

Brent Beshore - adventur.es - Transcript

Tim Mullooly: Welcome back to Living With Money. This is Tim Mullooly. On today's episode, I am joined by Brent Beshore. Brent is the CEO and Founder of adventur.es. Brent, thanks for coming on the podcast.

Brent Beshore: Hey, thanks for having me, Tim. I really appreciate it.

Tim Mullooly: First, let's start off with just a brief background about you personally, how you got started in your career, what some of your passions are, and how you got to where you are today.

Brent Beshore: Yeah. Well, so I grew up in Joplin, Missouri and went to school on the East Coast, then came back to get my law degree and my MBA at Mizzou, where I met my wife who was getting her PhD. We never left. We live in Columbia, Missouri now.

Let's see, my passions... I used to play golf, and tennis, and I had a bunch of hobbies.

Now, my hobbies are my three little girls. I have a four-year-old, two-year-old, and a newborn, so that is a full-time... everything outside of work is full-time focused on them.

Tim Mullooly: Right. So, you founded adventur.es back in 2007. Can you explain for the listeners, just what the primary purpose of the company is, who you serve, and why you ultimately decided to start the company in the first place?

Brent Beshore: Sure. Well, I think every entrepreneurial journey is a lot messier, and everyone wants to draw a straight line between point A and point B, and it's a pretty squiggly line. But, the reason why I started it is because I was looking for something to do, and figured I'd give it a run. Ultimately, led into this crazy journey where today, we partner with family owned businesses, and help them transition, and then provide a good long-term home for the company.

So, we're technically a private equity firm, but we operate very differently than a traditional private equity firm in almost every way. We serve sellers of companies who are typically looking to retire, or make some major life change, and partner with them, like I said, to transition the business, and keep leadership in place, and really try to not disrupt the business, which I think is pretty easy to do in a lot of these transitions.

Tim Mullooly: Yeah. That's great. I feel like what you just said, "Not really disrupt things too much." I feel like that might be a unique take on a company coming in to buy another company is that, was that a distinct difference that you wanted to keep intact?

You wanted to keep the culture of the business, and not really disrupt the day-to-day things too much?

Brent Beshore: Yeah. I mean I think there's two reasons. One is the way that we want to live our lives, and then two is the economics of it. In general, I mean we want to keep things as simple as

possible, have win-win relationships that we form across the board, and I think one way in which you can get sideways inter-personally pretty quickly is by taking things that people have done, and done successfully. I mean if we're buying, partnering with the business, it's been successful. We don't do turn arounds. These companies are doing quite well.

So, from that standpoint, I think it adds a certain level of simplicity that's unusual in the business. And then economically, if the business is performed really well over 10, 20, 30 years, I mean heck, we looked at a company recently that had been in business for 114 years. It was unbelievable. If they've been doing things a certain way for a long time, and they're doing well at it, why in the world would we come in and shake things up?

The business is performing, and we just let them continue to perform, and hopefully augment, and help them along the way. It should generate nice returns for everyone involved.

Tim Mullooly: That makes sense. If it's not broke, don't fix it, right, yeah?

Brent Beshore: Exactly, exactly.

Tim Mullooly: So, I read on your website that you guys believe that boring is beautiful in terms of businesses that you choose to partner with. Why did you feel that boring is the way to go?

Brent Beshore: Yeah, well so, boring to us is funny. We actually don't find our businesses boring at all, and we don't think that people involved in the businesses find them boring at all. It's a term that... it's almost like we joke around about using the term boring because when people think of, whether it's a swimming pool builder, or a glass and glazing manufacturer, you think of, "Oh man. That's not a sexy business. It's not a hot restaurant. It's not a film company. It's not an ad agency." Those types of things.

And we think that the more boring the business, the less intrinsic competition there will be for those customers.

So, if you invite a plumber over to fix your toilet, I don't think many people say, "You know what? After watching him do what he does, I really just want to become a plumber." Right?

Tim Mullooly: Right.

Brent Beshore: There's a certain beauty to the insulation that a boringness creates in an industry, and we like those attributes.

