

Engage360 Episode 155 | Perseverance vs. Endurance

Blayne Smith and Brandon Young

Tim Koller: Hi friends. Welcome to Engage360, Denver Seminary's podcast. I am your host, Timothy Kohler. Thank you for joining us for today's conversation. One of the things that has helped me in my life is to recognize that with any strong enough, why I can get through any how and part of doing this work was being able to recognize the purpose that I have. What is the purpose that I'm entering into in this experience? of life or this specific task. And with me on the conversation today is Brandon Young, graduate of Denver seminary's MDiv program and Blaine Smith, his partner at Applied Leadership Partners. And I am delighted to have these founders join us for this conversation. And they are an interesting case study in how to lead through adversity because Applied Leadership Partners was actually launched in March, 2020. A very interesting time to start a leadership development company and coming out of that work, they have now produced a book called perseverance is greater than endurance. So Brandon and Blaine, welcome to Engage360.

[00:01:23] **Brandon Young:** Thanks for having us, Tim. We're pumped to be here.

[00:01:27] **Tim Koller:** Well, to start our conversation, Brandon, I would love for you to tell us a bit about the purpose of this book. Why did you feel the need to write this resource and to publish it now?

[00:01:39] **Brandon Young:** Yeah, great question. Well, we feel like we have been given a powerful story to steward well. I guess I would start with that in saying that we've had a lot of opportunities over the past almost 30 years to lead in some of the most demanding and asymmetrical environments on the planet. We started as special operators, Blaine Smith is a West Point graduate, former Green Beret served in Iraq and Afghanistan myself. I'm a former U. S. Army Ranger. I served for rotations in Afghanistan and we went from there to health care and not just health care, but health care in a economy that was, really bottomed out in 08, 09. we went from there to taking a veteran serving nonprofit as an idea and then expanding it into, by the time we left 150, 000 members in 212 locations, helping, veterans reconnect to their community through physical and social activity. And we've done a number of things.

[00:02:40] **Tim Koller:** I mean, you, ran through that, like, it's just normal and each of these things you're naming are things that people would be like, this is like a lifetime achievement accomplishment right here. And you're just cataloging these things like it's normal. I just want to pause and go like, it's not normal. And I want to celebrate that, like, that is truly astonishing. So thank you for detailing some of those things, but also like, That's amazing. Well done for both of you.

[00:03:05] **Brandon Young:** Well, We, appreciate it. we've, we appreciate it. We've had the opportunity to do most of it together. Interestingly enough, Blaine and I served at the same time. We didn't know each other in service. We met as, folks in a large healthcare organization and kind of felt like fish out of water. And, the upshot of it all is that, over, over all this time, we've had the opportunity to really, Learn what it means to persevere. Learn what it means when you reach the extent of your endurance. And, endurance is admirable. It's very admirable. In fact, we would say that it is, it's critical. And when we think about endurance, we think about, perseverance. kind of putting your shoulder to the wheel. It's usually a marked period of hardship that you kind of have an idea that, the course, but perseverance is not like that. perseverance is for prolonged periods of change and uncertainty, which we would call more adversity than hardship. And, and we feel like it's timely for this topic to be brought into the conversation because We do think that there is a

difference between endurance and perseverance, and we have had the opportunity to come alongside a lot of really great leaders doing a lot of great work, meaningful work, all over the United States, and much of the time what we find is that frustration starts to really expose the cracks and many times I think a lot of leaders are reaching the extent of their endurance. They've kind of run the play. They've made the hard decisions. They've had the hard conversations. And they're kind of getting diminishing returns. They're really not getting what they're hoping to get. They're not hitting that growth. They're not, They're not seeing the, the richness of what they hope some of those hard decisions and hard conversations would bring and Blaine and I just kind of took a look at that and said, I think maybe you've reached the extent of your endurance and it's time to persevere. It's time to really transform to really kind of hit that next peak.

[00:05:11] **Tim Koller:** So if we are understanding the issue in front of us incorrectly, or if we're approaching it incorrectly, we're going to find ourselves beginning to burn out in the midst of it. So understanding the difference between endurance and perseverance is the title of the book, and then you unpack it in some really brilliant ways. So how should we understand the distinction between endurance and perseverance?

