DON’T START A SIDE HUSTLE!

Work Less, Earn More, and Live Free

BRIAN PAGE
[ TO DAD. ]
I’M NO TOLKIEN,
BUT THIS IS FOR YOU.
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INTRODUCTION
“I’M GOING TO GIVE YOU a few minutes to say your goodbyes. When you’re ready, I’ll come back in the room and turn off the ventilator. We will then let your father rest in peace,” the doctor told us gently.

A few hours earlier I had gotten a frantic call from my mom, saying my father had collapsed in his room. I immediately left my house and drove four hours to where they lived. That’s a long time to spend on the highway wondering if your father is dead or alive.

When I arrived at the hospital, I found my mom and my sister in the critical care unit, at my dad’s bedside. He was in a cramped room hooked up to multiple tubes and monitors. Other than the sound of air being pumped in and out of his lungs, the room was silent.

“He has no brain activity,” my mom said in a soft voice. “The machine is keeping him breathing but he hasn’t moved at all since we got here.” Surely that’s not my dad lying here in front of me, I thought. I saw his body on the table, but was he there?

Months earlier, my dad found several lumps around his neck and armpits and was diagnosed with stage four melanoma. The specialists told him the cancer had spread to his internal organs, but they were never clear on how much time he had. A few days before he was taken to the hospital, he told my mother he felt like he was in his last days. Never one to be dramatic, his statement rocked our entire family.

Since the time he was diagnosed I would regularly make the long drive to see him. I noticed his health decline with each visit.
During those days at his house we had many conversations about life, the kinds of conversations a son would hope to have with his father. I’m thankful I had that extra time with him.

One conversation stood out to me during those last few months. One night after he took his medication and fell asleep early, my mom told me what they had spoken about the day before I arrived. She said, “Your dad was really suffering yesterday. He never cries, but yesterday he really broke down. You know what he said to me? He said he wasn’t ready to go yet. He told me he never got to do the things he wanted to do with his life.

“Your dad told me that as a boy he wanted to be a pilot and was in love with planes. But his father told him it would never happen and not to bring the idea up again. So your dad never pursued it any further.”

I didn’t know that about my dad. I assumed he had experienced everything he wanted in his life. If he felt otherwise, he never told us.

Most of my life, my father worked as a pastor. Although he felt called, decades of preaching led to burnout. His next job, far removed from church life, was at a call center for a cable company.

My dad was always the number-one or -two performer in the region for his ability to sell on the phone. He was proud that he could take tons of abuse from callers and still smile through the phone. When irate customers cussed him out and screamed into the phone that their cable went out in the middle of a game, he would politely explain that their service was turned off because they hadn’t paid their bill in ninety days.

But he despised the work. Every minute of his day was tracked, even when he needed to run to the bathroom. If he returned even one minute late from his brief lunch break, he was penalized. At the end of each day he would be so exhausted that he’d go straight to his room and collapse on the bed. He’d wake to have dinner a
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e few hours later and then return to bed for the night. The next morning he’d wake up at four to do it all over again.

But by the time he reached his seventies, he had no savings of any kind. That job devoured all his time, energy, and the best years of his life. It was brutal, relentless work. But he did it to support himself and my mother. I respect him immensely for that.

A year before he was diagnosed, I told him, “Dad, I know this job is killing you. I want to help you. I’m gonna get you out of debt and take care of you and mom from now on. Also, I want to buy you a house. You can go ahead and put in your two weeks.” He and my mom were shocked.

For the first time in his life, my dad didn’t have to work.

They decided to move to a quaint town in the foothills of western South Carolina. They found a four-bedroom ranch in a new-construction neighborhood, and I bought it for them as I’d promised. The house was minutes from a beautiful lake where he could take his boat. Every week he’d be out there with his two dogs, exploring each cove and waterway. He was living his dream. Despite COVID and the lockdowns, it was a good year for him and Mom.

But the decades of soul-crushing work and a lifetime struggling to make ends meet had taken their toll on my father. His body was worn out, his joints were arthritic, and he was always in pain. Although he was now retired, he didn’t have the health to stay active and he began to decline quickly.

