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BECAUSE LIFE IS MEANT TO BE FULL

(A sampling from the Food for Thought Chronicles)

Kathy Brunner

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CHAPTER 1
THE PLAN...WHAT'S ON
YOUR PLATTER?
(Give it over... Not up)

I saw someone die today. I hadn't planned it, and I certainly think the victim didn't plan for it either. It just happened. I can recall seeing someone on a motorcycle and then within seconds seeing a body quickly catapulted through the air and under the wheel of a large truck permitting a helmet and pieces of metal flying as suddenly as a sneeze. When I pulled over to call 911, my hands were shaking and the voice I heard mumbling to the operator sounded nothing like my own.

Later I stood with others as the jaws of life were removed, the ambulance sent off and the sheets placed over someone who had just minutes before been alive. I had witnessed it all; the rider, the body, the life, the death. Just hours, minutes or even moments before perhaps someone had shook the hand, shared a confidence, chatted about trivia, gave a kiss, or stood beside the body which lost life as quickly as a balloon hitting a thorn. Life here and gone as quickly as a raindrop splashes and is obliterated by the wipers on a car. That is what we have basically; a moment before we will be remembered to some, forgotten by others.

I knelt down in the grass and prayed for both the victims; the motorcyclist who expired and the truck driver who survived. Both, in a matter of no more than maybe fifteen seconds became victims of circumstances. I don't know if either one was married, had children, were locals or just visitors driving through the area. I know that many lives going about a typical day were changed in those moments without even being so much as aware of it yet. We often have no control over who changes our plans when they enter or exit our lives.

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After the accident, cars were again frantically positioning themselves on that freeway, hurrying to their destination. At a stop light, I looked over at a young lady in a car beside mine, swaying her head back and forth to the tune coming from her car. As I pulled into a service station, two children in the car behind mine enjoyed window antics from the person pumping gas and making faces at them, two young adults were hugging and a girl in the convenience store was joking with an older gentleman about him “winning the big one someday” as he sandwiched a stash of lottery tickets into his jacket pocket, promising to share his future winnings. Life and death coexisted simultaneously, one quite oblivious to the other.

At any moment something can change our lives or the lives of someone we know, we work with, live with, study with or do life together with and things will never be the same. Today this death was simply another unremarkable event to some people and yet the same act changed others’ lives quite unlike what they may have ever imagined. The same moment was perceived and experienced quite differently.

Everyone’s moment is experienced from a different perspective.

From the time we are born we are encouraged to plan for our future. We have become accustomed to family planning, educational planning, financial planning, vacation planning, retirement planning. Today, funerals can be planned and arranged in advanced. We think somehow by planning we can control what is out of our control. But what becomes obvious is that we plan because we have no control.

What we think we have planned may give us a false sense of security. We choose to live in the two-story instead of the ranch but we can’t plan that our homes will never have a fire even if smoke alarms are installed. We can’t plan that our homes never have a burglary by installing security systems. We can choose to exercise and plan for a healthy future but we can’t be assured that our plans will guarantee that we never face a terminal illness or chronic disorder. We can

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choose to save and invest for our retirement but not plan for our investments to dissolve when the opening bell of the stock exchange rings. We can make choices but we cannot make long range plans and that's why we often fail to recognize the factors between our limitations and our productivity. Often we judge the outcomes based on the results rather than on how we handled the circumstances getting to our destination and we determine that if we did not succeed in achieving a goal that perhaps we have failed. But exercising and making healthy choices and still becoming a victim of a life-long illness is no more failure than investing our money wisely and watching much of it dwindle because of the general state of the world's economy. No man is an island. Whatever we do or decide, good or bad often is preceded and followed by the domino principle of what also happened before or after we made those choices. Who did we affect and what other circumstances did we collide with on the road to our destination without ever planning the involvement? Much like the accident today, we can make the choices that lead to an outcome but we can no more have complete control of the outcome than we can start or stop a rainstorm.