[00:05:33] **Blayne:** I think some context on the timeline is valuable here. So. We launched our business in March of 2020, not expecting there to be a pandemic. And we had to just kind of gut it out for a little while and try to write blogs and be generous and take what we could get there for a little while. And our goal for the business was to provide people what they actually wanted, what they were asking for and what our clients and prospective clients were saying to us in late 2020 and early 2021 was our business is doing okay. revenues are okay. Profitability is okay. But our people are really struggling. And what we saw was tons of leaders, tons of organizations that didn't know where the finish line was. And this really messed people up during COVID, if we can remember that. Brandon and I have had the benefit of going on the Unknown Distance March. We've had the benefit of training and working in environments where they intentionally hid the finish line from us. And we had to learn to settle in and stick with it when we didn't know when it was going to be over. Most of the world has not been exposed to that kind of environment. And I think COVID forced everybody into that and it made people nuts. And so what you had was, we're going to be back by Easter. Or we're going to bring people back to the office on July 4th. And then maybe it's going to be in the fall. And then it turned into, we don't know when this is going to be over. We may never go back to normal. And that really Jolted people. And what happened was people started asking us, How can you help us to understand that? How can you help us to get through this period that we're in, not knowing when it is going to be over? And I think that was the key thing that really struck Brandon and I, as we looked around and we saw a bunch of people that were trying to just grid it out, try to put their head down and get through it and kind of white knuckle their way through covid, so to speak. And what we saw was they were just running out of gas. Mhm. And that I think was where the big idea pop that, Hey, we've, got to illuminate this concept of perseverance for folks and convince these leaders and these people to stop, admirably just gutting it out and to take a step back and realize that they may actually have to adapt, transform, grow and make peace with the ups and downs that this path is going to take for them. so I think that was really the big thing, because when we talk about endurance, we suggest that when you get to point B. You're just kind of a more exhausted version of the person you were at point A, whereas with perseverance, it's actually quite different. You go through that long road, you weather the ups and downs, and the person that you are at point B is actually a different person. You've had to change to grow. We love the word become. You have had to choose to become the person that you needed to be in order to meet this changing and lengthy road that you were going to have to go on. Look, I am all for gutting it out. I am all for putting my shoulder to the wheel and getting it out, but that only gets you so far. And there are circumstances where that works and there are others where it doesn't. And I think we just found

ourselves in a, circumstance where, Ooh, people think that's going to work, but that's not going to work. And let's help them try to understand that.

[00:08:47] **Tim Koller:** That's so powerful. And one of the examples that you draw from is your experience as you were seeking to enter into special forces and the kinds of environments that you were placed in. And part of the rigor of that is being able to dig deep into And be able to understand the purpose that is driving you.

So can you speak a little bit to how purpose shows up in the midst of this perseverance idea?

[00:09:11] **Blayne:** Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I think it's absolutely critical that we know what it is we are ultimately trying to achieve or what purpose it is that we serve in our life or in our business. And when we're really clear on that, we can kind of put it up there on the summit or as a bit of a north star that can guide us. And so when we're a little confused or turned around or frustrated, We can look up, we can recognize that and remember to keep at least moving in that general direction. If we're not clear on that, we're going to become over, overwhelmed by events pretty easily. And my anecdote from Special Forces selection is just, it's just too hard. It hurts too bad. And you're going to have a moment where you're, out there in the middle of the night by yourself in the swamp, and you're sitting on your rucksack and you can't find your land navigation point. And you start to bargain. You start to reason. With yourself and you say, you know what? Maybe this isn't for me. Maybe I don't need this. Maybe my family wouldn't like it. If I were a green beret and I was gone all the time and that voice creeps in and then you punch out, that's because you're thinking too much about what's right in front of you. And you're not thinking nearly enough about why it is you actually need to do this.