My father ran out of time. I was angry that he never got to enjoy his retirement years. I was boiling with questions: How was it that he never got ahead financially during his life? Why did he spend all of his time doing what he hated just to collect a paycheck? What other dreams did he not get to experience?

One of my father’s steadfast dreams for me had been to get a job. When I was a teenager, I disagreed. I’d seen too many people work
at something that made them miserable. Why would I want that? I didn’t know what the alternative was, but I knew there had to be a better way.

When discussions of college came up he would say, “You are going to college, Son. It’s not up for discussion. Get a degree, get any degree and graduate. Just go to college.” I wasn’t fully sold on the idea but started looking at schools.

This was my thought process when it came to looking at schools:

- ***UNC Wilmington is at the beach? Okay, that one gets a yes.***
- ***This other college is near ski resorts in the mountains? That sounds even better. Let’s go to the mountains.***

I applied to just one school and six months later I was packing my bags for Appalachian State University. Two years later I was a solid B student, but I still couldn’t choose a major—every one of them seemed boring to me. I finally settled on Leisure Studies (yes, it’s a major). My dad did say get a degree—any degree, right?

Needless to say, the major was a breeze. So I would get to spend most of my time rock climbing and skiing or exploring the Blue Ridge Parkway. I did not take school too seriously and generally questioned authority. I graduated four and a half years later and got that not-so-useful degree.

Everything I cherished from those years was related to the experiences I had outside of class and much of what I lived then formed my life philosophy today. That philosophy has allowed me to live an extraordinary life, the kind that few people get to experience. I got to travel, live, and do what I wanted nearly all the time. I’ve rarely needed to work a regular job. I want to explore this theme throughout this book, to inspire you about what’s possible and on the path to being time rich.

The principles I will show you will lay the foundation on which you can build true wealth—wealth that can be measured in both dollars and cents as well as minutes and hours. This foundation
will allow you to fire your boss if you so choose, because where we’re going, we don’t need bosses.

First we will calculate the monthly income needed to forever walk away from a job. Next we will identify one or more assets that can be owned, created, or controlled to hit that income target as quickly as possible. Finally we will move on to adding in other passive-income-producing assets that will go to work for us, so we don’t have to.

You’ll learn practical skills, like how to have laser-sharp focus to do the most you can in the least amount of time allotted. You’ll learn big-picture strategies that will help you see your personal path to wealth. We’ll discuss how changing your beliefs can help you achieve your goals and the difference between thinking exponentially vs. linearly. I’d like to teach you about vehicles vs. careers, how to make sure you’ve chosen the right wealth vehicle, and the distinction between experience and expertise.

Finally we will explore the specific income-producing assets “passivepreneurs” use to get them to their destination, many of which may surprise you. We’ll move away from ideas like overtime, dollars per hour, paychecks, jobs, and salaries and move toward ideas like wealth vehicles, assets, passive income, cash flow, and discretionary time.

While everyone else works their asses off to earn a living, we will instead live off our assets. Are you ready? Let’s get started.
THE
WHY
PART I
THE WHY
A REASON TO BE RICH

“PETER GIBBONS: “I don’t like my job, and, uh, I don’t think I’m gonna go anymore.”

JOANNA: So you’re gonna quit?

PETER GIBBONS: Nuh-uh. Not really. Uh . . . I’m just gonna stop going.”

—OFFICE SPACE

Despite being the single most educated generation in history, half of all Gen Z and millennial college graduates are still living at home three years later after getting their diplomas. Toxic work culture, abusive management, employees feeling disrespected, unethical behavior, and a cutthroat corporate culture are fueling a worrisome trend called the anti-work movement. The Reddit subthread r/antiwork, where fed up employees post screenshots of themselves quitting their jobs, is one of the fastest growing communities on the platform with more than 2 million users.

