

FIVE AND A
HALF
QUESTIONS
EVERYONE MUST
ANSWER

in search of
PURPOSEFUL
IDENTITY

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TOOLBOX

TOOL #1: YOUR PERCEIVED STRENGTHS

You probably think there's some big secret to discovering your strengths. No secret. All you need is self-awareness and effort. They are in you right now. Recognizing them is critical. Strengths are your dominant thinking, feeling, and doing patterns. With proper recognition, you can enhance any strength within you. How can you recognize them? Try this:

First, write down what you believe are your strengths.

Next, ask someone who will give you honest feedback what they think of your list. They may tell you that they don't recognize these strengths in you. Ask them why. Then ask them if they see any strengths in you that you're not aware of. Do this with a few people. Be sure the people you ask are ones who love you and have your best interests at heart. Then compare. Once you've discovered some mutual recognition, begin to build on your findings.

There are several other tools that will help you identify your strengths through personality testing. They include Strengths Finder 2.0, DiSC, and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator to name a few. These can help you find your core preferences and patterns for thinking, feeling, and doing. You grow stronger when you spend time in your strengths. By directing all your energy to your strengths, you'll surely get the results you aim for more quickly. (Just keep in mind that there's a difference between skills and strengths. Skills are things that you learn over time, while strengths come naturally.) By focusing on your strengths, you become more efficient, creative, and productive. The byproduct of this is you will be happier and more fulfilled.

So how do you build your strengths? Start by asking yourself what you're doing to grow your strengths on a daily basis. For example:

- What are you reading?
- What are you listening to?
- What are you watching?
- Who are you talking to?
- What are you writing?

IMPORTANT: The content and context are what enables you to grow in your strengths.

TOOL #2: THE FIVE FINGERS OF STRENGTH

A great tool to unlock strengths is The Five Fingers of Strengths. This tool uses your own hand as a guide.

1. The Thumb: This is the hands' strongest appendage. The thumb has power.

- Identify the top strengths within you. Use Tool #1.

2. The Pointer: This finger points the way.

- How can you see the greatest strength you possess put into action in the future?

3. The Middle: The middle finger stretches out past all the others, taking risks.

- What risks do you have to take to make your strength a focal point of your life?

4. The Ring: It is quiet but paramount. The ring represents a commitment.

- What do you have to commit to so your strength can grow?

5. The Pinkie: The pinkie is the great equalizer. It completes the hand and helps hold everything together. This finger represents the little things.

- What are the little things you can change today to feed your strengths?

This tool will help you discover hidden strengths that need uncovering. The following tool will expose the habits and routines that are holding you back from progression.

TOOL #3: THE RIGHT SOIL

Where are the places you go to promote your strengths to shine? Michael Jordan's place was the court. Terry Fox's was the road. Who are the people who both encourage you and push you to be the best you? For me, it's my family and an inner circle of men who I know have my back. What I am asking is, what is the right soil that promotes your strengths, so they shine?

For some people, it's the library. For others, it's the gym. For others, it's a person, like a coach or friend. Again, you must recognize these places and people in your life so you can thrive. If you ignore or are unaware of your surroundings and influences, it's easy to plant seeds of greatness in the wrong soil and therefore never experience the growth that would have occurred had they been planted in good soil.

Try this simple tool, called The Right Soil:

1. List ten people that influence your time. Then answer these questions:

- Does this person build me up? Yes No
- Does this person care about my success? Yes No
- What does this person mean to me?

2. List five places you go that *consume* your time. Then answer these questions:

- Does this place inspire me? Yes No
- Is this place contributing to my strengths? Yes No
- Who else does this place attract?

3. Now, once you've taken an in-depth look at those questions, ask yourself this: *For my strengths to shine, what is the right soil that promotes just that?*

This tool is universal. You can do it with your spouse, kids, friends, and colleagues—anyone who can help provide the answers you're looking for. The deeper you go, the more your eyes will be opened to who and what places are aiding or hindering your strengths. After completing these tool activities, plug in what you know and watch your strengths grow in power.

TOOL #4: FIND A FRIEND

Character weaknesses and life-changing experiences can pose a severe threat to our true identity if we allow them to take root. One of the best ways I have found to unplug such weaknesses is by having someone that I can share my burdens with, a person who holds me accountable to change—a friend.