[00:10:22] **Brandon Young:** we make that distinction. we draw on a lot of our experiences from our time in special operations and, land navigation is one of the themes that you will hear coming up a couple of times as you go through this book and what land navigation is essentially, you get a map and a compass and a little plastic protractor and a bunch of grid coordinates and you have to plot them on a map and essentially the task is go find stop signs in the woods in the dark. Good luck. No technology. You got 5 hours. Make sure you're back within the allotted time. And if you don't come back in the time, then you fail. And so you're out there and one of the illustrations that. That we use in this regard is, there's a terrain feature called a draw and a draw is essentially kind of a small valley where, you know, the, where two hilltops will meet and there's water that runs through it. And it's often a lot of dense foliage, vegetation and whatnot. It's always dark. There's literally always mosquitoes there. It's always disorienting and you always get tangled up. And those are the moments where you can kind of sit on your rucksack. lost, stuck in that draw and decide that this isn't for me, or you can maybe pick your head up and orient towards that North Star and that purpose. And one thing that Blaine and I share all the time with leaders is, look, the truth is that there are no life epiphanies in the draw. There are only exit doors. Now, if you want to take the exit door, that's up to you that is definitely up to you, but let's not make any mistake or try to bargain ourselves into believing that we've just somehow struck a life epiphany. If you feel like this maybe isn't for you, or maybe, you need to do a course correction or a mission change, so be it. Get through that draw first, and then you can make that decision.

[00:12:20] **Tim Koller:** It's a brilliant insight because we have this idea of rationalizing things away, and you're encouraging us to actually dig deeper into our purpose in the midst of difficulty so that On the other side of the difficulty, we may actually have been transformed. So that idea of becoming so to dig into our purpose and to be able to be willing to have a lifetime of change and growth is a somewhat radical approach. Because There are so many ways in which, especially in leadership

conversations, we're trying to manipulate other people to get what we want. It is rare that we're taking the time to actually do this introspective work of like, well, who are you? What's your purpose? And when you meet adversity, how are you going to respond? So I'm curious now, multiple years into doing this project, Applied Leadership Partners. Are you finding that the clients you're working with are growing and, Succeeding in light of doing this work. What are some of the ways that working with these companies has transformed even the writing of this book?

[00:13:26] **Blayne:** I think it's a good question. And I mean, I'll say this somewhat tongue in cheek, but. When Brandon and I started, our first metric for success was, does the check clear? Right? We didn't get fired, so they must have thought we were okay. And then the second metric of success was, do we get invited back? And I actually say that one quite seriously, which means, did we go there and entertain them for a couple hours and tell some good stories?

And they're like, yeah, that was cool. And they write us the check, but we don't really get invited back because we entertained them, but we didn't really change them. We didn't transform them. and most of our work still to this day is repeat business. we grow and move throughout organizations and get invited back to speak to different audiences or run a longer program. And we take that really seriously. And that makes us feel really good because that, to me, at least, is an indication that they're finding real value. In what we're providing and, Brandon and I, think are good storytellers. I think we're good speakers, but if it's really about you it's not about us. And so if we can't give you concepts and principles and frameworks through which you can apply your leadership practice to actually make your world better than we've really failed at our job. And so I think that is the biggest thing is to help these organizations Build a shared language around leadership so that if 10 of us are sitting around the table, we all know what the heck we're talking about when we say the word empowerment, and it's

not just this, sugar coated flowery word that we're all in favor of, and can we actually put it in play in a way that will likely work. And when people do that, it makes a big difference. and so I think that's really the key to success more so than like. having some big transcendent moment where they realize who they're supposed to be in this world and change their life. I think it comes down much more to, can we talk about the things that matter most to our business consistently?

And do we have a way to apply those? And then winning as it turns out is fun and cures a lot of what ails companies. And when they start seeing results, they're like, man, there's something to this. That's

my ticket.

[00:15:40] **Brandon Young:** that's right. And we shared three different vignettes in the book of three different organizations that we have served, from, multinational division of a multinational large healthcare corporation, to a couple of middle market organizations that are, regional. And national in both the finance and the insurance sectors and the thing about it is, that you'll see it and from some of those vignettes, but you'll also see it just when we, talk to them day to day, we, hear some of those words coming back to us, like, hey, we're up against the ridgeline right now where we've just hit the ridgeline of adversity.

I feel like I'm in the rock slide right now, but I know that we're gonna bottom out in the valley. We'll get on the climb and we will get to our next hilltop because we're realizing that there is no escalator to the top guys. Thanks for helping us understand that we know there's going to be ups and downs

to get to the top and then it's going to take a little bit more from us. We see it in the effectiveness with the results we see it. I mean, some of these organizations have had literally year over year record breaking performance years for these organizations. And one of the most, just again, it's, a little bit silly, but it just makes me giggle so much is, we'll get pictures from some of the leaders where they'll take something that we'd shared or talked about, or something that just came up as a part of the workshop that we're with. And they'll put it on shirts. We had, one of the leaders send us a picture of him. He got a made up for his whole team. That said, no one is coming, as if just to, remind us, like we're not looking for the quick fix or the easy answer. We're not looking for somebody else to come and solve the problem for us. We have on this team right here, right now, the answers that we need for us to persevere through adversity and be successful on the other side.

