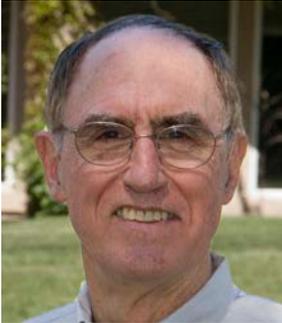


# *A Brief Autobiography*



My name is Doug Hignell and to describe myself today, I will tell you that I am a lover of God, the husband of an awesome woman for over 42 years, father of five and grandfather of 8, Chairman of The Hignell Companies with approximately 180 employees, committed to physical exercise and good health, friend to many, and I hold an MS, MBA and PhD from Stanford University. This is some of the very good news.

To place that reality in context is to paint the picture of a life that is in progress. While some days my passion for God controls my life, some days He is far from my mind. I struggle with negativity towards myself and with not fully experiencing His love for me. I was taught by my family, the church and culture to perform. Performance was the key to everything and because of that I still struggle with believing that my worth is a function of my production. My first marriage ended in divorce after 12 years with a significant impact on my 3 children from that marriage. This is some of the not so good news.

Bringing those two realities together, I am an imperfect man in my 70s who desires greater intimacy with God and others; who is slowly learning to live in dependence upon Him rather than my own gifts and abilities; who wants to fully understand and live from the Father heart of God rather than performance; and who wants to demonstrate the Kingdom of God wherever I go. In the process I have remained teachable with an ever increasing desire to experience God's presence and power through my life. With that summary, let me tell you a little bit more about the story that God is writing in my life.

I was born in Oakland, California in 1943 to parents who came from a poor and dysfunctional background, but who were committed to making life better for themselves and their family. By working long hours and having unusual wisdom they began to succeed financially. When I was 4 years old we moved from Oakland to Alturus, California when Dad purchased a cattle ranch. It turned out to be too isolated for Mom so we moved to Chico, California when I was 5 and Dad formed a company to build single family homes. His company eventually built approximately 1,000 homes in Chico.

Mom was raised in a very strict denomination in which her father was a pastor. Her free spirit clashed with the many rules and restrictions, but in the midst of it she loved God and raised her children to pursue a relationship with God through Jesus. Dad had some church background but it was not at the center of his life in my early years, so Mom was the spiritual leader in our home and raised us in the same strict denomination she grew up in. Though I committed my life to Jesus at an early age, my relationship with God was based on rules and regulations. Outside of my Mom, the first 31 years of my life can be characterized by not having any spiritual mentors to help me understand the incredible grace available in Jesus and the love of a heavenly Father. I was taught that if I sinned, forgot to ask forgiveness, and Jesus came back I was not going to heaven.

Insecurity, feelings of not fitting in, and the lack of good friends characterized my years through high school and early college. After high school I attended the college attached to our denomination in the Midwest for two years. My insecurity and loneliness led to my being married at 19 and then returning to California State University, Chico (CSUC) to finish my undergraduate degree. Our first child was born 10 months after we were married. After I graduated from CSUC in Civil Engineering we spent four years at Stanford University where I obtained a Masters in Civil Engineering, and an MBA and PhD from the Stanford Graduate School of Business. By that time we had 3 girls.

Upon finishing graduate school at age 27 we moved back to Chico where I formed a business with my Dad. He had retired from home building and was willing to work with me to help start a new company. As I look back, I believe that while my move back to Chico was motivated by a desire to live in a smaller town and come back to my roots, it was also indicative of my ongoing insecurity and the feeling that I didn't match up to others, the same sense that had led me to marrying at such an early age.

Working alongside my Dad, our company prospered but my personal life didn't. I had spent my whole life finding my worth in my production. If I produced then I had worth and if not, then I did not. I started working summers at age 12, had a real estate salesman's license at 16 working selling new homes, obtained a multi-engine airplane pilot's license at 20, graduated from a prestigious university with three graduate degrees on almost a full ride scholarship by 27, was a 50% partner in a successful business and drove a Corvette. From the outside it looked like I had life all worked out. But at age 30 my internal life was a mess and my relationship with God was almost non-existent. My wife and I began to explore New Age ideas. I

began to drink and smoke and ride motorcycles way too fast. I had given my life to be the best at whatever I tried and it turned out to be a false god.