Tim Mullooly: Yeah, definitely. And would you find that boring tends to lead to more stability, in terms of the way business gets done for them?

Brent Beshore: Correct, yeah. I think boring in many ways is a sort of step-by-step slow build process, that the idea of what goes up quickly, likely will come down a lot faster as well. And I think that when you look at these businesses that have grown to be a substantial size over like I

said, half a century maybe, they tend to have structures in place that insulate them from competitive forces and a lot of the things that would cause them to shrink rapidly.

Tim Mullooly: Right. Totally, it makes sense. So, I also read that your firm likes to partner with family owned businesses. Was there a specific reason that you chose to focus on businesses that are family owned?

Brent Beshore: Well, most of the businesses in our segment of the market, so we partner and acquire businesses between typically, three million and \$15 million of what we call owner earnings. So this is what it truly feels like to sit in the owner's seat. These are substantial companies and to build a company like this, we're usually working with, sometimes the first generation but oftentimes the second or the third generation of the family to like I said, create a good long term home for the business. So, the idea of multi-generational families owning businesses is something that feels very natural to us, and the way in which we go about it which makes us very different from traditional private equity, feels like, much more like a family is acquiring the company and partnering with the company long term. As opposed to a big bad private equity firm.

So, and in fact, all of our LPs in our first fund are all families. And so it's a really nice transition from family owned businesses to be continuing to be a family owned business. Just in a different structure.

Tim Mullooly: Right, okay so we've talked about why you chose "boring businesses" and family owned businesses. So, what's the process like when you guys invest in a new business? How involved does adventur.es get in the day-to-day, and what are the typical main goals when you start working with a company?

Brent Beshore: Yeah, well let's maybe start at the last question first. So the first thing we think about is do no harm, right? The last thing in the world we want to do is come in, disrupt the business, harm the business, frustrate the people. Look, I mean, it's relationships, right? And relationships are always going to be messy because people are messy. Me included, right? And we try though, to be very careful with how we structure relationships. We try to be very kind, and generous, and thoughtful towards the people we work with. And then separate from that, I mean every smaller company needs help in a variety of areas. One of the things we talk about quite often is small businesses don't stay small on purpose. There's usually reasons behind why they stay small.

And so, what we're doing is, when we're getting to know the company, and before we partner with them, what we're doing is we're trying to diagnose, what are those areas that we think are the lowest hanging fruit to be able to provide more resources, or maybe a different way to think about things. I mean, oftentimes, the interesting part that we've learned is, most people who have been running businesses successfully for a long time know what needs to be done. Oftentimes, there's a lack of resources and usually it's just people, to be able to execute on the decisions that they know need to be made.

And so, we're working with them through that transition period to really identify those areas, where we can maybe step in with resources that are unusual in our segment of the market. We like to focus on marketing, advertising, lead gen, and sales as being kind of a first point usually, that allows the company to prosper. I mean, every business would like to solve to more customers, and so we're always trying to think of ways in which maybe we've seen across the portfolio, people doing things successfully to find and acquire those new customers and maybe bringing some of those best practices to bear.

But, it's always down through the leadership of the company. So, we're never coming and "taking charge." It's always pushing down through the leadership and in a conversation. It's all consensual if you want to think about it that way. We're never telling the portfolio companies what to do. It's always offering up resources and help, and then them choosing when and how to use that.

Tim Mullooly: That makes sense. In terms of day-to-day operations, you guys aren't getting really that much involved at all. It's more suggesting ideas and letting them take it and run with it from there?

Brent Beshore: Yeah, I mean I would say, it's probably a little more involved than that. We're certainly not running the companies. So when you think of day-to-day or week-to-week, I mean I would say somebody from [adventur.es](#), I mean there's 13 of us at the [adventur.es](#) level working with the companies. Somebody from [adventur.es](#) is talking to somebody within the portfolio company, at least once a week if not more often.