Hypothetically, in our lives we are at the controls. We are in the vehicle making some decisions about which direction might be the wisest, most interesting, least difficult, most profitable, fastest or best for us at any given moment. But that is why we make many of our mistakes whether we are selecting a career, a spouse, or even our ideas about how we will get our eternal reward. We think just because we are at the controls that we are in control. But then the day arrives when we recognize there is NOTHING within our total control and we stop and realize there is a huge difference between being the one *at* the controls and being the one *in* control. HUGE!

It is difficult to even fathom that an event that we have yet to experience may have a consequence in our lives tomorrow. It is beyond our imagination to even think that a person or event still unfamiliar may make a significant difference in our lives someday. We have no clue who we will meet in the future, no assurance that our lives will turn out like we planned. Our money, fame, health,

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status, education and background provide no guarantee that we can achieve a goal or stop calamities. Getting our next moment *DOES NOT DEPEND ON US!* The only thing that depends on us is our decision in that moment. Do we order the chicken or the fish? Do we smile or look away? Do we make the call or fail to follow through? Do we go for the yard or punt? Do we tell the truth or lie? Intervene or ignore? Step on the gas or the brake? Ignite the fire or put it out? Stay or leave? Betray or honor? Hold on or let go? Permit or deny?

All human plans are at the divine mercy of what will be.

Every second of our life is unknown. Someone's life will be changed dramatically in those seconds. Perhaps it will be because in those seconds, a child is conceived, or a victim assaulted. The next second could deliver the final number someone needs to win the lottery or the first time someone hears "I love you". In moments, an accident could change everything, the signature could make it final, the judge can determine the sentence, the bullet can pierce the skin, the smile can make the difference, the casket can be lowered, the veil can be raised, the house can go up in flames, the stock market can crash, the ethics can be lost, the hand can be outstretched, the knife can stab, the values can be compromised, the lightning can strike, the diagnosis can be given, the "I do's" can be said, the landmine can explode, the final out can end the game, the fetus can be aborted, the praise can be sung, the divorce can be final, the car can cross the yellow line, the wrist can be sliced, the peace treaty signed, the football sail over the goal post and the values go over the line.

We spend a lifetime planning what we might do, who we might spend it with, where we might live, what we might have. We insure, invest, warranty and bond, but we still cannot control the next moment. We can plan for it with about as much success as two undefeated teams entering a title game knowing only one can win. Planning for what happens in the blink of an eye, and what really happens in the blink of an eye are two very different things. The winning team planned to win, but the team that lost did not plan to lose, so...what happened?

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In God's eyes, every second is planned but in our hearts the choice of how we experience them is decided. God does not choose one of us to kill and one to be killed or one to save and one to be abandoned. He does not decide one of us should become a drug addict any more than He determines one of us should stay clean. He plans each second. We decide how to respond. He gives us the moment and we choose how to fill it. He provides a door and we choose to open or close it. He does have a plan. We do have a choice. It's all planned for us but it's not all decided. He allows us to have a recipe. We can choose whether we elect to put in the correct ingredients or take a chance that the finished product might turn out less than what we hoped for if we substitute ingredients.

Khalil Gibran said, "We choose our joys and sorrows long before we experience them."

We often forget that we do not decide tomorrow but only now. We can make choices that appear to lead to some type of decisions about our future, our careers, relationships, health, finances but we make the choices now. We cannot know what we will do or what will happen in the future anymore than we be certain of what type of weather we will have next week. We can plan for rain because it was predicted but even the weatherman cannot make it so. We can choose with whom we would like to have a relationship and the depth of that relationship. We can choose what career path to follow, what to study, where to live, what we do for recreation, what skills to perfect, what to let go of and what to keep, but we make those decisions in the present. Perhaps that's why whenever a circumstance, event, person or experience comes along at some point in the future and changes what we thought might be, we comment, "This wasn't at all what I planned!" We are still surprised that the moments beyond the now are not ours to plan. We imagine control we will and should never have.