[00:17:37] **Blayne:** Yeah, I just want to tack on to that. I think the biggest thing, honestly, that we bring to Tim, sometimes these people is do we just remind them that they're normal and that things are okay. I mean, people get twisted up and they take it so seriously and they're so committed to their business and their people that when things are not going well and they're stressed, it wears on them tremendously. And Brandon and I usually within our first conversation, just let these people know, and we're saying it in earnest. Hey, look, what you're going through does matter and it is hard, but we will figure it out. And this is a pretty normal thing to be going through at this phase of the game. So you're just like everybody else. You're totally normal. we'll see this to the other side. And sometimes I think we could just leave after saying that and they would have a big lift in their business. but then we, can help them actually work through it. I honestly think that's the biggest thing is just reminding leaders, Hey, you're not alone. This is not a novel thing that you're going through that's unique to you. You're a good person. You're trying hard. This stuff happens and there is a way through it. And they're just like, Oh, well, okay, if that's the case, then I'm in. Tell me, how we can get better here.

[00:18:44] **Tim Koller:** That's encouraging because part of, I think the mystique of leadership is that we can get overwhelmed very quickly in any number of contexts of how many things are gonna change external to the organization, how many things are changing internally to the organization. How do I keep up on all of these things? And as I read your book, one of the things that I found very helpful are a variety of frameworks that you have created. So not only are you integrating from really great. Books that already were written. So you can think of some of the references to seven habits of highly effective people to self differentiation and managing leadership anxiety by Steve cuss. And some of the frameworks that you're referencing as you go through are really helpful and they summarize them accurately and well, but then you're also creating your own unique frameworks, which I found very interesting and very helpful. And I appreciated that. Partly because you have been in worlds where I haven't, I've never been in special forces training, but you make the book accessible for me because every time there is an acronym, you explain what it is. Every time there's an experience, you're giving a footnote that helps me to understand what the context is. And so, even though I haven't gone through that training. Reading the book. I was like, Oh, I can see how this applies into the environments where I have been, but then you're helping give us some language around this. So one of the things that you wrote in there was related to leading through adversity. And so you have this framework of change, uncertainty, acceptance, choice and growth. And it sounds like these are things that because of your work in your own personal success. The organizations you've helped succeed and now working with these variety of companies to help them succeed. These are the things that are emerging from that work. So can you tell us a little bit more about this change? Uncertainty, acceptance, choice and growth.

[00:20:35] **Brandon Young:** Yeah, we'd love to. and, really, I appreciate that, Tim. we wanted to give people something to hold on to. when they're confronted with the adversity of life, which we all will

be confronted with. And so change, uncertainty, acceptance, choice, and growth is essentially this framework that we developed for, what persevering through adversity looks like. So it starts with change. Things come at you fast and often. Mostly you don't expect them, right? Which brings about a sense of uncertainty. You become uncertain in your training, in your abilities. Do I have what it takes to lead through this? And uncertainty has the tendency to bring about a basic human emotion, which is fear. Now we can use all the words that we want to use to, to make it sound nicer. Like I'm just a little anxious. I'm just a little bit frustrated. I'm just a little bit this or that. It's fear, okay? And fear becomes the friction that holds us in place. We get frozen by that fear, unsure of which way to go. What do I do? What decision is going to impact things the best way? What's going to happen on the other side of that? And it's that murkiness. It's that unknown which creates that, that sense inside of us. And so, That's where we come back to, one of two things is going to make you move off your mark. It's either going to be pain or purpose. You really get so uncomfortable, frozen in that fear, that you will start to make small concessions. these small sidesteps, let's say. That's where you start to see maybe some decisions that are made that aren't really in keeping with your values prospectively, sidesteps, and it kind of leads you down what we would say is the path of least resistance. Or, Purpose will be that transcending North Star that will make you take one more difficult choice at a time, and that's when you start getting into the acceptance aspect. You really, when you're in this process, you begin to accept what you can control. And what you cannot control you start to shrink the world down to understanding. Here's what I can influence. Here's what I can, be prepared for and stop trying to predict what is going to happen or predict a false finish line. Then you have to make a choice. And choice is the crucible right here. You now have a feeling of what you can and cannot control. You have a feeling of maybe what the next best step you can take is, and you get to choose in that moment to be the leader that the situation calls for, the leader that the team needs. You get to choose to become things like Your values, your ethos, your creeds, all the things that you say you are, you get to make choices that actually demonstrate this is who I am. And that is where growth comes on the other side. The perseverance payoff truly is growth. It's not just that do hard things and that you accomplish through adversity. You will accomplish things through adversity, but it's that you become somebody who can persevere through adversity and you can take that next rock slide, that next unexpected change that comes at you, because ultimately it's gonna happen. That's life. right. Yep. Yeah.