So, there's a lot of back and forth information being pushed and pulled. What I would say is, our job is not to do the leadership's job for them. Right? They have a job and we have a job. Our job is to help them be the best they can be, and to amplify their success and being resources to bear. So, when things are really growing fast, or we think there's an opportunity to make some significant changes, we'll be more involved. But if it's smooth sailing, I mean the last thing you want is for somebody like us to come in and harass somebody and take up their time, and frustrate them. Look, we try to help if we can be helpful.

Otherwise, like we encourage them, "Go live a good life. We're going to live a good life. Be in touch when you need to be in touch. We'll do the same."

Tim Mullooly: Yeah. That makes sense. And like you were saying before, trying to minimize that disruption when you start with a company, so that makes sense. Your firm, and I personally love this, your firm has a strict no asshole policy. Would you care to elaborate on what that policy entails, and what you found are some of the benefits of having that policy?

Brent Beshore: Yeah, well so maybe we could back up and talk about it, because I think this is an area that can easily be misconstrued as condescending, or holier than thou. And by no means, the redraft of that policy that I think I did last year or the year before, I talked explicitly about how, look, there's only two types of people. You're either an asshole or an asshole in recovery. And there's really no other people, right? And by the way, if you don't think you're either, you're definitely an asshole.

So, I mean it's interesting because really what we're doing with that policy is acknowledging that there's going to be frustrations and frictions in any relationship. And we're dedicated to resolving them in a kind, thoughtful way. When we talk about the policy, what we're talking about is we want people who are committed to working out differences in a productive manner, as opposed to doing what most people think of as being an asshole.

Which is being short-sighted and quick tempered. Incredibly short-term, self-interested. So, we try to encourage people to think long term. To subordinate their own self interests, including this, includes at adventur.es, and not trying to score and win. Don't win arguments, right? Do what's in the best interests of the company.

So, I think it's more of a holistic philosophy. I mean, what are the benefits of it? Gosh, life is a heck of a lot better when you can get along and enjoy the people that you work with.

Tim Mullooly: And that's probably the only benefit, but it's a huge benefit. I mean, not having to worry about a tense relationship, or, "Gosh, I don't want to talk to this person because they're always being an asshole." That kind of thing doesn't exist when there aren't any assholes.

Brent Beshore: For sure.

Tim Mullooly: So, and I think it's... would you say it's pretty much just maintaining an adult, mature relationship with another in a professional sense, and not really getting too emotionally connected to problems? And kind of just in a calm sense, handling your business?

Brent Beshore: Yeah, I mean I think it depends on your definition of adult. We continue to see more often, and it never fails to surprise me, how often people act really, really poorly. And how often ego and pride flare up, just as disconnects from reality. So, and us included, too, right? We're our harshest critics and we encourage everyone in our organization to really hold each other accountable. When we slip and fall, we're going to pick each other back up, but we're certainly not going to ignore and pretend like we didn't slip and fall.

Tim Mullooly: Right, and that makes sense, and that kind of ties into what you said before, is life being messy. For you personally, how do you try and approach your own life on a day-to-day basis? Kind of knowing that life is messy. Everyone has messy moments. How do you try and minimize the messiness in a sense?

Brent Beshore: I think being even aware and focused on how quickly things can get messy, and it's not surprising you are really things that I've learned in my career and in my personal life as well. I mean, I'm blessed with incredible co-workers and a family that loves me, roots for me, but also holds me accountable and calls me out on my crap.

We've all got plenty of it, me included. I think that's all you can ask for is just continue to invite people into your life that speak truth, and that are, they got to be for you, right?

So, if somebody speaks truth into your life or what they say is truth but they're not for you, it's going to get quickly distorted. Really turn into schadenfreude or some variation, right? And so

I'm careful with who I let in, but once people are in and I trust them, I really try to rely on what they're saying to me and helping correct me.

Tim Mullooly: Would you also say that having those people around you, but then also like you said, having the self-awareness in a sense to know that life is messy, and also going back to the last question, knowing whether or not you're an asshole or one in recovery, how big of a role do you think self-awareness plays in everyone's day-to-day life?