Is it possible there is a moment that is given to us that we might never choose and yet it might be a turning point for something larger than we could know? Do we sometimes not realize what impact a moment had until sometime in the future whenever we recall a choice we made, a decision we ignored, a commitment we kept or an

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opportunity that we avoided? Are defining moments always obvious or more apt to be spontaneous occurrences that develop their definition after some reflection? Are our platters so full that we cannot even find a morsel that we relish? Have we simply forgotten how to make the most of this moment because we cannot even locate it amid our already over-scheduled day planners? Have we lost *now* and what we really should be doing because we are so concerned about the tomorrow that we can do absolutely nothing about?

A rich man is as helpless as a poor man to stop a moment of time. Time knows no prejudice. No one really has any more or any less of time, although our circumstances may make it seem so. But the same hours are in your day as in the day of someone imprisoned, someone retired, someone dying, and someone just born. Time is unable to be held, stopped, maintained or reproduced. Time is precious. It is so precious that it is only given to us moment by moment, one second after another. We do not get all sixty seconds of a minute at once. Time is so fleeting we cannot hold both seconds at the same time, but so exceptional that we cannot have even one moment gone, back again. We want so much to make an impact in our future yet what we do now has the most critical impact on the next moment. If we could only get passed wanting to fill up on the emptiness of the unknown and learn to savor the morsel of the moment whether bitter or sweet, we would be filled with what would make all the difference.

You can make choices and decisions but plans are the Lord's to make.

Often we get so anxious about what the future holds or what we have or have not accomplished, we forget that it is this moment that is critical. We often regard each moment as trivial because it seems so fleeting but ask anyone who has had a defining moment about the one that changed their life and they will tell their story from a perspective that begins with,

“When I realized...”

“In that split second...”

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“A moment later...”
“Moments before...”
“In a flash...”
“Instantly...”
“Without warning...”
“All of the sudden...”
“The next thing I knew...”
“Just like that...”
“At the blink of an eye...”

Bobby Petrocelli has a story that will leave you literally afraid to go to sleep at night. It is both a story about what can happen in the blink of an eye and the story of what can happen when you are not permitted to die but have no reason to live. It is a story that gives us a perspective about what we currently do and what we may never imagine we will do someday. It is a story about how something we may never have chosen from life's smorgasbord might fill a space we thought would remain eternally unsatisfied.

**“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD.
“They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a
future and a hope.”(Jeremiah 29:11)**

CHAPTER 2

BOBBY PETROCELLI

*The world is round and the place which may seem like the end
may also be the beginning.*

Ivy Baker Priest

I met Bobby Petrocelli initially by internet accident. While researching the time it took to perform various activities, the web site *10seconds.org* surfaced. I was impressed with what appeared to be a rather foolish and unattainable promise Bobby stated on that site, indicating that anyone who contacted him would receive a response. I took a chance and dropped him an email and waited for the computer generated “I am currently not in the office” response. Yes, of course, his promise made sense now. Any computer could reply instantly. But to my surprise, Bobby personally did respond. As I shared my passion about writing, Bobby responded that he would be quite happy to meet with me and share his defining moments. Within a few weeks, we did get to communicate beyond keystrokes, as I traveled to St. Petersburg, Florida to meet with him. Our meeting still leaves my heart amazed at the resiliency of the human spirit, the power of divine and personal forgiveness and the incredible knowledge of how just a few seconds are all that stands between life as we currently know it and the way it might change once those seconds pass.

Bobby was born in Brooklyn, New York and grew up in loving family as a Swedish meatball. His father was Italian; his mother half Swedish and Bobby drew his character from the likes of both of them. Whenever Bobby was young, he had an uncle that played baseball

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with the Boston Red Sox. His admiration for the legends he met including Mickey Mantle, Joe Pepitone, Carl Yazstremski and Whitey Ford and his love of the game, made baseball his favorite sport throughout his high school years. After graduation, Bobby chose Oral Roberts University in Oklahoma. His choice was not just because he was given a baseball scholarship but because he had watched the Oral Roberts Program on television every Sunday morning and recalled how beautiful the school's campus appeared and how the program presented the scholastic setting as just one part of a genuinely compassionate interpersonal university.