[00:23:52] **Tim Koller:** a rock side or the valley? You've got the climb and so you're giving us some metaphors of being able to reframe the experiences that we're having So rather than just I'm going to continue to grind this out and do more of the same and get more exhausted There are alternate ways of being able to approach this. So I love hearing things like oh in the midst of choice You If I'm able to make those choices to claim my agency. growth is going to occur on the other side. But you had a very interesting line. This was from earlier in your book, but you are talking about leaders who are having a never enough approach. So you say leaders who subscribe to the quote unquote never enough approach will find themselves overburdened and alone with the When they hit their mountaintops, which I thought was interesting because I thought you were going to say when you hit the valley, you're alone, but you're actually saying when you achieve, when you reach the mountaintop, if you have a never enough approach, you're going to be left alone. So help us understand why this idea of celebrating is so essential for a leader.

[00:24:59] **Blayne:** Yeah, I'll dip in here. I know Brandon has some strong feelings on this, so I'm going to leave room for him, but I mean, I'll just admit that I'm a bit of a recovering achievement junkie. And so I have a lot of firsthand experience at. Working really hard to accomplish something that was very important to me and was very difficult to achieve. And then within a nanosecond of reaching that achievement, I'm like, whatever, onto the next thing. And I always thought that was a positive attribute because I was never going to be someone who rested on my laurels. I grew up in sort of this Midwestern Protestant household where, you keep your nose to the grindstone. And the

worst thing you could ever be is braggadocious, right? and I just embodied that. And, what I realized over time is that everyone is not that way, and not only is it not probably healthy for me to be that way, but I can't lead that way because people that helped me to achieve things and we're on my team for those big pushes deserve to be recognized, celebrated and embraced. And we need to acknowledge that we just did something really great together, and we need to take a breath before we move on to the next thing. In a bigger sense, the lesson for me in this was we can't presume to know how other people feel in these moments, and we need to lead them as they wish to be led, and not just the way we wish to be led. And if you are a hard charging, achievement minded leader, it is very easy to get to the hilltop. Barely high five yourself and then just be running back down the hill on the other side into the next valley to go slay the next dragon and your team has their hands on their knees up at the top of the hill going like, what the heck, man? And that will leave people feeling very disenfranchised and they may not choose to join you on that next one. Even though you've gotten to the mountaintop this time, they may say like, hey, I'm not down for that. Again, it's really important.

[00:26:53] **Brandon Young:** Yeah, and this is one of the real reasons why we also felt that this book needed to be written and that these, this story needed to be told in this way, because there's so much good out there. There's so many great books and podcasts and lots of great content out there about, doing hard things or, like figuring out how to achieve when things are against you. We felt very strongly that we could add to the conversation, not just you as an individual doing hard things, but leading teams through hard things, leading teams through adversity, not just ourselves. and that's really kind of another fold to that idea of, Hey, look, you can make it to the mountaintop and, we get it. we've lived that life, right? and I would tell you this right now that, many times that I got to that mountaintop, I looked around and realized that I was utterly alone. And that is not what, I was going for, but it is what ended up happening. It is what I ended up achieving, and we wanted to maybe open the conversation up a little bit more to talk a little bit more about what it's like to actually lead people through adversity, lead the team through adversity to not leave, one of your critical teammates behind on that long march because you could get there to the top. But if you don't get there with everybody, I'm not sure it's quite as worth it, and I can tell you that in my own personal life, I am sure that it wasn't worth it many times.