Brent Beshore: Well, the challenge with self-awareness is, it's sort of the inverse of blind spots, right? And the problem with blind spots is that you don't know by definition because you're blind to them. So, I think that's the challenge is, how self-aware is somebody? I don't know. I mean, I think there's very little correlation between how self-aware people think they are and their actual self-awareness. I think the only way to be self-aware is to surround yourself with people that you know and trust and that will call you on your crap. I mean, literally, there's no other way. Look at them now, I don't know how else to solve it.

Tim Mullooly: That's true. I mean, if you think about it, you have to be self-aware about being self-aware. So, it's tough. So I totally agree. Having people around to kind of keep you grounded and keep you self-aware in a sense, definitely is the only way to get there.

I read in your 2018 Year In Review letter on your website, that you said, "People are the ends, not the means." I feel like a unique take on how a business operates and thinks about their people and their products. Do you want to talk about why you have that mindset and how you approach helping businesses with that viewpoint in mind?

Brent Beshore: Well, yeah. I mean I think there's really only two ways to look at life. Either people are the means to whatever ends you want, and if you have that mindset, then people who are useful to you and helpful to you, you'll like them as long as they continue to be helpful and useful. And as soon as they're not helpful and useful, you will get angry at them and maybe potentially even try to harm them. And certainly at the very least, discard them. And I think that's just a really challenging way to go about life. I'm not sure relationships should be based on the utility, especially the temporary utility of someone.

And so, I think the other way to go about life, is to look at people as the ends themselves, and look at it as all of them experiencing a journey that we're all in together, and to be able to pour into others and treat people with dignity and respect, regardless of how they treat you. Regardless of their, maybe their current or even future utility, is an incredibly deep topic. But I think how it manifests it in the business is that we just truly care about people. We care about the people at adventur.es.

We care about certainly the leadership teams at the companies, but beyond that, we care about the, more of the rank and file employees. We care about the vendors. We try to do right by our customers, and also by their communities. I mean, we try to be encouraging to them as leaders of these companies to reinvest back into the communities, which I mean look, you can make an argument for sort of being a Lexus to tote bill, self-interest, rightly understood model, where the more that we reinvest back into those relationships, the more they'll bear fruit for us, but I don't

think that's the true purpose behind it. we believe we should do that regardless of the economic benefit, whether it's short term or long term.

Tim Mullooly: Right. I totally agree, and it just so happens that it does usually produce a better result in the end, but definitely I'd have to agree. It's all about the relationships. I read about one of the conversations that you had with Charlie Munger and Warren Buffet. For you, what would you say were the best thing that you took away from each of those conversations with those guys?

Brent Beshore: Yeah, well first of all, they were both incredibly kind and generous with their time. I got to have lunch with Mr. Munger out in LA, and then dinner with Mr. Buffet up in Omaha, and both of those conversations were almost all off the record, right? I have disclosed a tiny bit about what was in there in the annual letters, but really and just in general, they were incredibly hospitable and curious, and excited about the work that we were doing, which is very similar to the work they did early in their careers. And I got to have dinner with Buffet, in particular getting to talk to him about Sanborn Maps and Dempster Mill, and how they recruited Harry Bottle to come into Dempster Mill, and all that was just such a fascinating conversation.

It was kind of all the things I had ever wanted to know about the really early years, and then Mr. Munger was, he pounded me with questions. I mean, I felt like it was a machine gun fire. And you talk about sweating, I think I probably sweated out through my palms, a lot, let's put it that way.

So, in general, my takeaway from the meeting with Mr. Munger was, at 94 years old which was when I got to chat with him, he was 94. He was as sharp as ... I can't even believe he would be sharper than that. His mind was unbelievably sharp, and he was still very intellectually curious. Basically he was as intellectually curious as you could get. I mean, he fluently transitioned between climate change, to economic policy, to political philosophy. I mean, just interchangeably and fluidly just transitioned around, and really this idea, that he had brought up about this lattice work of connectedness between these big ideas, I mean is something he plays out in his own life.