Baseball was not in the cards for Bobby, at least the first year. He was cut from the team his freshman year. Obstacles were not life's way of delivering detours for Bobby and he was determined to work hard and to try-out once again during his sophomore year. He diligently devoted himself to getting his body in shape before try-outs. But, just days before returning to school and tryouts, Bobby tore leg ligaments in a bicycle accident. Most individuals would simply wail with desperation and give up, but Bobby decided that he would give try-outs his all, regardless of his accident and he made the team both junior and senior year. Bobby met his wife-to-be, Ava while at the school his senior year as well, and on March 12, 1983, Bobby earned the title "husband". He spent several years teaching and coaching in Texas schools while Ava finished her degree in Psychology.

Like typical newlyweds, Bobby and Ava endured the cramped quarters of their first residence together for two years until they located their dream house and moved Labor Day weekend of 1985. Although they were just renting, the space was large enough for Bobby to enjoy his drum set which was something he couldn't do in his previous apartment. He joked about making up for lost time, playing his drums incessantly. It was delightful, living with the one you love and doing the things you love to do.

Several weeks after they moved in, Bobby took a look at the clock as his hectic day of coaching and teaching was winding down. It was 11:40 p.m. The moon was full and his beautiful wife was beginning to fall asleep next to him. What more could a man possibly want? Bobby

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knew. He stumbled into the kitchen to retrieve a glass of milk, but he wouldn't be having milk tonight. Looking into a nearly empty carton, Bobby resigned himself to a glass of water instead and then just before 11:45, he returned to bed and mumbled to Ava that there was no milk. He also prayed aloud, a practice he did regularly before retiring each night, and the last thing he heard Ava whisper before they both fell asleep was, "Amen".

The next time he opened his eyes he would remember forever. The events that Bobby survived in the early hours of October 25, 1985 are burned into his memory. Many of us have had a horrific dream appearing so real it unnerves us in the aftermath long into our consciousness. Bobby tried to awaken from his nightmare as well. He shouted his own name hoping to wake himself up, but it was futile.

He saw himself not in his bedroom but on the floor of his dining room and he began to run from room to room to find a light that worked. The power was out in most of the house but Bobby could feel something wet on his face. Just wake up! When he finally reached a light that worked he realized he had blood and glass in his face and mouth. He had a hole in his cheek large enough to stick his tongue through. Just wake up! Where is Ava? He looked everywhere. What a horrendous dream! Just wake up!! Wake up!! If only he could awaken himself. Then he thought he heard a banging on the front door. Bobby opened the door to find an older gentleman whose eyes were filled with tears. Was he dreaming so vividly that he could hear the sounds and reach out and touch the individual standing on his doorstep?

The man shouted words that confused and enlightened Bobby simultaneously, "Oh, my God, I can't believe this! I saw the whole thing happen!" he screamed.

A full sized pick-up truck was in Bobby's house. Bobby was finding this a difficult dream to interpret as his mind begged for consciousness. A strange man looking as dazed as Bobby himself leaned against the driver door. His first question was, "Is there somebody else in the house?"

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“Oh, My God,” yelled Bobby. “Ava’s under the truck!”

He “dreamed” he was running to his neighbors screaming for help and turned to see paramedics, ambulances, police and an explosion of red lights filling the street. He “dreamed” that he ran back into the house and tried to lift the truck. He saw a body he hardly knew as his own being rushed to the emergency room. He heard someone say, that Ava did not make it and realized in his nightmare that she was not in the ambulance with him but would be coming in another one. Numbness began to wear off and he realized just how horrible this dream had been whenever his body began to feel pain in every movement. Just wake up! He asked about Ava again. Why hadn’t she arrived yet? Why were the ambulances taking so long to bring her? Then he heard the words again.

