand for and filtering your decisions through that knowledge produces something that feels like walking into that cathedral.

Energized. Light. Powerful. Centered. Focused. Determined.

And perhaps most surprisingly, humble.

Instead of the humility of diminishment, it's the humility of someone who has stopped pretending to be someone they're not and has discovered that who they are is more than enough.

That feeling is what's waiting on the other side of this work.

Not someday. Not after you've fixed everything that's broken. Not once the crazy world settles down.

Now. In the middle of the crazy. Because the anchor has to be set before the storm arrives, not during it.

Purpose, Where Values Point

Values tell you who you are.

Purpose tells you what they are for.

You can have strong, clear values and still feel directionless: clear about your character but uncertain about your calling. Values without purpose is a compass without a destination. You know which way is north. You just don't know where you're going.

Purpose answers the question values alone can't answer.

Instead of "What do I stand for?" it answers "What am I here to do with it?"

Purpose is not grand, dramatic, or reserved for people with a platform or a pulpit. It doesn't require a mission statement or a moment of revelation on a mountaintop.

It is simply the honest answer to "What is the work that feels like mine?"

Not the work that pays the most. Not the work that impresses most people. Not the work that was expected of you, assigned to you, or defaulted to because nothing better presented itself.

The work that makes Monday feel different from Sunday night.

The bridge builder found his in a kitchen. He didn't choose kitchens because they were strategic. He chose them because when he was creating something from nothing in one, he was in the center of what he loved. Specific. Personal. Completely his.

And here is what I've seen purpose do in the lives of people I've worked with: It simplifies everything.

Life doesn't get clearer, but the filter gets clearer. When you know what you're here to do, decisions that used to feel impossible become obvious. Opportunities that used to seduce you lose their pull. The crazy world keeps generating noise, pressure, and distraction, but it has less power over you because you have somewhere to be that matters more than wherever the noise is pointing.

Purpose doesn't eliminate the crazy.

It makes the crazy irrelevant to the only question that matters:

Am I moving toward what I'm here to do?

The Only Reliable Navigation System

I want to say this as directly as I know how because everything that follows in this book depends on it.

The strategies, and frameworks, and tools in these pages are real. They work. I've watched them change lives, transform organizations, repair relationships, and help people navigate some of the most difficult circumstances imaginable.

But they are techniques, and techniques without an anchor are just better ways to drift.

The pie chart in the next chapter helps you see your responsibility clearly—but only if you're anchored to something worth being responsible for.

Acceptance without approval gives you peace—but only if you know what your acceptance serves.

Action orientation creates momentum—but only if you're moving toward something that matters to you.

The casket test clarifies your relationships—but only if you know what you value enough to protect.

The discipline of thinking creates space between reaction and response—but only if you have values clear enough to fill that space with something better than your first impulse.

CARE gives you an operating system—but only if the clarity at its foundation is rooted in what you believe, not what you've been told to believe.

Every tool in this book is downstream of this chapter, which means if you collect the techniques without doing the values work that gives the techniques direction, you will become more efficient at navigating toward the wrong destination.

You will navigate the crazy beautifully, and you'll end up somewhere that feels off even when it looks successful.

What This Requires

Getting clear about your values is not a weekend exercise. It is not a list you make in a journal on a Sunday afternoon and then frame on your wall.

It is a lifelong practice of honest examination.

It requires asking the hard questions: Do I believe this because I believe it or because I was taught to? Am I living in alignment with what I say matters? Am I pretending not to know something I know very well?

It requires the willingness to change your answer over time. Your values at twenty are not your values at forty, not because integrity has failed but because wisdom has grown.

And it requires courage because living by your values in a crazy world that will pressure you constantly to compromise, conform, perform, and pretend is one of the most countercultural things a person can do.

Here is what I know after watching people navigate their own versions of crazy: The people who do this work—who get genuinely clear about their values, connect that clarity to a sense of purpose that is truly theirs, and filter their daily choices through that anchor consistently, imperfectly, and courageously—navigate crazy differently than everyone else.

That's because they know exactly who they are that's because they know who they are and what they believe.

Before You Read Another Word

Ask yourself three questions. Take your time. Answer honestly.

What are the three or four things you value most deeply, the things you would be unwilling to compromise regardless of pressure?

Are you currently living in alignment with those values—at work, at home, in your closest relationships, and in the quiet conversations you have with yourself?

What is the hidden destination you've been navigating toward, and is it yours?

That last question is the one that matters most.

The bridge builder knew his answer for decades. He set it aside. He built bridges. He did it well. He was proud of every single one.

And one evening, in an emptying conference room, he finally said the answer out loud.

That's when his real life began.

That's not because the bridges weren't real but because the kitchen was more real.

You don't have to wait for an empty conference room.

You don't have to wait at all.

The destination doesn't have to stay hidden, but you have to be willing to look for it.

And when you find it—when you see clearly where you've been heading and where you want to go—everything that follows in this book becomes more than a technique for navigating crazy.

It becomes the path to the life that was yours all along.

That's what this book is really about: navigating toward something that matters.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

What are you pretending not to know? Sit with that question seriously. What truth have you been setting aside because acknowledging it would require doing something about it?

What are the three or four things you value most deeply, the things you would refuse to compromise regardless of pressure? Write them down. Do your daily choices reflect those values or just describe them?

What is your hidden destination? Where are your current choices taking you, and is that where you want to go?

Think about your cathedral moment, a time when you felt completely still, centered, and aligned without being told to. What were you doing? What does that tell you about your values and purpose?

What is the work that makes Monday feel different from Sunday night? If you don't know yet, what would you need to stop pretending not to know to find out?

You have your anchor now. Your values have been clarified. Your hidden destination has been revealed. What happens when the crazy world does its best to pull you away from it and the cost starts showing up in your body, your relationships, and your ability to function?