Mr. Buffet, I said probably the biggest take away from that dinner that I said in a letter was, this idea that price is my due diligence, which was a result of me sort of continuing to pound on him over and over again, ask the same question like five different ways about, he really operates from a due diligence perspective. And finally, it was kind of the show stopper, and he said it a little bit tongue in cheek, but I think he was dead serious about it was, "Price is my due diligence. So, the lower the price and the pay, the less due diligence I'm going to have to do." And it's totally true, and I don't think many people appreciate how powerful that sentiment is. And certainly even just that one comment, certainly has impacted the way we think about things, and the way we go about due diligence. It's just making sure to meter things to the price. It's all price dependent.

Tim Mullooly: You look at the success of someone like Warren Buffet and you think there must be some insanely complicated way that he goes about finding his companies and his business, and it's eye-opening to hear something like that. And it's just as simple as, "Price is due diligence." It's almost like it can't be that simple.

For those two guys, I mean you said about both of them, they're still even at further along in their career obviously, than a lot of us, they're still curious, and they're still constantly learning. Would you say that, that's something that you try and practice in everyday life? Just consistently learning to try and get better?

Brent Beshore: I mean, absolutely. Probably one of my favorite parts of my job is that I'm literally learning about new industries and getting up to speed on new sub-sectors of those industries constantly. I mean, I've personally looked at over 10,000 deals and over time, you get the idea that, "Well, maybe less of it's new." And I got to tell you, every single week, I review some information on a company where I learn a little something new in a little nugget, or something completely new like, I didn't even know the industry existed. And it's just, it's incredibly exciting. And so, yeah, I mean I think there's, once you get the bug to continuously learn, I don't think that's something you can ever shut off.

Tim Mullooly: And it's got to be beneficial. I mean, there's so much out there to learn and it can only help, it can't really hurt to know more about a bunch of different industries.

One of your posts from 2016 was one of my favorite actually that I've read. It's about what impresses you. Why would you say that you get the most impressed about the little things?

Brent Beshore: Well, I mean, it's so in general, I always try to watch what people say versus what they do, and I think that it's really hard to get the big things wrong if you get the little things right. If somebody's nailing the small details, thoughtful and kind, and sort of put together in their smaller activities, whether it's just having emails be proofread, as dumb as it sounds. Or, a handwritten note as a thank you. It's just the little things that truly impress me, and I've kind of learned to look at those as the canaries in the coal mine.

I mean, look, we all get busy and we all get distracted, and we all get tired, and we all mis-type things. But in general, I think you can tell a lot about how somebody operates their life by what they do in day-to-day normal, hour-to-hour mundane details. I think all those things roll up into more noticeable and more important things long term.

Tim Mullooly: So would you say those little details go a long way in terms of when you're evaluating a deal or looking at a potential business?

Brent Beshore: Oh, for sure. I mean, we're... the easy part about deals, especially in our segment of the market is the financial side. I mean, these businesses are beautifully simple. I mean, they're very straightforward what they do and the financials are what they are. The hard part is assessing the people. And so absolutely, we're constantly watching what people say versus what they do, and how they think through issues, and how they present themselves. And I mean, look, it's not an issue where you're trying to play gotcha. But there's no fun and no sense in doing that. It's more of just, does the whole picture make sense? And ultimately can you see, if you project forward on the trajectory that these people are on, can you see them being good long-term partners, and treating us fairly, and having it be a good deal for everyone involved?

Tim Mullooly: Right. So at the end of last year, you published a book called, *The Messy Marketplace*. First, congratulations on getting the book published. Do you want to tell the listeners a little bit about what the overall message of the book was, and the main reason why you decided to sit down and write it?

Brent Beshore: Yeah, so the main reason why we decided to write it was because, we're big fans of using content to scale conversations. So, we think about everything we write, even this podcast, as being a way to scale conversations with people. So, if somebody can listen to this and it not require a one-to-one, hand-to-hand combat, it just scales much more nicely.

