



# Pausing and Reprioritizing: It Changed My Life



by **Mark Linsz**  
*Co-Founder and  
Senior Managing  
Partner,  
My Next Season*

In mid-2012, I was reflecting on the past five years. At the time, I was Treasurer of Bank of America and was thinking back on the financial crisis: the summer and fall of 2008, the Lehman and Merrill weekend, the bank downgrades, and capital raises. Our family had moved twice: from London to New York and from New York to Charlotte. Due to my daughters' school schedules, I was forced to commute for about seven months with each move. My days were long and filled with adrenaline, and my nights were often sleepless as I mentally prepared for the next day or worried about what was next in the crisis.

While taking stock of my life and events of the prior years, I asked my wife Becky a question that, with full disclosure, I was afraid of hearing the answer. I asked how I had been doing as a husband and as a father. Was I spending enough time with her and our three girls? Was I around

enough? I had trepidation about how she might answer these questions, but never expected the response she gave me. Becky confided that her concern for me was that I seemed to focus only on work and our family. She went on to say that she observed my having given up time with our friends and our extended family, and this concerned her.

**Seeing my work permeate my mind and mood, she felt strongly that I needed a hobby or something (else) to engage my heart and mind, and my time.**

That conversation with Becky was a wake-up call and a gift. I found myself unable to shake her words as I prepared to retire from Bank of America and co-found My Next Season. I knew Becky was right, but how could I fit more into my schedule? It felt nearly impossible.

I felt as though I always valued relationships but, in truth, I had taken no time in the preceding five years to build new relationships or to deepen old ones. I recognized quickly, that was a part of my life I had to change. I started by prioritizing time to establish and deepen relationships with several friends. It required my

being intentional on scheduling an early breakfast, a coffee, or a drink in the evening. I had to make the time to spend time with people I cared about.

Shortly after that conversation with Becky, one of the friends that I had reconnected with asked me to go on a golfing weekend. My gut reaction was swift: I did not have the time to go golfing with friends. I had a full plate: the girls' schedules were full of things I needed to be present for, the to-do list at home was long, and, frankly, I was a horrible golfer. Thankfully, I consulted my best advisor (Becky) on the matter before responding to my friend. She strongly encouraged my going—and after much agonizing about it, I decided to say yes. I realized it was an opportunity to strengthen several relationships of importance to me and possibly build some new ones.

The weekend was a blast. The relationships that were formed that weekend are among my closest today. As a bonus, I realized that golf is a challenging, invigorating sport that clears my mind and gives me time to build relationships. (And I have gotten better!) **Continued**

As I began to think about retiring from banking, those friends helped me to think through what I needed to add back into my life and to dream about my future again. In addition to adding an occasional round of golf, I joined a couple of not-for-profit boards and began mentoring a group of young business professionals on business and faith.

It has been three years since I retired from Bank of America, and I am so

grateful to those friends who cared enough to help me through the transition and encourage me to pursue passions outside of work. My friends were there to help me think about finishing well at Bank of America and to help me process my own next season. They continue to be there for me to bounce ideas off of and brainstorm ideas as I started and as we grow My Next Season. We've shared ideas, advice, challenges . . . not to mention lots of

great food . . . and none of that would have happened, had I not paused to take stock of my life, be open to observations and coaching from someone who knew me well and loved me, and be open to re-ordering my life's priorities.

I still remember the feeling in my stomach as I asked that question of Becky. I never thought her answer and encouragement would have such a profound impact on my future.