“No, Bobby, I’m sorry to tell you. Your wife did not make it. Your wife is dead.”

Fighting back his own tears, the chaplain of the League City Police Department also had a roll in Bobby’s drama, as he tried to get Bobby to comprehend the living nightmare that had taken place.

Now I know this is a dream, imagined Bobby. Just hours ago we ate together, cuddled and watched TV. We made plans for this week-end. We were in our house. Nobody just dies in their house when all the locks are bolted, all the fires out. We were in bed. Ava did not have any medical condition. I just need to wake up!

Two days later, Bobby Petrocelli was still viewing his own nightmare. This time he was experiencing it as a lead story on TV reporting that a drunk driver had crashed his pick-up through Bobby’s bedroom killing the young wife and injuring Bobby.

Bobby thought he would never be able to resurrect the words to tell Ava how real this dream had been. He “dreamed” he saw friends and his in-laws at the hospital. He “dreamed” they were bathing and cleaning him; dressing him up. Although a little weird, even in a dream being bathed by your friends is humbling. It was Saturday and Ava and he had plans. His friends had talked with him about going to

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see Ava, but after miles of driving in miserably rainy weather, Bobby wasn't at either the movie theater or the couple's favorite Mexican restaurant but instead at a funeral home. Bobby relates that much of what he was doing was going through the motions as though he were truly watching a scene from a movie; in this case a horror story. He recalls it as being surreal, even now. Somewhere in the medicated fog of his reality, Bobby couldn't believe then or even now what happened.

Bobby located his crutches and smelled the tar and rubber burned into his thigh. Weirdest dream ever, he thought. Horrible nightmare! Maybe it was the pasta he had eaten so late that night before bed. He was hobbling over to the figure in the casket. It was Ava! Why won't this dream end? Just wake up! Bobby thought he would have to take matters into his own hands and end this horrific nightmare the only way he knew. He reached over to lift Ava out of the casket and take her home, but the friends who brought him helped lay Ava back down, and Bobby Petrocelli then began to recognize that he would not be waking up from a nightmare but would instead start living one.

"What am I going to do with my life now without Ava? That was my first thought as I became more aware of what had happened." Bobby shared.

Bobby ordered lunch for us and sat down but immediately jumped up to roll up his shirt sleeves, revealing the tire track scars still visible on his arms two decades later. My eyes had never seen scars so vivid on a survivor. He had a million thoughts to share about the moment whenever he recognized there was no dream.

Bobby had worked teaching children. Nearly one thousand of the students from the school where he coached and taught attended his wife's funeral. He was in awe of their response and devotion. He had a purpose in his life as a teacher but he wondered if his life had purpose without Ava.

He recalled the endless surgeries and rehabilitation his body endured. In the course of our conversation I could smell the smoke and feel the tar chips that adhered to his skin like some demonic adhesive. I

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shuddered as he described the horrific pain of having the melted splinters of tar and rubber plucked out of his skin piece by piece. I thought I heard his screams as the gentle smiling face told the story. In the background a siren sounded. It could have been real or the story Bobby was telling was so graphic that it came with a sound card.

Bobby explained that in the police reports, he learned that the truck that had crashed into his home had probably been going around seventy miles an hour. Whenever it crashed into Bobby's bedroom it had been airborne for a few feet from hitting the concrete slab of the house's foundation. The truck then proceeded to run over Bobby and toss him up on the hood, only to dump him several feet farther into the dining room window. Whenever the cab came to rest, it was in the dining room where Bobby first awakened from his nightmare and the remainder of the truck was in the bedroom with Bobby's wife pinned beneath it, rolled up in the sheets and mattresses that the wheels carried along as it careened through the house. Ava, whenever finally pulled from under the truck, had no broken bones and barely any scratches. She died from the asphyxiation of the mattresses and sheets against her as the truck rolled her throughout the house. It was estimated that given the speed of the truck, the whole accident probably took place in less than ten seconds.

We are given defining moments. We make defining choices.