So, with *The Messy Marketplace*, the way we thought about it is, we wanted a book that was like the first five to seven hours of conversations that we want to have with every single seller. And their families, and to kind of prep them around all of the emotional baggage that they're going to bring in, and we're going to bring in, and all the trials and tribulations that are going to go on. I mean, there's about 400 decisions that have to be made through an acquisition process, and it's something that people think that, "Oh, you get the price and the very broad terms figured out, and the rest of it just comes easy. That's for the lawyers."

No, it's not, and there's a lot of dynamics between the employees, the leadership of the company, the communities, the vendors, the customers, and really the family and friends around the seller. I mean, these are usually big numbers, and it changes people's lives and that's amazing, and you think about the upside of that. There's also a lot of downside, and people's feelings get hurt, and who's in the know, and who's not in the know.

And so, we just wanted to give sort of a level set expectations for every seller, and by the way, *adventur.es* is mentioned once in the book in the forward, and not mentioned at all throughout the rest of it, because we didn't want this to be a business card.

We didn't want this to be a sales pitch, right? In fact, we tried to take *adventur.es* out of it as much as we possibly could, and said, regardless of whoever you choose, here are the dynamics. And here's who the buyers are, and here's what the buyers' interests are.

And here's all the things you need to know about the terminology used in deals. We want educated sellers. I mean, that's the interesting part. Most people think that the less educated people are, the better it is, because of information asymmetry. The only problem with that is that especially in our model for investors, like we're partnering with these people post close, so I they suddenly wake up six months after we do a deal and say, "Wait a minute. You guys screwed me over," like we're screwed, too, right?

Tim Mullooly: Right. Yeah.

Brent Beshore: So, it's not helpful for us. We really just try to be transparent about who's got what interest and how things really work in the deal world. And so, we've gotten great feedback so far. It's certainly sold way more copies than I ever dreamed at this point, and yeah, I don't think we'll ever probably write another book. I say that and maybe we will, but it was a heck of a

project. From the time that it got done, the manuscript first got done until the time it first got published, gosh, I think was over a year. It was just brutal.

Tim Mullooly: Wow.

Brent Beshore: So, anyway, yeah, but we tried to put our heart and soul into it and make it worthwhile.

Tim Mullooly: Yeah, you know you said you've gotten some great feedback on it. Have you had any direct correlation between someone reading the book and you starting to work with them and it having it, have that direct result of what you were intending, to have a more educated seller? In terms of the process so far?

Brent Beshore: Oh, heck yeah. Oh, yeah. Heck yeah. It's been wonderful. We now give it to everyone who contacts us and say, "Okay, here. Can you go read this? Here's your homework. Hate to give you homework to start off the relationship but here's our perspective on things. Here's how we think the world works. Go read this and then let's chat." And what it does is, it accelerates the conversation and not just in hours, because it's like the first five to seven hours of conversations. But what it does is, it provokes sort of the big issues that any seller or leadership team's going to have, and gets those brought up to the surface immediately and allows us to really address them. And either move one direction or the other much more quickly.

Tim Mullooly: Yeah, that's great, that it's having that immediate effect on some of the deals that you've been doing. One of the subsections in the book, it talks about deal killers. You said you've looked at over 10,000 different businesses and different deals. What have you personally found to be some of the biggest deal killers out there. Is there one that kind of sticks out in common, more than the others?

Brent Beshore: Well, I mean, I would just say in general, the biggest deal killers are people. I mean, when you don't disclose things you should disclose. When you lie, when you cut corners. When egos flare up, and you get dug in on a specific issue, it's going to be people that kill deals. I mean, rarely is there something about the business perspective about, even like a lawsuit or a tax issue, I mean all that stuff can be worked out through the contracts. I mean, what really ends up making deals fall apart is just the friction between people, and unfortunately, hence the name, The Messy Marketplace.

There's a lot of messiness. Everyone involved is a human, right? And we're all messy and we all have different views and imperfect views of the world, and where those collide is where deals fall apart.

