

**12@12**  
**Two Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Days**  
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You may have seen or heard advertisements for the recently released movie *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good Very Bad Day*, especially if you have young kids, and some of us might have read the children's book from which the movie gets its title as was read when we were kids.

There is definitely something that grabs our feelings about terrible, horrible no good very bad days. Sometimes this takes the form of wry gallows humor and other times we are impacted in more serious and intensely thoughtful ways. What I want to reflect on for a few minutes is how horrible no good days can actually be the doorways that open onto unexpected new vistas in our lives.

In the last dozen years, I've had two notable very bad days that stand out in this regard. For those of us who've worked in the cyclical oil business for some years, one of my two worst very bad days was an experience that may be familiar to you. In 2002, after surviving through eleven almost annual layoffs at the company I worked for, a dreaded company-wide reorganization and reduction in force led to the termination of my position. For most of us being let go from a job, especially when it comes unexpectedly, has some pretty devastating emotional impacts. For folks, like me, who found a large part of their whole identity in the professional position they loved, being involuntarily terminated, even if there is a generous severance package included, strips you of your identity and puts a big hole in your feeling of worth. On a terrible horrible no good very bad day like this, it is hard to imagine that anything good, let alone better, could come from what has just happened to you.

I found myself in a fog of disorientation, fighting off an engulfing dark cloud of depression, but I also felt determined to not let these things

defeat me. The first two things I did within 24 hours of the bad news were to visit with two very trusted people in my life to seek their wisdom. One was Tom Douthit, our senior pastor here at BridgePoint, and the other was a close friend who had recently retired from Shell after 30 years as a geophysicist. I confided to both friends a long-standing but unacted upon desire I'd had ever since college to be involved in some type of vocational ministry. I bounced the idea off of Tom Douthit of volunteering my services for a trial period to serve as a ministry facilitator on the church staff who could lighten the administrative and logistics load of the pastoral team. Tom was excited about that idea and now, over twelve years later, I have enjoyed a very fulfilling position doing a type of vocational ministry that fits my skill set. Also, in 2003, the geophysicist who was the second person I visited with, approached me about working part time as a geological engineering consultant for a small company he was consulting for. This gave me the privilege of also working part time as the General Manager of that small company and doing the engineering aspects of oil prospecting that I have always loved. I would not have had the courage to make a door-opening career change on my own and had I not had that "Terrible, Horrible, No Good Very Bad Day." I would have missed out on the joy and fulfillment of working with my great co-workers and doing things I love in two different arenas.

My second notable horrible, very bad day happened on the afternoon of August 18, 2007 while working at the small oil company. At about 3:30 that afternoon, with no advance warning whatsoever, I collapsed in a sudden cardiac death event. The downtown EMS personnel got to our office through downtown traffic in an amazingly fast 10 minutes, but that is a very long time when your heart is not beating, even with CPR being administered. Upon seeing my dark blue complexion and hearing how long I'd been down, I'm told that the EMS personnel visibly went into a "going through the motions" mode, fully expecting to pronounce me dead at the scene. But amazingly, when they shocked me I immediately began to revive and by the time they got me to the waiting

ambulance on the street, I was sitting up and visiting. The ambulance driver could not believe this was the person he'd been hearing about over his radio. It turned out I have a very rare probably genetic propensity to have a "migraine" occur in a particular artery in the heart with the constriction triggering ventricular fibrillation. The condition is thankfully easily treated with medication, and now I'm even more secure than the average person with a built in shocker for insurance. So, how did this terrible very bad day end up making my life better?

I've been living a wonderful God-given bonus round for over seven years so far, and there are a couple ways life has become better than before. First, I've gained a much greater appreciation of what it means to live life one day at a time. Especially during the initial months after my episode, I didn't really know how many, if any more days there would be for me. I felt a special thankfulness for the blessings of each day and also gained a perspective that things we might worry about out in the future don't exist in the present and may well never happen anyway. Second, for me as a Christian with an abiding confidence that I will spend eternity with my Lord and Savior, and having effectively "died" once already, there is a sense of the importance of living in a way that I'm ready to greet my Maker at any point. There is also a gigantic relief and joy in knowing that the end of this physical life need not be dreaded as a terrible horrible no good very bad day, but viewed as the doorway leading to an even more amazing new vista.

So my two worst horrible very bad days really proved to be two of the very best days in my life. They led to deeply enjoying and appreciating being alive moment to moment and doing what I most love in this life. They also reminded me that the ultimate terrible horrible day of our death can actually be another doorway to the very best imaginable outcome.