

DALE YOUNG

Restoring the Years the Locusts Ate

Dale Young is an executive coach specializing in teamwork, identity, and leadership. He coaches business leaders and entrepreneurs through turning their chaos into clarity to pursue their calling. Dale is also the author of The Identity Key and a professional speaker.

*"Life is a journey;
Your dream is the compass;
Passion is the fuel."
—Dale Young, 2011*

The Terrible Month

March of 2016. A double-whammy at the bottom of the worst decade of my life. The issues that had been splitting my marriage for years had finally culminated in divorce. A couple of weeks later, I was suddenly part-time at my job of 11 years. You can imagine what that did to my finances, my happiness, and my confidence. The locusts had swept through my comfortable existence and destroyed so much.

Why, then, did I feel such hope?

The Comfortable Years

I had no idea before 2012 that I was about to enter a downturn that would last a decade. Life had been reasonably good. Personally, my marriage was comfortable. We had no children, a decision that we made before marriage. We had a nice house and some friends.

Spiritually, I had committed my life to Christ in 1998 and since had been growing, serving, and learning about my faith. I was comfortable.

Professionally, I had a solid career in information technology (IT), on an upward trajectory in terms of salary, responsibility, and leadership. My new job as a director provided a stable income, a little bit of travel, management of a great team, and a level of satisfaction for me. Nothing spectacular, but comfortable.

The Calling

Many years earlier, when some coworkers were complaining about our jobs, I remember saying, “We shouldn’t complain; after all, this is just a job, not a career.” At that moment, I realized I wanted a career.

Years later, I had a career, but I realized now that wasn’t enough. What I really wanted was a calling. A God-given, God-sized, God-inspired, God-energized purpose.

2011 gave me hope that I had found that calling. Through a series of God-incidences, I discovered Christian Life Coaching, started taking classes, and even got my first paying client. I had dreams and plans to eventually make this my full-time career. The future was bright.

The First Incident

The long downhill slide began on Sunday, May 20, 2012. I remember a light startle as I became fully awake. I was sitting on the side of the bed, fully dressed for church. The bed was made. It was as if I had sat down to do something and had one of those micro-naps. But I had no memory then, and still don’t, of what was prior to that. I checked the time on my phone, said out loud, “It’s time to head to church,” stood up, and started calling out and looking for my wife.

Our two-story house was quiet, and I didn’t find her on the first floor. I checked the garage, and her car was there, so I assumed she was upstairs and not hearing me. I sent her a text: “Where are you?”

She called me within a minute, which I thought was strange. Over the next few confusing minutes, I learned that she’d been with her family in Tennessee for the last week, she was heading to the airport later that day to return home, and I had talked with her less than 30 minutes before to confirm that I was picking her up at the airport. I had no memory of any of this, and we were both scared.

She called a neighbor to take me to the emergency room where I was admitted and observed for several hours. I was visited by my nephew Gary and Pastor Andy from church, which made me feel better. Vital signs, lots of tests, EEG... they found nothing obvious that was a cause. They labeled it TGA—transient global amnesia—and sent me home.

An incident like that shakes you to the core of your being. Fortunately, I was still part of the church, still believed that God would take care of us, and still had my passion to help people grow and live their best life.

The Descent

Later that year, my wife started talking about moving to Tennessee. Permanently. Without me. Yes, she wanted a divorce. I was shocked. Despite counseling, the gap between us widened. This led to us downsizing our house in 2013, with all the associated stress of moving and getting rid of an accumulation of things from the last 20 years.

Originally, she was not going to live in the new, smaller house, but we attempted to reconcile and continued living together. In 2014, she filed for divorce, but I continued to hope. However, our separations became longer and more frequent.

All this stress was compounded by changes in my IT job. The company I worked for had been looking for management that would take them to the next level, which meant that I had a succession of new bosses... at least six over five years. The company was changing directions, and my role was being minimized.

Friday, September 11, 2015, was the day I knew the marriage was over. I invited her on a date to see the movie *War Room*. I knew it was a Christian movie, but I didn't know that the plot involved a struggling couple who were brought back together through the power of prayer. As the movie unfolded, I was praying that this might be the turning point that would bring us back together.

After the movie, we went to a coffee shop and talked. She broke the news that she was leaving for Tennessee the next day. I was crushed and knew that the marriage was done. It took almost six months to get it finished legally, but in my mind, 9/11 was the end.

Winston Churchill said, "When you're going through hell, KEEP GOING."

The stage was set for the terrible March of 2016. The divorce was now final. My "secure" job was now part-time. Like it or not, I needed to focus on the passion that I had felt five years earlier to become a professional coach.

The Turn

Around this time, someone shared a quote with me: "You can get bitter or you can get better—and the choice is yours."