Tim Mullooly: Right, yeah. And that makes sense, because like you said before, the financials in terms of numbers with the companies, they are what they are. So, really I feel like the main variable there would be just the people and if it's a good fit or not with your business.

Your pinned tweet right now on Twitter is a thread that you did, I think about a year ago. And it talks about 10 Big Ideas That Changed Your Life. You started out by saying, this was an

incredibly hard question to dive into, but do you want to tell the listeners a little bit about the first couple, those big ideas that kind of changed your life? Because I really enjoyed reading that thread and some of the ideas kind of hit home for me, too.

Brent Beshore: Yeah, I mean, I'd be happy to chat about them. So, the first one I talk about is this idea of the Imago Dei. And this is really, we talked a little bit earlier about our people, the means or the ends. And for me, this is the rooting, like the true root cause of why I believe that we should treat people as the ends and not the means. And what it means is that, the Imago Dei is this idea that we are all made in the image of God. And we are all indelibly created with this inherent value and worth, that is independent of behavior and beliefs.

So, kind of said differently, everyone matters, and we should treat people that way. And so, when it comes to looking at somebody who's a lawyer or maybe is opposing council, and it's easy to vilify them, and it's easy to not get them any slack. And instead, it's a person. It's somebody who is made in the image of God and who I should respect and care for, and treat well regardless of how they treat me.

Tim Mullooly: Yeah, I feel like that kind of lends back to what you were talking about, about just the relationships you have with people and how important they are, in terms of doing business with other people. Just knowing that we're all humans and we're all connected in that sense. And just having a better outlook in terms of dealing with people one-to-one.

Brent Beshore: Yeah, exactly. I mean, I'm happy to tackle any of the other ones, I mean, there's 10 of them so I don't want to...

Tim Mullooly: Right, yeah.

Brent Beshore: I couldn't roll through too many of them.

Tim Mullooly: Yeah, no. If you wanted to maybe just share one more, and then I'll link in the show notes, too, to the Twitter thread if anyone listening wants to go check out the rest of the 10.

Brent Beshore: Sure. I mean, I would say the other one's that really sort of in the same vein as the Imago Dei is this idea of serving versus being served. And one of the most unusual ideas, I remember when I first came across this, and it really kind of sunk into who I was. This idea that, it's a paradoxical concept that the more you serve others, and serve others in a self-sacrificial manner, the better their lives go and your life goes. And so, you have to do this with no expectation of reciprocity and it's so counter cultural, right? Because everyone is always about like optimizing your time and optimizing your life, and how much you're going to get out of it. And sort of zero sum game, and this just completely inverts it, and says the way to live a great life, is what you can give to others.

And how the positive impact you can make on other people's lives.

And of course, my faith obviously, the exemplar of Jesus is the definition of this, right?

Self-sacrificial, but I think it sometimes can get caught up in the sort of 30,000 foot in theory idea, but in practice I guarantee you, just as a listener you, Tim, should go ahead and try it. Just go serve people and what does that feel like? And it's going to feel incredible, but only if you do it truly for them. So, if you are trying to serve people to have them thank you, or to appreciate you, it just doesn't work. It feels crappy for everyone involved. And people can tell when you're not doing things truly for their benefit. And so, the only way it works is if you're truly self-sacrificial and you're expecting nothing in return. But when that happens, it changes, it transforms your life. It's incredible.

Tim Mullooly: Yeah. I feel like the hardest part of that for people is probably not wanting anything in return. Because like you said, it's all about people get caught up in like the ROI, like what's in it for me? Yeah, I definitely feel like not wanting anything in return is probably the hardest part for a lot of people.

Brent Beshore: Well, and to kind of explore that just a little bit, if you think about it, if you're doing it with an expectation of something in return, then you're really using that other person as the means to your own end, right? So this goes back to the other thing we discussed. Are the people the ends or the means? If they're the ends, you can do stuff just for them, with no expectation of benefit, right? But if you're using them to gather praise, to make yourself feel better, to get them to give you something down the road, to deepen your business relationship, people can tell. This is something, you can always tell when somebody's like, "Hey, how can I help you?" And really the implication is, "How can I help you so you will help me?" Right?