Bobby handed me a book, *10 Seconds Will Change Your Life Forever*. As he went to refresh our soft drinks, I glanced through the pages and was mesmerized. While filled with pictures of family and friends, there also were photographs from the accident scene. How could anyone ever imagine whenever they stood beside their loved one on their wedding day, that a few macabre seconds in their own home would separate their lives so suddenly?

Bobby continued his amazing story and I found myself hanging on to every comment Bobby made, memorizing his expressions and

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looking at my own reflection in eyes that had witnessed the incredible and yet remained hopeful of a vision and a promise for the future.

After the accident, Bobby tried to go back to teaching. He had a heart for the youngsters and thought it was his passion but somehow he didn't feel that it was his purpose. He recognized that he still had enormous guilt, grief and denial about the events that had taken place just a few months prior to returning to teach. In the months that followed, Bobby kept a daily journal of his feelings. Facing the days without Ava was more excruciating than the rehabilitation which left him screaming out loud to his therapists. Bobby would know every second; exactly how many days, weeks, months and minutes Ava had been gone anytime he was asked. The only time he observed was the time he now had to spend alone. He was devastated. He admitted that he hardly knew who he was or why he had survived. He had planned to live with Ava and now there was nothing to live for without her.

Bobby remarked that we spend so much time in our lives searching for love, for happiness and for contentment but it is easily reachable if we become accepting of the people, whether good or bad whose paths cross our lives. Bobby has been a man who had lost all that mattered and learned that all that really mattered was what was left. He did not learn that overnight, but the resilience that provided life support for his body whenever he questioned the purpose of his existence without Ava gradually led him to that discovery. Everything has a purpose in the long run, if you chose to let your resilience lead you there

“If you judge them, they will run, but if you love them they will come,” he said.

I realized he was not talking just about the youth he knew but about everyone we meet in life. We form those stereotypical impressions based on misconceived notions and less than reasonable time to really get to know one another. We form judgments about another human being without really taking the time to simply accept them first. We definitely do unto others as is done to us, because being ascribed to a token caste system is all too familiar. We become known as “the wreck less youth,” “the yuppies”, “the X-generation”, “the old man

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set in his ways”, “the militant”, “the uninformed” and “the masses”. But, Bobby knew something true in all cases. Someone who is judged before being loved seldom sticks around long enough to get to know. Yet, it is in the process of getting to know someone that we find out not just a great deal about another person, but also a good deal about the person who we really are.

We have all done this. We see someone who dresses differently or pierces their body in places we don’t approve and we judge. But who are we to dictate what someone wears or how they look? We look at a person’s residence and often judge the worth inside it’s doors. We hear about a single mother with two children and perhaps assume that she was promiscuous... just because. We look at the homeless and forget we ourselves may be just one paycheck away from sleeping under the bridge. We often see another’s lot in life as their fault, their choice, their decision, but although that may be true, Bobby knows it just as often is far from the truth. Someone else’s decisions or choices may have caused our cards to be dealt quite differently than the hand we were expecting. Someone else’s decision changed Bobby’s life on October 25, 1985.

Bobby knows what it was like to be lost in society; educated, respected and well liked but really lost in terms of what to do with one’s life and how to deal with what is left over after the debris is swept away. Bobby was going to have not just the moment that changed his life, but all the next moments as well to survive in a much different plan than he made just several years before, whenever he stood beside his bride. In a poignant moment, Bobby reflected on the incredible support he received at the funeral for his wife.

“I was stunned then, and unable to recognize what I needed, but I think that there should be little cards at the funeral home that you can fill out and hand to people whenever they ask if there is anything they can do.” he said.

He continued, “Those cards could say, Call me in a week and see how I am doing or please take me out to dinner two months from now or come and visit me in a few months.”

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He recognized that normalcy after such a loss is nearly impossible to achieve in the minutes, days, weeks or even years to follow, however that's when the most support is crucial.