I know many of us would rather skip that part. We don't want to waste time on improving a part of ourselves that we can easily keep hidden. Sometimes we are afraid to think about what has happened in the past. The result is internalizing thoughts, feelings, and struggles, and a tendency to travel the road alone when, on either side, there are people who are willing to help. Our journey toward purposeful identity doesn't have to be isolated; we should not detach from each other. So reach out and ask a friend to keep you accountable. Take it from me. It's a daily battle, a continual surrender, when it comes to character weakness or a life-altering experience. Every day we fight to lay down our pride, our lying, our cheating, our wandering eyes, the troublesome grip of the past. I am grateful for my friends who have been there for me, to listen and keep me in the fight.

Who can I share my life with without be judged?

TOOL #5: HEALTHY WEAKNESS AWARENESS FORMULA

WHAT ARE MY WEAKNESSES, REALLY?

The truth will set you free, so let's get to it. The world is the Identity Thief's playground. Moment after moment, he will lie, try to intimidate you and hide your purpose from you, discourage you, and destroy any attempt you make at progress. One look at the Terry Fox and Nick Vujicic stories, and you know what I'm saying. A place where the Identity Thief can't reside is in a place of honesty. One thing he does want is for us to believe that our weaknesses are irreversible. However, when our strengths are working together in concert, our shortcomings are more easily overcome.

Simply put, for us to recognize our weaknesses, we must first be honest with ourselves. Then we need to engage our strengths so that we can be overcomers. Let's make some progress and figure out a weakness or two.

When asking ourselves about a weakness, we can either be honest or dishonest, constructive or destructive. The formulas below are designed for a person who is taking an active introspective and extrospective look at their self-weaknesses - be they DNA, life-altering, or character. Like the previous tools, where you investigated your strengths, the sole purpose of this tool is to help you identify your weaknesses.

There is a problem, however. People typically don't like recognizing weaknesses. Some will avoid recognition at all cost and obtain a delusional perspective on what their real weaknesses are, never truly being able to pinpoint what weaknesses need attention. Others hyperinflate their weaknesses and in the process become unjustifiably depressed because they allow self-pity into the equation. It is always wise to avoid self-pity.

There are four formulas listed below, but only one works for sure, kind of like the parable Jesus used about the seed sower and the four different types of soil. He laid out each path and the result of each one to avoid, but he also revealed the right path and soil to plant seeds in.

Step 1

The first thing to do is list as many perceived traits, skills, interests, goals, visions, etc. that you want to review about yourself. Then ask if they are a weakness and follow the formula outlines to get a true answer. (Hint: Doing this activity with someone who knows you well may yield better results.) Here are the possible formulas when asking yourself about weaknesses.

Step 2

Ask + Dishonest with Oneself = Delusional Weakness Awareness

It is delusional because, from the beginning, dishonesty with self has polluted the person's ability to see reality purely.

An example of this could be a star running back who wants to play quarterback but constantly ignores his inaccuracy and poor arm strength, all while telling himself he is good and getting better despite no true progress.

Ask + Be Honest with Oneself + Embrace Self-Pity = Depressing Weakness Awareness

Being honest with oneself about weaknesses takes humility and is good, but dwelling on them is un motivating, deflating, dispiriting, and depressing. Finding and sustaining progress amid a depressed attitude would be a daunting task.

An example of this would be a college student who fails five chemistry exams in a row. If he is honest, he will determine he is not doing well in chemistry. If he allows self-pity in and views chemistry with an attitude like “Dang, I’m going to fail this course, but it doesn’t matter because it’s just too tough for my limited mind to comprehend,” he will miss the opportunity to improve and save his GPA.

Ask + Be Dishonest with Oneself + Embrace Self-Pity = Destructive Weakness Awareness

When it comes to weakness, if you’re dishonest with yourself, then a lie can quickly become destructive. For instance, an all-star quarterback could begin to question his ability if he started throwing a few incomplete passes during practice. This is different from the running back because the quarterback’s skill has already been realized by the coaches. Now, pressure to perform and worry about failing affects the QB. He starts asking if he’s really any good or if he’s surrounded by hype-men. Feelings of doubt infiltrate his confidence, stunting his growth. If he decides to dwell on those emotions and picks apart his game, all the work his coaches are doing to build up a big-time player could be lost. If the star athlete remains in this pressure zone, he may very well find he naturally steps away from his calling and loses a huge piece of his identity in the process. The result is a destructive weakness awareness.