A new generation of workers who call themselves “idlers” work just enough not to get fired yet still get a paycheck. In China a
massive movement called tang ping (“lying flat”) is underway, which rejects the idea of working for a living or contributing to society.\(^2\)

In the COVID era, millions of workers are walking away from their careers in what economists call “the Great Resignation.” Businesses are experiencing record levels of turnover as unsatisfied workers jump ship for better opportunities. Although many quit for better pay or benefits, a report published by *MIT Sloan Management Review* found that the biggest single driver of this exodus is a toxic workplace.\(^3\) Low-paid industries like retail, restaurants, and hospitality as well as higher-paid jobs like consulting, software, nursing, and IT are all at crisis levels of understaffing. With so many dissatisfied, it appears work no longer works!

Does working less make people happier? Recent research seems to support this idea. The World Economic Forum studied the relationship between the level of happiness of a country’s citizens and average hours worked. The data showed that the five happiest countries in the world are Finland, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, and the Netherlands.\(^4\) On average, workers in these countries put in hundreds of hours less per year than those in other wealthy nations.

Greece, Turkey, Portugal, Hungary, and Japan, on the other hand, work considerably more hours than the average country and are generally less happy overall. The big takeaway from this study is that, with the exception of Israel, countries with the highest levels of happiness are those that work the least.

For decades the typical forty-hour, five-day workweek has been the norm. But this is changing. An increasing number of companies are experimenting with four-day workweeks or workdays with less than six hours. The results are telling. When these companies reduced the number of days or the average hours worked, stress levels decreased. Not only did people feel less stressed, but job satisfaction increased. A larger segment of the population is
beginning to reevaluate their relationship with work and the amount of their lives they want to devote to it. Working less is now becoming more mainstream as the trend is accelerating.

A fascinating experiment took place in Japan, a country known for extreme overtime. Hard work is highly prized as a virtue and working oneself to death is a not uncommon occurrence. Known as *karoshi*, which translates to “death from overwork,” some have been known to put in seventy-plus-hour weeks until their bodies give out. They suffer chronic health issues and dangerous levels of stress, leading to death.

Microsoft started experimenting with a four-day workweek in 2019 at their Asia headquarters in Japan. Based on their reports, the Japan office experienced a 40 percent boost in productivity with one less day per week in the office. Perhaps working less is not only preferable, but beneficial.

Before we move on, this book is not about “four-hour workweeks,” although we will further talk about reducing time at work. This is not a book about anticapitalist ideology. I don’t support opting out of society or living in a van down by the river, and eating government cheese, as Matt Foley on Saturday Night Live is famous for declaring. I won’t be advocating the idea of doing nothing, becoming nomadic, or couch surfing for a living. I’m not for a universal basic income or living off the government teat either. What I am proposing is that we examine our relationship with work. The best way I know to gain clarity is to ask the right questions. Let’s begin with what I call the Powerball Question.

Imagine tomorrow you wake up to find that you won the lottery. Imagine it’s the Powerball, which sits at $132 million. You wake up, count all those zeroes, and realize you are a centimillionaire. The Powerball Question is: Do you go into work today?

I believe if we removed all financial incentives from the equation of work, the majority of us would quit. We say work is about
making a difference or being challenged, or some other high ideal, but the truth is most of us go to work for one primary reason: a paycheck. I believe most people, upon winning the lottery, would say, “Take this job and shove it!” I believe they would suddenly find many other better uses of their time—things they never had the time to do, until now.

“Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

—MATTHEW 18:4

As a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up? Likely it was something extraordinary like becoming an astronaut, a ballerina, or president of the United States. Maybe you dreamed of being a superhero or a rock star.

When I was nine, I believed that one day I would be Indiana Jones. I imagined I’d be a whip-carrying, leather jacket–wearing badass archeologist. My days would be filled with treasure quests and exploring snake-filled tunnels and dodging poison darts. I’d stay one step ahead of the bad guys as I searched for the Holy Grail. Little did I know that archeologists spend most of their time in research libraries, not looking for treasure.