Bobby admitted that his faith in God was shaken by this accident, but he also acknowledged that it was that same accident that reached beyond a God he knew to one he trusted fully to reveal His purpose in sparing Bobby. The road back required Bobby commit to forgive and move on with his life. He had spent hours wondering what he might do if he could only get his hands on the driver of that truck. Bobby knew the driver of the truck had spent most of the day prior to that late night accident, drinking and was grossly intoxicated. Bobby knew the driver made a choice; a choice to drink and drive. Bobby knew that forgiveness was an option. In his book, *10 Seconds Will change your life Forever*, he described an unforgiving attitude like drinking poison and hoping the person who offended you is hurt by the poison you drink. Bobby would swallow no poison. He chose to forgive the man who killed his wife.

The driver who killed Ava served only four months in jail even though he was convicted and ordered to serve eighteen to thirty six months of a ten year involuntary manslaughter charge. Bobby would serve a lifetime sentence without his Ava.

I never thought to ask Bobby what moment was defining for him as I just expected that the accident would obviously be his response. But Bobby confirmed he had discovered his defining moment while sharing his thoughts about how ten seconds could change a life talking with various youth groups.

Bobby thinks youth today is striving incessantly for an acceptance that does not necessarily come naturally even to their parents. "Youth is out of control but seeking a sense of responsibility and direction," he stated. Bobby has discovered that whenever he shares his story with people, many share theirs with him. It is as though he is able to awaken their feelings as he relates his initial denial of what had happened and the various stages of anger with God, depression, and feelings of unworthiness and guilt. When sharing his story, he

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validates to others how as little as ten seconds of stopping to think can make a profound difference in the outcome of a circumstance. Bobby knows the impact these talks have had on his listeners.

We talked about faith and church and family and dreams. Bobby smiled with enthusiasm as he described his family. Several years after the accident, Bobby remarried. He described his wife, Suzy, as “sensitive” and “nothing short of remarkable”. He knows that was his second chance at being with the love of his life. He is the father of two boys and is a firm believer in what he refers to as the “ten second principle”. He knows that decisions we make can change everything in as little as ten seconds. Decisions like whether to forgive or not, whether to steal the idea, or the money or the credit, decisions like turning our lives over to God, decisions like whether to get in our vehicle after we have been drinking and turn on the ignition or to hand our keys to a responsible driver.

Bobby shares this principle and much more as a motivational speaker. He has a profound message, stated simply. We have a choice. We can make a decision and in as little as ten seconds we may cause something great or something terrible to affect us or someone else forever because of that decision. The option is in our hands.

Bobby tossed countless inspirational words to me that long afternoon, but I remember him quoting Galatians 6:9 and smiled as I heard his voice.

“Let us not become weary of doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

He spoke like a man who could taste conviction rather than just aspire to it and reap a harvest from a field that was once so empty he may have thought it could never produce even enough for survival.

It was a beautiful crisp February day when I first met Bobby Petrocelli, and within twenty four hours, of that meeting, I read *10 Seconds Will change your life Forever*, and have stopped frequently since and examined my own decisions about many things in the ten seconds it takes me to finalize my choices.

ONE MORE SERVING

Bobby is genuinely honest and deeply sincere. He cares about serving others and wants to leave this earth knowing he has contributed something of worth. He had a busy schedule and a new life. He did not know me or need to spend time with an unknown author looking for a story that he could tell better than any I could write. Bobby Petrocelli has been through hell, yet his heart forgave the evil that took the best parts of his life away and threatened to eat away what little was left. He knows how important it is to acknowledge everyone you meet on your path. Like his website promise, he responds to everyone who takes the time to communicate with him. Bobby is bigger than life in his love for others.

You might pass Bobby in a grocery store or see him pumping gas and notice the scars that resemble tire treads on his arm and wonder what he did to get those scars. You might have judged that he was just another wild youth had you not heard the story those scars represented. You might walk by him spending an afternoon with his sons and just see another father. You might notice Bobby and his wife, Suzy out for a walk together and see just another husband. He is that and so much more.