Ask + Be Honest with Oneself + Avoid Self-Pity = Healthy Weakness Awareness

This is the only formula that will ultimately benefit your awareness of your weaknesses.

What are your perceived weaknesses?

TOOL #6: 5 TIPS FOR PASSION

Here are some tips for discovering your passion(s):

1. **Always be hungry to learn.** Life can change in a minute, so when it comes to knowledge, take it in. The more you know about you, the more you know what you like or dislike.
2. **Always be humble.** As we pursue our passions, success will follow. You'll get good at the things you love. It's inevitable because we don't give up on what we love. The important thing is to stay humble and remember to never misuse a gift.
3. **Never settle.** Always give your best effort. Don't settle for less!
4. **Take the chance.** You indeed miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take. Be willing to take a chance on yourself. You have a great Partner on your side who wants to see you successful, but you have to take a chance and want it.
5. **If you fail, learn the lesson.** Failing isn't a bad thing. In my experience, I must say that nothing has taught me, and the professionals around me, more than our failures. Not learning from failure is what's bad. From our very first steps, to our journey through school, and finally to the career world, we have all failed at one time or another. But why did that determined baby get up and try again—and again—even after a fall? Because failure was teaching that little one a lesson: "If you want to get over to Mom or Dad, you're going to have to want it!"

What are your internal passions?

What are your external passions?

TOOL #7: THE PASSION QUIZ

When it comes to our passions, we need to realize that they take effort, risk, and productivity. In your own life, where do you see yourself sacrificing time, money and energy? Maybe on the weekends, you spend your time watching sports when you could be pursuing your passion for coaching. If you're willing to sacrifice hours watching football highlights, then you can apply that time to, say, coaching. Ask yourself the following questions and see if you can identify your passions: What am I hungry for?

- Why is it important to be humble?
- Have I settled?
- What is blocking me from finding my passion?
- What am I willing to sacrifice to make my passion a reality?
- What am I willing to invest in my passion?
- If today were my last day to live, what would I do?

TOOL #8: 5 QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY YOUR BRAND

Answering these five questions is critical to a whole, authentic, and powerful brand. Take a few minutes and answer these questions.

What do you stand for?

What does your name convey?

How do people label you?

What are you known for?

Why do people come to you?

TOOL #9: THE NOW AND SOON

Let's take some time to build self-awareness. What are you currently known for? Write it below. Then write what you would like to be known for (a vision for the future).

What are you known for now?

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.
4. _____.
5. _____.

What would you like to be known for?

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.
4. _____.
5. _____.

Think back to your passions and strengths that can help make these traits become a reality. Remember, a decision is required, and it must be intentional.

So, what are you known for? What would others say about you behind closed doors? How have you reacted or responded to the trials of life? Are you an overcomer? Here are some things I would like to be known for, and maybe you would too:

- A leader who challenges people and helps them achieve their goals.
- A parent who encourages and equips their family for generations to come.
- A person who is supportive, empathetic, and reliable to others.
- A person who creates an environment where people feel safe and comfortable to be themselves.
- An innovator who is always trying to make a difference in the community.

TOOL #11: SNAPSHOT OF YOU

The previous five questions in TOOL #8, can be powerful awareness builders when answered honestly and intentionally. If you've gone through the book and written down the answers to each question, then you've already begun equipping yourself. Take your answers and write a descriptive paragraph about what you have discovered about yourself. These questions will provide you with a snapshot of who you are today, at least in your own eyes.

1. What are your strengths?

2. What are your weaknesses?

3. What are you passionate about?

4. What is your brand?

5. What do you believe?

Here is what my Snapshot looked like when I originally did it:

My name is Joe Pellegrino. My strengths include public speaking, teaching, coaching, leadership, perseverance, creativity, drive, and vision. My weaknesses are self-confidence, writing, and detailed work. I sometimes struggle with integrity and saying no to others. I am passionate about seeing others, especially men, become all they were created to be. I am also passionate about my family, whom I love very much. I also love the game of baseball, through which I have learned so much about life. At one time, my brand was not good, but I now believe that has all changed. People who know me believe I am a man who cares very much about others and wants to see them attain purpose and success in their lives, and that I will do what I can to help them get there. I also believe people trust me and that if I say I will do something, it will be done. I believe in the words of the Bible and therefore believe that Jesus is the Savior of the world. I believe I was made for a purpose, and that is why I do what I do. I believe this because I have gone through life with me being the focus, and nothing ever worked. While I experienced

TOOL #12: FAILURE FOR THOUGHT

Take a moment and write down your top two failures in life (use some details, no one but you has to read this) and see the lessons they have imparted to you, no matter their nature, from your perspective (positive or negative).