I chose to get better. I leaned into God instead of running away. I didn't understand the road He had me on, but I chose to keep walking.

I wish I could say it was an easy road. It wasn't. On my path to building a successful coaching business, there were years of losing money, struggle, and doubt.

In late 2016, I invested in a coaching program called Transformational Leadership. I received the first level of certification, which allowed me to run virtual groups using their content. I ran four or five groups and made part of my money back. This was a good program, but I felt it was too restrictive and not as powerful as individual coaching.

In late 2017, I invested in Convene. This is an excellent organization that gets Christian CEOs together in groups of up to 16 people monthly for a full day of working on their businesses. I loved the concept and the people, but I did not have enough connections and references to establish my own group. I lost money and almost a year of time.

The Breakthrough

In late 2018, a friend introduced me to WeAlign. The vision of WeAlign is to “rehumanize the world through genuine identity and belonging.” They have a strengths alignment process, which uses the CliftonStrengths assessment and adds individualized coaching. I loved the vision and the process. This was the first time I had been coached through my strengths, and learning more about those strengths opened my eyes to why, up to that point, I had failed to build a profitable business.

Two things stood out to me about the process. First was the uniqueness of the assessment. You've heard how each of us has unique fingerprints. Our strength profile is just as unique. Second was my non-strengths. When I looked at my struggles in building a coaching business and looked at the things where I'm not as strong, there was a perfect correlation. I saw how this process could help others and also provide some of the missing pieces for my business.

I decided to dive into the WeAlign process, and in early 2019, I achieved WeAlign Executive Coach certification. This started turning my business around; between their process and other coaching, I started digging out of the hole.

Several business leaders who have been through this process have totally transformed their businesses to give them more freedom, income, and impact. One business owner, Sam, started her business after going through the process with me. Three years later, she now has 30 clients nationwide, 15 contractors, and is looking to take her business to the next level.

In 2020, I had been a speaker for business leaders and corporations on assessments, the CliftonStrengths in particular, for two years. Based on my experience, I published my first book, *The Identity Key*, which gives insight into the wide variety of assessments available and their relative benefits. Knowing your true identity at a deep, core level gives you the foundation for greatness; it allows you to find and pursue your calling.

One month after my book was published, the world shut down due to COVID-19. This was a setback, but as we move into a post-pandemic world, this information has become even more essential.

The Stockdale Paradox

Two decades ago, I read a book called *Good to Great* by Jim Collins. Through another God-incident, I reread *Good to Great* this year.

One of the lessons Collins shares is the Stockdale paradox, named after Admiral Jim Stockdale, who was a prisoner of war for eight years during the Vietnam War.

The Stockdale paradox is, “You must retain faith that you will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties, AND at the same time, you must confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they may be.”

I realized that although I had forgotten the name of the Stockdale paradox, and had even forgotten the actual wording, I had *remembered* the lesson. That was exactly what I had been doing across the worst decade of my life.

Restoration

In 2021, I felt like my worst decade was finally over in a big way.

I met someone, Kayla, online. A few days later, we met in person, and through several God-incidences, we knew we were right for each other. I loved her church and her family. She had a passion for helping others in a way that was compatible with mine and yet unique to her. We were married four months later and moved into a new house. Her friendship and support have encouraged me to pursue my dreams and my coaching business. She brought her three kids and four grandkids into my life, and I’m enjoying discovering what it’s like to be a parent and grandparent.

New relationship, new home in a new city, new church—new energy to pursue my dream.

Through this experience, I learned three lessons:

1. Retain faith that you will win in the end AND face the brutal facts.
2. Discover your dreams and find your passion. This will give you the direction of your calling and the power to pursue it.
3. Turn your day-to-day chaos into clarity and follow God's calling for your life, and God will restore the years that the locusts ate.

My future is now bright. I feel like God is opening the doors for me to pass on the lessons from this decade to others in the midst of their own turbulence. As I've learned more about companies and the people issues that they face, I see opportunities where these same lessons apply.

I help people get clarity on where and who they are in life at a deep core level, determine where they want to be, and create a map (or plan) on how to get there. I work with organizations in the same way. My ministry is to use my experience and strengths coaching to help individuals and organizations get out of their *chaos* into their *clarity* and pursue their *calling*.



If you would like to experience a one-hour coaching call with Dale Young at no charge, email dale@coachdale.com and mention *Next Level Your Life*. Follow Dale on LinkedIn [LinkedIn.com/in/CoachDale](https://www.linkedin.com/in/CoachDale) and Facebook [Facebook.com/CoachDaleYoung](https://www.facebook.com/CoachDaleYoung).



Tweetable: "Life is a journey; your dream is the compass; passion is the fuel." —Dale Young, 2011