Like most kids, I believed the possibilities were unlimited. What I wanted to be later in life had nothing to do with making money or even making a living. How I saw myself as a grown-up mirrored what I loved to do for play. I hadn’t yet come to understand that there was a “real world” with obligations and coworkers, deadlines and routine. I was years away from resigning myself to the fact that I had to pay rent and student loans and put food on my own table. I had no idea that work would consume the better part of my life and that life itself is a lot of work.
As children, we can’t imagine doing anything other than what we most love. So we only dream about what excites us and lights us up. Children never say, “I want to be a corporate drone in middle management with little to no room for advancement in a company that finds me replaceable.” Kids can’t fathom working sixty-hour weeks, or experiencing existential dread when the alarm clock goes off on Mondays.

Imagine for a moment that you are once again your ten-year-old self. Feel what it was like to be in that little body. Anything is possible. Before your adult sensibilities kick in and shut down this thought experiment, see if you can get a glimpse. Do you remember? How different our lives are now, right? As you read this book, my hope is that it may guide you to creating a life and work that you love.

“Roads? Where we’re going, we don’t need roads.”

—EMMETT “DOC” BROWN, Back to the Future

One of my very favorite movies is Back to the Future. At the end of the movie, Marty and his crazy-haired professor, Doc, are in a DeLorean time machine. They pull out of Marty’s driveway into a residential street and are about to take off. They will need to hit eighty-eight miles an hour from a dead stop for the time machine to take them to a different year. Right as Doc is about to hit the accelerator, Marty nervously speaks up. “Hey, we better back up. We don’t have enough road to get up to eighty-eight miles per hour.”

Doc replies, “Roads? Where we’re going, we don’t need roads.”

Where we’re going, we don’t need jobs. The fact is we won’t need bosses, gigs, or vacation time. You can light your punch cards and paychecks on fire, shred your W2s, and chop up the corporate ladder for kindling. While you’re at it, you can kick your side hustles to the curb while you’re at it. We won’t need any of that where we’re going.
QUESTIONS ARE SO UNDERATED

ONE OF MY FAVORITE FINANCIAL advisors is Dave Ramsey. He hosts a no-nonsense financial radio show where he helps people cut up their credit cards and kick their debt addiction. When callers dial in to his show, one of the most common questions they ask is: Should I sell?

“Would you recommend I sell my car and pay off the loan?”

“Should I sell my house or my investment property to pay off my debt?”

“Would you recommend I get out my stocks right now, or sell this widget that I bought?”

Dave usually responds with another question. “If you already had the money in your hand right now from selling [insert what they are considering selling], would you buy it again today?” A light bulb goes off for most callers. When given the opportunity to make a past choice again, but with the life experience and context of today, it’s easy to see the right choice.

I’d like to ask you my own version of that question. Imagine if you had back every single minute you’ve ever spent working. Add in every overtime hour you’ve ever worked and every decade you’ve
invested in your career. If you had that time back right now to do with as you please, how would you spend it? Would you change anything?

What if we took that question and applied it to the future? If you had every minute from today until the end of your life to spend as you choose—and only as you choose—what would you do?

Giving ourselves a “do-over” allows us to ask hard questions. Would I choose this job or career again? Would I finally do what I’ve always dreamt of doing with my life? Would I only spend time in pursuit of what I’m passionate about or in the company of those I love? What if work was not a top consideration?

This may seem like an unrealistic thought experiment but stay with me. New ways of seeing the world only emerge by asking ourselves new questions. As Tony Robbins says, “The quality of your life is in direct proportion to the quality of questions you ask.”

New questions may even be uncomfortable or on the surface appear unrealistic because they are so novel. Often our brain immediately thinks that it’s not possible.

“Brian, I work a full-time job and I’m a parent and a spouse; I have responsibilities. I have no time as it is now.”

“I make enough to cover my bills and maybe even have some left over, but I hardly could choose to stop working. I need my job.”

‘Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?’

‘That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,’ said the Cat.

‘I don’t much care where,’ said Alice.

‘Then it doesn’t matter which way you go.’”

—LEWIS CARROLL,

Alice in Wonderland
The reason we must ask ourselves new questions is because it’s only with “blank-slate thinking” that we can craft our lives to be magical. New possibilities can emerge from at least considering what may right now seem impossible.