[00:28:33] **Blayne:** Brenda, I thanks for mentioning that because I remember when we first talked to our publisher and our agent about writing a book and I was 100 percent opposed to being a couple of former special operations guys writing a book about how you can be tough and get through hard things. I almost didn't even want to write this book. If you recall, I was like, we've got to have a better idea than this because I just thought it was a little cliché and a little bit of a too well worn path. And we were very adamant about, we need this conversation to be about it. Effectively leading teams of people through these types of scenarios, because you're right. It's one thing to, do all this stuff and just be the biggest, toughest guy in the world and get through hard things. It is an entirely different thing to, to shepherd a team of people that you care about through that and to do it sustainably to where you can actually get them back on your team to do it again. One of the things that we talk about a lot is You know, a measure of personal and professional success for me is would somebody I've worked with in the past go out of their way to work with me again? And again, that's a little silly, kind of like our metric for success for the business about getting invited back, but it's kind of the same thing. And if you look around and we don't need to name names, there are people in everyone's life that they could point to who are very smart and very capable and have recruited people and gotten them to help them do hard things. And then they have to recruit a whole new team for their next venture because they crushed everybody and made them all mad and maybe, didn't behave in the best way they could have. and my goal in my professional life, at least, is to get as many of these wonderful people I've had the privilege of working with to come work with me

again someday, because hopefully it was a good experience. And we all kind of grew as people, in the pursuit of what we were trying to do commercially or professionally.

[00:30:28] **Tim Koller:** That's beautiful. And there was a really compelling story. There's a number of compelling stories, but there was a very compelling story. Blaine that you shared of one chain of command was saying we're going to go into this area and we've got these outcomes that we desire and you're sitting around the room observing that there's a lot of people who aren't saying anything. And you had the courage in that environment to have a bit of an active vulnerability to go like, Hey, guys, let's have a conversation about what we're being asked to do. And let's have a very honest conversation about these reservations, because we care about each other. And because we care about each other, we can't hold back. So can you speak a little bit to as a leader, why it's so essential to hear from your people in that way?

[00:31:15] **Blayne:** Yeah, that's a really powerful anecdote for me and the way we talk about this often is kind of a reframe of the open door policy. and that it's not okay just to tell your people that, Hey, my door is open and you can come talk to me anytime you want. You have the right to come talk to me if you have a concern. it actually needs to be much more of a pull. Where you say, look, if something is happening that is concerning to you or you have misgivings about our mission or any of the things we're doing, you have an obligation to come talk to me and tell me about this. I expect you to come to me with a concern because what we're doing matters too much. In our case, in Afghanistan, it was far too dangerous. our teammates were like brothers, and it was concerning to me to sit around and look at a room full of folks who really cared about each other and cared about the mission and had suffered some serious losses up to that point. And to just feel that they weren't cool with what was getting ready to happen, but yet they weren't saying anything. And I felt very alone, if I can be honest, and I felt a bit like a failure as a leader in that moment. You But the only thing I really could do to try to rectify that was to say, fellas, what's up? if this doesn't feel good to you, I need to know why and let's just call time out. And I will call the task force and tell them we're out until we get this squared away. And I think that it doesn't solve everything overnight, but it certainly move things significantly in the right direction.

[00:32:46] **Tim Koller:** It's such a beautiful illustration of a caring leader, someone who is going beyond just I was told to do this, and therefore I'm doing it. But to actually have the sense of these people matter, and I'm going to make choices to make sure that our voices are represented in this. So throughout the book, I was just so encouraged to read stories of the courage that was displayed. But also thank you both for the vulnerability that you show in concluding Telling these stories because I know it couldn't have been easy first off to merely have lived that life, but then to share it to the audience was really compelling for me. But also, the vulnerability encouraged me to think through some of the lenses of how am I reflecting on my own leadership experience rather than just moving past it and continuing on. But to go, okay, Oh, that shaped me in some way. So I just want to say thank you for the vulnerability that you both displayed in writing what you wrote. It was very amazing to read. So thank you.