God had other ideas for me and used a series of events to get my attention. In July 1974, at age 31, it became clear that my marriage was ending. It had been damaging to both my wife and I. After we separated, I retained the custody of our girls. For the first time in my life I had to accept that I had failed at something significant and could not perform my way out of it. This became the pivotal moment in my life. I realized that I had to make a significant paradigm shift or my life was going to continue to be a wasted and painful life.

Through a quick series of events I began to realize the unconditional love and acceptance that Father God had for me, a love and acceptance not tied to performance. I had messed up big time and deserved judgment and instead He gave me a new life. Just before my wife left her first cousin, Kaylinn, came to visit from Indiana. As the girls and I were on our own Kaylinn volunteered to stay on a year as a nanny to help with the young girls. I returned to my roots and Kaylinn, the girls and I began to attend Neighborhood Church of Chico. Knowing that my independence had turned out to be a false god I recommitted my life to God and began to earnestly pursue a relationship with Him. In July, 1975 Kaylinn and I were married and continued to raise the three girls; talk about the grace of God! Once our three girls were out of the home we adopted our two boys Andrew and Ryan, in 1988 and 1989. Our boys have taught me a lot about the Father heart of God. Though raising them has been challenging at times, my love for them has never wavered and in fact has grown stronger, just like God's love for me has never wavered.

The prodigal son story could also be called the prodigal father story. A loving God ran to me in the midst of my pain, suffering and performance and set the stage for a new life, a life I didn't deserve. A life blessed with a wonderful wife and 5 healthy children. He put a new love in my heart both for Him and for others.

Age 31 was the tipping point in my life. Prior to that age I didn't have any spiritual fathers but since that time my life has been filled with spiritual fathers and I have become a spiritual father to many. God brought one spiritual father after another into my life: Ken Backlund (our pastor in the early years of my returning to God), Rich Sprenkel (our now retired company pastor who was with me for 35 years), and three men associated with The Navigators (a Christian discipleship ministry), Mike Bedient, Dwight Hill and Jerry White. There have been many other spiritual fathers as well.

God has provided a peer network of close friends who have deeply impacted me, challenging me to become all that He intended for me to become. One key network has been what we call our "covenant group". It includes one couple from Colorado Springs, and two couples from Seattle. Approximately 25 years ago we committed to help each other end well in our relationship with God and with our mates. Our commitment includes meeting for two 3-5 day get-togethers each year, once in the spring and once in the fall. We have been able to keep this commitment almost every year. We have also spent some longer vacations together. These are couples who I know want the best for Kaylinn and I, and would be available on a moment's notice if we had a need, i.e. "they have our back". In addition, for at least 30 years Kaylinn and I have been a part of one small local group or another that would meet on a regular basis and most years I have led a small men's bible study.

I believe very strongly that real life change is facilitated in the midst of a "caring community", a safe place where we can be ourselves and be open to others speaking into our lives. This is the model for The Hignell Companies. Our purpose statement is "Creating Caring Communities that Transform Lives". Our nine person Executive Team is 100% committed to this driving purpose. The impact of working with these close friends and business partners encourages me to push the envelope of what God can accomplish through my life and the life of our company.

For the first 31 years of my life spiritual fathers were non-existent, but from the tipping point when my first marriage failed, God has supplied a broad spectrum of spiritual fathers. As I have seen the significance of spiritual fathers I am motivated to be a spiritual father to others, to help them walk in the day to day experience of Father God's unconditional love and acceptance for them, to provide a safe place where they can grow and develop into all God has for them, a place where their dreams and desires can be fulfilled.

Through these many life experiences I am learning that we have a heavenly Father who loves us with an unconditional love, and is our "raving fan". He wants us to be all that He created us to be. He planted inside us dreams and desires and He wants to partner with us to see them fulfilled. He is a good God, who works all things together for good when we follow Him, and we can rest in the hope that "the best is yet to come."