Bobby began to tell his story publicly at a high school on October 25, 1986. Exactly one year prior to that he experienced a blink of an eye moment that changed every plan he ever had made. Bobby made many plans for his new wife, his new life, his career and his dreams. He never made plans to become an inspiring public speaker. Twelve months before, he lost everything he ever planned, including what he thought his purpose in life might be, but whenever he finished his talk that night, Bobby realized God's purpose for sparing him that horrible night. He had everything to live for because God was far from finished with him even when he had nothing. Bobby can see in those talks that his life has prevented others from catastrophe and heartache and he recognizes that he has a valuable commodity and a priceless possession in the wealth of the experience he has learned to share. His "nothing left to live for" has given much to many. Bobby's defining moment occurred twice on the same day one year apart.

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There is a quote in his book by H. Jackson Brown Jr. (*Live and Learn and Pass it On*)

“I have learned that every great achievement was once considered impossible.”

In the less than ten seconds to read that, and shake hands with Bobby, it becomes a reality.

What circumstance or situation have you allowed to define you or cause you to reconsider who you are and why you were put on earth?

Bobby truly has gone from the darkest of nightmares, running half clothed into the street yelling for help for his life, his wife, into a light that sheds some awareness on how we can use the darkest moments of our life to make a choice, make a difference, and make an impact. Bobby knows sometimes it only takes ten seconds to choose which decision will provide the backdrop to the life we can have, or the one we might be left with, and no matter how dark and strange a place we find ourselves, we can search our soul for our life’s purpose and find the light that leads us home.

Bobby took life’s cruel taking of the one he loved and gave it a way to live on through the profound impact his life has on those who hear his story and choose to take ten seconds to reflect on the difference it might make in theirs. Bobby could have just as easily decided that life was not worth living and pulled the covers over his head forever. It might have been far easier than recovery and the road back, but Bobby accepted what resilience God gave him and chose to use what was left of his life to glorify the God who helped him survive beyond the plans he made to the plans God made for him.

Bobby and Suzy live in Seminole, Florida. I asked him what the best use would be if given a million dollars, and Bobby responded that the more he has, the more he gives away, to the needy, to programs promoting leadership to youth, to individuals in prison, etc. He continues to work as an inspirational speaker reaching youth

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throughout the country. He is living proof that sometimes we are meant to survive because we have a purpose greater than we can ever imagine and despite whatever was lost, we can be a valuable asset to others .

Bobby closed his eyes and went to sleep one night and perhaps he hoped to dream those dreams we all do about what the future would hold. He never saw those dreams become reality, but he sees God's plan for his life daily. Life was not something Bobbie could either plan or control. It never will be, but he knows the next moment can make all the difference.

You will enjoy not just his spirit but his humor, love for life and respect for being powerless and trusting in the only certain thing...that God has a plan for you wherever you are at the moment. You will feel blessed just for knowing him. You can contact Bobby via his website: <http://www.10seconds.org> or email him at: Tseconds@aol.com or Bobby@10seconds.org

And yes, Bobby still promises to answer any email that he receives. Send him my best.

You can make many plans, but the Lord's purpose will prevail. (Proverbs19:21)

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MANDARIN ORANGE MUFFINS

1 Can (medium size) mandarin oranges (drained)

1/3 C shortening

1 ½ C flour

1/2 C sugar

1 ¾ t baking powder

1 egg

½ t salt

1/3 C milk

(For topping): ¼ C melted butter

¼ C sugar

½ t cinnamon

Combine all ingredients (except those for topping) in a bowl and mix thoroughly. Bake at 375 for 15-20 minutes. Combine cinnamon and sugar. Roll slightly cooled muffins in melted butter and then dip in cinnamon/sugar mixture...Mmmm!

True stories of ordinary people who acted upon defining moments to become extraordinary. You'll never look at individuals you interact with daily in the same way again. Become someone who really makes a difference! Can be used as a workbook as well.

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