[00:33:45] **Brandon Young:** I really appreciate that, Tim. And, Blaine mentioned a few minutes ago that, the idea of us writing kind of like another, former soft guy barrel chested freedom fighter, book and even speaking about that kind of stuff, wholly uninteresting to us, to be perfectly honest. and yet what we wanted to do is, is maybe open up that story in a little bit of a more vulnerable way to show people. Some of the things that are going on the inside of that, and one of, one of, one of our real dear mentors, also another Denver Seminary graduate, Will Cunningham, has said to me many times, that the job of a writer is to open up a new window into an old truth.

And what we endeavored to do here with these stories that we, endeavored to steward well, is just to use our story to open up a new window into an old truth that relates directly to your leadership and to your circumstances. Because in the end of the day, we're not asking anybody to be a ranger in the Hindu Kush mountain range of Afghanistan area in 2003. We're asking you to look at, what, you're up against right now and figure out how can you persevere well, how can you care for your people? Well, how can you care for your heart well in the midst of all of this and I just, I'll just add this is that, we do, share a number of anecdotes and in the first two chapters of this book, we open up with really two stories from our lives. myself as a ranger leader on my third combat rotation in Afghanistan, Blaine shares a 2009 experience with him as a, Special forces O. D. A. Team, a commander in Anaconda at Fob, Anaconda in Afghanistan. And, I will say that, I've known Blaine for a long time. We've worked together in a number of different settings in a long time. And I know him, well. He doesn't, he's very much living that life of, I'm not going to live a boisterous life or pound my chest or anything like that. And I'm telling you right now, when you talk about vulnerability, When I received the manuscript of the chapter in which Blaine really opens up his heart and tells a story about what it was like being a leader, in, in harrowing circumstances, number one, I closed my number two, I wiped the tears off of my cheek and number three, I called him and just said, thank you. I mean, what a gift that, Blaine has given to us. and you want to talk about courage. I would just encourage anybody if you really want to know, what is at the heart of true, authentic leadership and, leading through, persevering through adversity, Take a read. It will touch you and in the fields. And, yeah, I'm just proud of this guy right here. And I can't, I won't miss the opportunity to brag on him in that regard.

[00:37:07] **Blayne:** Thanks, buddy. This is why everybody that's considering starting a professional services business needs to have a partner and a really good one, because that kind of encouragement is what will get you through. and Tim, you were saying before we went live and recorded here that you had recently read the final chapter of the book. and the chapter is called Go Together. Because one of the things that when we got to the very end of the manuscript and we were thinking about how to kind of land the plane on the book and summarize it, we thought of all different kinds of ways we could do it. and it finally occurred to us that we need to remind people that if you lose the plot on why you're doing this, it's all going to be for not. And you need to find the people in your life that you care about the most that you love. That you're on this journey with and remember to stay really close to them throughout this entire process because if you don't, you may not be very happy with where you end up. because the, achieving the thing that you thought was so important to you, might not taste so good if it costs you your marriage or your friendship or your partnership or things along those lines. and so. Embracing real adversity. Part of that is just remembering that if you can go through it with people you really care about and love and trust, it's, going to be that much better. And you can, learn to settle in and just be patient and be faithful and stay with it. Be consistent. If you're on that path with people that you really love, it doesn't make it easy. but it certainly makes it feel much more fulfilling and meaningful. and then when you get to the summit, it's, all the sweeter. So I think I've really changed my thinking on most of this, to be much less about how do I get through this? How do I get from where I'm at now to the other side of this, so to speak, and rather to think much more about how do I embrace this? How do I. just savor this even when it's bad. And if I can do that with my business partner and my wife and my kids and the small group of people that I have around me, I know it's going to be okay. And that's, another reframe that at least works for me.

[00:39:34] **Tim Koller:** That's so beautiful. That is absolutely fantastic. I appreciate the reflections that both of you have brought during this conversation. And as we bring it toward a close, I want to ask, was there any question I have not asked you that you wish I had? Is there anything that you are looking at and saying, I would love to have this idea present in this conversation?

[00:39:57] **Brandon Young:** Ooh, good question, Tim.