Tim Mullooly: Absolutely.

Brent Beshore: And so, it's actually just incredibly straightforward. Right? I mean just go try to do stuff for somebody who even can't do anything for you. That's the best way to test it, right? Are you doing something for your benefit or for theirs? Well, do stuff for people who can never help you out. See how it feels.

Tim Mullooly: Yeah, definitely. A couple months ago, I know my brother Casey had mentioned that you sent him a lot of books, which he really appreciated. Kind of piggybacking off of that, what are one or two of your absolute favorite books of all time?

Brent Beshore: Okay, well so this is, I'm going to be truthful when I say it, and I have to bring up something that it sounds weirdly proselytizing when I say this. But I, hands down, think from the Bible, Old and New Testament as Christian, have had the most impact on myself and those around me of any book I've ever read, by a mile. And part of it is, people have a pretty limited view if you've not spent much time in the Bible, of what the Bible really is. The Bible is not only for a believer, what we feel like is God's revealed reality, but it's also this incredible collection of poetry and advice. I mean, if you go back with the Old Testament and you look at Proverbs, I mean, it's an incredible collection of wisdom. And they actually call this, a wisdom literature of the Old Testament.

I mean, if you go back and read Proverbs and Ecclesiastes together, it is the most incredible pairing. If you say you're can only read a couple things for the rest of your life, I'm probably going to go back to Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. It's absolutely amazing.

And so, a lot of the things that I read in business books, a lot of the conversations I have with people where they're like, "Oh, there's this incredibly big idea," I'm always like, "Okay, great." When they tell me about it, I'm like, "Wow, that's actually in the Bible." Like, it's incredible that it's in there, right?

And so I'm not saying this to say, even if you're not a believer, even if you think that there's a really, really good chance, or you're convinced that there is no God, that's totally fine. That's up to you. I totally get it. I was there at one point in my life as well. I'm not trying to say, "Go read the Bible," to sort of change your belief system in that way. I'm just saying objectively, the depth of the Bible and what the stories, and the poetry, and the literature, and the big ideas, they're all in there. And just like by far, it's had the most impact on me.

And so anyway, I mean some of the books that I sent to your brother are a couple of my other favorites. One of them on the fiction side. I think I sent him *The Moviegoer*, and *Go Down Moses* I think were the two fiction books I think I sent him. Both of which are just... Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer*, and then Faulkner's *Go Down Moses* are just two of my favorites as well.

Tim Mullooly: Right. Yeah, one last question for you Brent. I like to wrap up all the episodes with this question. Whether it's a personal or a professional thing, or maybe it ties into both a little bit. What's the best piece of advice that you've ever received? Big question, I know.

Brent Beshore: Man, that's a tough, as Italians say, "That's a tough one." I mean, yeah, I may have to go-

Tim Mullooly: I always like asking people that because it gets the wheels turning in their head. Gets them thinking back to all the things they've heard in the span of their life.

Brent Beshore: I'm probably going to be, yeah, I'm trying to go back. The George Carlin quote's the one that just pops into my mind, that, "Don't sweat the petty things and don't pet the sweaty things." I think that's probably the summation of all life advice packed in there. And letting things go, and not getting involved in situations that you clearly shouldn't get involved in. I mean, that combination's pretty potent, so I think I'll probably just leave it with the late, great George Carlin.

Tim Mullooly: Yeah.

Brent Beshore: Well, hey, I really enjoyed the conversation. This is fantastic.

Tim Mullooly: Yeah, thanks for coming on the podcast, Brent. I really appreciate you taking the time.

Brent Beshore: Of course. Looking forward to it again, sometime soon.

Tim Mullooly: For the listeners out there, we'll link in the show notes to adventur.es website, so if you want to poke around on there and read a little bit more about Brent and the company, and we'll also link to the book that we mentioned as well, *The Messy Marketplace*. So, thanks for tuning into this episode of *Living With Money*, and we will catch you on the next one.