There is a new class of wealthy people emerging today, a group I call the passivepreneurs. They are financially well to do (think money/income/assets) but also rich in discretionary time. Their lifestyle allows them to be anywhere on the globe they like, with whomever they want to bring along for the ride, and for as long as they want to be there.

Passivepreneurs are not traditional high-income earners like surgeons or attorneys. Neither are they the titans of business who run billion-dollar companies. They don’t run tech startups in Silicon Valley or work on Wall Street. They are not trust fund kids who won the “lucky sperm club sweepstakes” and were born into money. They come from diverse backgrounds and education levels and look very different from one another. But the one thing they do all have in common is that they have mastered the art of creating passive income. They live a life of unlimited time, ultimate choice, and true financial freedom.

In this book we will profile many of these individuals and how they differ from the run-of-the-mill “money rich.” I’d like to show you how focusing solely on increasing the digits in your bank account is a recipe for disaster because money is but one factor in measuring what it is to be rich. I’d like to show you how becoming a passivepreneur is not only possible but can happen in considerably less time than you may think.

The first thing that you will learn about passivepreneurs is that they all have a financial source from which they can draw. This source is not earned income and it is never a job. Their passive income vehicle (or PIV as we will refer to it in this book) requires little if any of their direct time to maintain. Their financial source...
is independent of them; and it feeds them day in and day out, regardless of what they do. They do not live to work; their PIVs do that for them.

The highest priority of a passivepreneur is not to hit some arbitrary dollar amount in the bank, like a million dollars. They aren’t chasing a higher salary or a vague idea of “more” money. In fact money is so little of a concern for them that they don’t think about it much. They are too busy enjoying life. They have built reliable and redundant sources of cash flow that allow them to have a very different relationship with money than those who have a high net worth but are time bankrupt.

What would you do if you were time rich? Would you go on a three-month tour of Europe and then jump to another continent for the next three? Would you join a martial arts class to get your black belt, become an actor at the local theater, or pursue becoming a master musician? Would you stay home with the kids when they’re young? How about going into full-time unpaid ministry, becoming a missionary, or starting a nonprofit? Would you hike the length of the Appalachian Trail and bring no cell phone with you? Would you spend your days anchored in the stunning Charleston harbor while you write your first book, as I’m doing right now?

Think about what life would be like if you no longer had to think about the kind of work you do for money, a life where weekends were no more exciting than weekdays, because every day of the week was yours. Imagine no one telling you where you have to be or for how long you can be gone. Any of this and more will be open to you when you become a passivepreneur.

**FINDING YOUR WHY**

I’ve learned that it’s rarely the mechanics of *how* to achieve our dreams that hold us back. “How” is everywhere. A quick Google
search will show you how to do nearly anything a human has done before. It’s not the how that is elusive but the why.

It’s personal. Your why is unlikely to be my why. You may want to buy a forty-foot blue water sailboat and go single-handing around the globe for the rest of your life. Why? Because your life is about adventure and challenge and taking risks. You may want to volunteer at a homeless outreach nonprofit every day. Why? Because your life is about contributing to others and helping the less fortunate. Those whys are what we must get clear on before we seek out the how.

The reason our deep desire must come before taking any action is because the why is the juice; it’s the fuel. Spend some time considering why. The answer to this question has the power to catapult you out of bed in the morning like a kid on Christmas day. Getting clear on your answer will push you to do what’s required to make your wildest dreams a reality. Because it won’t be easy.

Wait, what? Let me say that again: it won’t be easy. If you want to have it all, you must be willing to give it all. This new way of living has a steep price. That’s why so few experience it. No-effort results may sell a lot of workout videos, but that is not how life works. The good news is, I’m going to share with you the three-to-five-year plan, and not the three-to-five-decade plan. I’ll help you swap the 40- to 60-hour job for 40 to 60 hours of free time. I’ll show you how, if you’re willing to work your ass off for a short time, you can create results that last a lifetime.