Failure 1:

What was the outcome?

What did you learn?

How have you used this to make you a better person?

If not, how could you?

Failure 2:

What was the outcome?

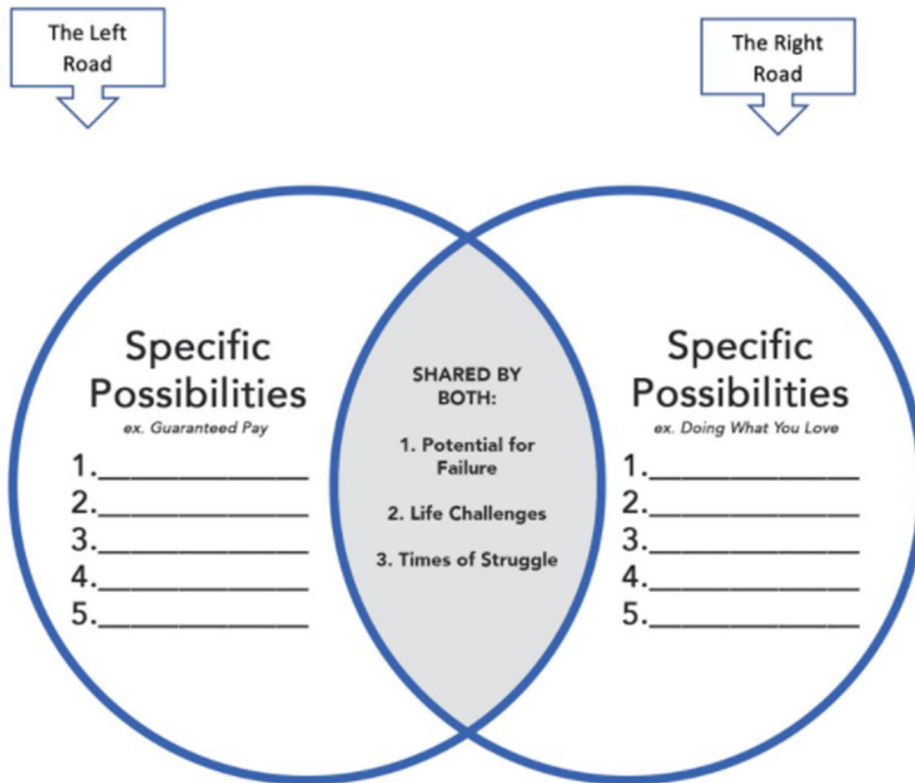
What did you learn?

How have you used this to make you a better person?

If not, how could you?

TOOL #13: TWO-PATHS VENN DIAGRAM

Below is a Venn diagram partially filled out with what I believe are unique to each road, and also those that are congruent between each road. If you're at a crossroads as to which direction to go, take an honest look at what each path offers. Put your dream—for example, producing a movie—on the right side. Now put the other option—such as accepting a promotion at CVS—on the left. Then fill in the rest.



Which road do you want to choose? Circle: *Left* or *Right*

TOOL #14: THE PURPOSE TEST

If you think you know your specific purpose, put it to the test by asking these questions:

- Does it go against the Scriptures? (see Hebrews 4:12; Psalm 119:105) Yes No
- Does this activity bring glory to God? (see 1 Corinthians 10:31) Yes No
- Is it profitable to my Christian walk? (see Matthew 16:26) Yes No
- Will this build up others? (see 1 Corinthians 14:17) Yes No
- Does it take advantage of your gifts or talents? (see Ephesians 2:10) Yes No

Now, ask God for answers and be still and listen (see James 1:5–8, Psalm 46:10). Remember, the devil isn't scared of the Jesus *in* you. He's scared when Jesus comes *out* of you. Don't miss out on, sabotage, or misappropriate your true purpose!