[00:40:02] **Tim Koller:** Yeah, I know it's not like podcast friendly to drop that bomb 42 minutes in, but

[00:40:07] **Brandon Young:** No, I think it's actually a really good question. One thing that just kind of popped, that I'll just go ahead and snatch that thought and roll with it, and I know I'll leave some space for Blaine to, to also, jump in, is, when we talk about growth in this book, one of the key distinctions that we make is that oftentimes the course or life tends to give us what we need, not what we want. And that's one of the key things when we think about this idea of what does growth actually look like. We explore what that means. We talk about blind spots, so often when we're going through adversity, it, it's typically not that any type of crisis creates new problems. It's more that it exposed preexisting problems. We saw that significantly during COVID, during all the lockdowns and things like that. But, it's in moments like that when we are, confronted or in some ways affronted by our blind spots that we get to choose how we are going to respond to that, life has given us what we need, not what we want. And I would just, add that to the context in the conversation because that really starts to then. When we are willing to embrace it and engage it and go through it, as Blaine has said, together with the people who we love and who love us, as imperfect as that might be, that's when we start to really grasp the nugget on the other side, that, that, that light that's hidden in the dark, and that's wisdom. And we make a strong play for how important wisdom is. in this book and how critical wisdom is for leaders today in a very complex fast moving world that is rife with misinformation, disinformation, and access to any information that anyone would like to have at any point in time. Information is important. That's not the only thing we need, though. We need understanding and we need wisdom, and we also talk quite a bit about that, in the course of this book.

[00:42:28] **Blayne:** Yeah, I don't have much more to add. I love this conversation about knowledge, understanding and wisdom, and we could go on for many days, I think, and with the three of us talking about that. But I think that is ultimately where we are going with our practice and probably what we will write about next in long form is this idea of we're kind of moving from the knowledge economy into the wisdom economy. and if we can't learn to apply good judgment and discernment and patience and decency and all of these things, in real time, we're going to have trouble. Brandon and I have talked a lot lately about the difference between being great and being good and how maybe what many of us are going to need to do to tackle this next chapter of life, this next, array of challenges is to think less about being a great man or a great business and think more about being good, and see where that gets us. So that's just musings that I'm kind of noodling on right now. But I think there's so much there, and there's so much opportunity, by the way, I want people to be encouraged that. If you are a good, decent, hardworking, consistent person, there is limitless opportunity for out there for you, and I don't want anyone to be persuaded otherwise. If you can write handwritten thank you notes, if you can shake people's hand, if you can look them in the eye, if you can under promise and over deliver, if you can truly care about people, the marketplace for that, may not seem super clear right now, but it is wildly abundant. So don't run away from it. I would say, lean into it even harder, use all the technology tools you want as tools, but the fundamentals of being good, I think, are what is going to make this next generation of leaders. Great. Let's

[00:44:16] **Tim Koller:** I'm already ready to preorder the next book. That is so fantastic.

[00:44:21] **Brandon Young:** Well, we gotta get this book sold first so that we can earn the next book. Cause we're ready to write that Wisdom Economy, my friend.

[00:44:27] **Tim Koller:** And in your first book, you say nobody drifts into achievement and that growth doesn't come from good intentions. It comes from good follow through. So listeners, if you are enjoying this conversation, I would encourage you to order perseverance is greater. Then endurance by Brandon Young and Blaine Smith. And as we close out our conversation has reminded me of a scripture passage from second Timothy chapter four, where he's closing out his argument at this letter that he wrote. And he says, they will turn their ears away from truth and turn aside to myths. But you keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. For I am being poured out like a drink offering and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. And in hearing that passage come from Paul to his person, he's mentoring Timothy. I was just encouraged to go. You Digging into our purpose and understanding our purpose is something that I think we're being invited into. But if we want to learn and grow, I'd encourage our listeners to go pick up this book and enjoy it as much as I have. So Brandon Blaine, thank you both for blessing me by this conversation and our audience because of the good work that you've produced in this. Thank you.

[00:45:43] **Brandon Young:** Thanks for having us, Tim.

[00:45:45] **Blayne:** Yeah. Sincerely appreciate it.

[00:45:47] **Tim Koller:** Friends, we're grateful that you've chosen to spend some time with us. If you get the chance, please leave a rating or review wherever you listen to podcasts, and please send any questions or comments to us at podcast@denverseminary.edu. In addition, visit denverseminary.edu for more information and resources about Denver Seminary, such as events, degree programs, and other episodes of Engage360, including full transcripts. We're grateful for your interest, support, and prayers. Until the next time, may the Lord bless you.