**BONUS**

WOW! You’ve made it all the way through all three modules of “ACCELERATE! I am super proud of you! I firmly believe that God is going to help you to continue this journey even BEYOND this video course!

Do me a favor and email me at [brian@highvoltage-kids.com](mailto:brian@highvoltage-kids.com) and tell what what God has done in your life through Accelerate! I read every email personally and I will respond to you personally! I am just excited to hear about what God is doing in your life!

To close this video course out, I wanted to share with you something that is very personal to me. It’s about a time in my life that was a HUGE growth season for me. But, it was as the result of a huge mistake.

Let me explain. The year was 2008. I had been in full-time ministry for 15 years.

Our Kids Ministry had continued to grow. We grew from just under 200 kids when I got there to an average of over 600 kids weekly. The High Voltage Kids Ministry curriculum was continuing to grow. At that time we had just crossed the threshold of over 5,000 customers world-wide.

I began to travel a lot more. I was being asked to travel to other countries to speak to Children’s Leaders, speak to tons of Kids Pastors in huge Conferences, speak to thousands of kids at Kids Conventions. I began to think I was “something.”

**And, something happened along the way.** I began to get so busy. I was daily trying to build MY ministry, write MY curriculum, accomplish MY goals. I never was an arrogant person. But, in my heart – in secret – I began to think that I had arrived. I had accomplished a lot of things. I had finally become a “success.”

As a result, my prayer life suffered, my marriage suffered, my character suffered. Through a series of events, God revealed to me that I had long depended on MY intellect, MY energy, MY talent, and MY plans to accomplish HIS objectives for my life. As a result, I found myself in a position where it nearly destroyed my life, my ministry, and my family.

Here me out – there is NOTHING wrong with working hard and accomplishing BIG things for God. But, all of my pushing and striving had cut me off from the life I so desperately needed. It had been a long time since I had actually stopped to ask God, “Is this what you want me to do today?”

I began to believe that I was the one responsible for the successes in my life. No, I never stated that out loud. I certainly never said it to anyone else. But, in my daily actions of pushing and striving in my own energy and neglecting my intimacy and connection with God – I found myself shriveled up and dry.

I found myself in a place where I had become **a full-time minister, but a part-time Christ follower**. I KNEW I had to make some ***serious*** and ***drastic*** life changes. And, I did. And before you think this was some sort of heroic decision on my part, I have to tell you it wasn’t completely voluntary. After a very difficult, devastating meeting with Pastor Rod one Saturday afternoon – it was decided that I would step down from up-front ministry until God was able to change me.

I still had a job, but I moved from a leadership role to a support role. I didn’t preach. I didn’t teach. I didn’t lead worship. I didn’t lead meetings. I moved to the background because **my actions, attitudes, and thinking patterns had disqualified me from leading others**.

Your story may be different – hopefully not as drastic. But, we have all found ourselves in a place similar to that. As Children’s Ministers, we work hard. We pursue success with all of our might. We tackle daily decisions, difficulties, even approach ministry with all of “our” might. But, it is not all of OUR might that we are called to use.

Why do we so often put our connection to God and intimacy with God on the backburner when we are pursuing His purposes? Is it that we just get too busy? Or do we somewhere deep down truly believe we “have what it takes” and can do it on our own? After all, I’ve been pastoring kids for years – you got this thing down.

**Too often we pray as a last resort.** We work and work and when we can’t figure out the answer to a problem, it’s only then that we go to God for help – usually to fix the mess we have created. Instead, what we should be doing is seeking FIRST His strength, His ideas, His plans. Paul talks about this in ***Colossians 1:29*** when he says, *“To this end I labor, struggling with all* ***HIS*** *energy, which so powerfully works in me.”*

Too often we struggle with all of OUR energy, to the detriment of our relationship and connection with God. O, we are pursuing good things. We are working to minister to kids, build the church, win the lost. **The problem is, we are moving so fast and working so hard to do the *work of God*, we ignore the *God of the work*.**

When I finally faced this issue – there was only one thing to do. I got on my face – daily – before God and begged Him to reveal Himself to me again. I unplugged from ministry – not simply because I felt as though my actions and state of heart disqualified me from ministry – but, because I knew that I needed NOTHING standing in the way of my renewing my relationship with God.

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During that time, I kept a very detailed journal. I want to share a small excerpt from that journal to help you understand the lesson that I learned through that entire process.

**June 2, 2009**

*I spent so much time blowing and going “in my own strength” that I wore myself to a nub and became cut off from the life-giving flow of God’s presence…I actually had the stupid thought that I could go ahead and handle this life and these challenges on my own. I was so busy pushing to “DO” that I neglected who God wanted me to “BE”.*

*I think that is where I was. Running and pushing so hard and so fast so that I wouldn’t have to stop and see how cracked my character was. I was afraid of finding that out. I didn’t want to believe it. Then, I crashed and burned. And, not only did I SEE it, I hurt everyone around me because of it.*

*The awesome thing is, in the past year God has helped me as I give in to this daily evaluation.*

*I thank You, Lord, that You have instilled in me the desire to be open and honest about what motivates me, what needs fixing in me, and the difference between who I am and who You would have me to be.*

*I commit to You once again today to live daily in your presence and lean not on my own understanding. In ALL my ways, I will acknowledge You and YOU will direct my path.”*

The lesson I learned through this process was the lesson God was trying to get me to learn my entire Christian life.

**The Lesson: There is NO SUBSTITUTE for daily intimate connection to my Heavenly Father.**

I spent an entire year on the sidelines – completely out of upfront ministry, and I reconnected to the Vine. I learned to wholly and completely RELY on Him.

Without HIM I can do nothing. My talents, gifts, and abilities are worthless without HIS presence in my life. I am committed to being God-reliant and NOT self-reliant.

It ended up being a full year before I ever stepped back into upfront ministry. I thank God for Pastor Rod, our church board, and the rest of the pastoral staff who were gracious in allowing me to go through this process.

I can tell you **it was more than worth it**. I reconnected to the vine. I recognized that I must DAILY check that connection to make sure I remember WHO it is that is making the miracles happen.

HE is the vine. WE are the branches. Without HIM, we can do nothing! We can work, we can plan, we can give to Missions, we can invite our friends to church, we can make sure the services are perfect. We can do a lot of things, but without HIM and HIS anointing – it is worthless!

**There is NO SUBSTITUTE for daily intimate connection to my Heavenly Father.**

*5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. - John 15:5-8*

*As you continue to ACCELERATE – stay connected to the Vine! Take time to slow down and spend time with your Heavenly Father. Without Him you can do NOTHING!*