



"Live by Design, Not by Default"

A Welcome Message From Marc Dickerson



Dear PRG Community,

Welcome to the July edition of **PRG Pulse**. As we celebrate Independence Day, we often think about the freedoms we enjoy as Americans. But this month, I invite you to think about another kind of freedom—the freedom to grow, to change, and to become the person God created you to be.

One of the highlights of this issue is my interview with Delaware harness racing driver **Brandon Givens**. Brandon's story is not simply about horse racing; it is about redemption. After years of addiction, prison, setbacks, and brokenness, he found hope through faith, family, and a willingness to completely change the direction of his life. His message is simple yet profound: if you want your life to change, you must be willing to change your environment, your habits, and the people who influence you.

Throughout this month's newsletter, our contributors explore what it means to live with greater freedom—spiritually, mentally, physically, and emotionally. Whether you're overcoming adversity, strengthening your health, managing stress, or pursuing your goals, lasting freedom comes from intentional choices made every day.

I hope Brandon's story and the articles in this issue encourage you to examine your own life. Ask yourself: **What is keeping me from becoming the person I want to be?** Then take one step forward. Small, consistent decisions can lead to extraordinary transformation.

Thank you for being part of the PRG community. I hope this month's issue inspires you to live with greater purpose, stronger faith, and the confidence to continue **living by design, not by default**.

Have a safe, meaningful, and inspiring July!

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"Adversity introduces a man to himself."

Albert Einstein

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Do Better,
Be Better.



INDEPENDENCE DAY

We all celebrate the birth of our country on the fourth of July, but what does independence really mean. Is it the liberation of a country from its parent, Britain in our case. Is it something intangible that we think of when we leave our parents to delve off into the world on our own? Perhaps it's worthy to think of our independence in a narrower term that's focused on our own individual experiences.

Let's look at our priorities in life. Do we think of health, wealth, family, love? Are we focusing so much on one as to leave us unliberated at another? Many of us begin our focus on the job that brings in the necessary income in order to provide for the basic needs of ourselves or our families. What happens to health, family and love when we overfocus on wealth? That is an important question we need to give ourselves the freedom to ask of ourselves.



What rules can we place in our lives in order to make sure we allow that there are several lines of importance in our lives, and that we need to leave room for each of these lines to grow and flourish. Yes, we do need to focus on the earning part of our lives, but we cannot do so in the absence of the other important priorities. As such, what rules can we put in place so we can maintain the importance of the other priorities? As an example, my husband and I retired and we set a rule that we would do one constructive and one pleasurable thing each day. We don't always meet the goal evidenced in the rule, but it is a good and proper rule, and keeps us from becoming couch potatoes or from focusing so much on one priority that we forget the rest.

That leads to the importance of setting goals. In our case, it's a list of To Do items. That's just our way. The "how to" isn't nearly as important as the realization that there are necessary things we need to add to our lives, and that we acknowledge those priorities. As we work through the list, we also make time to pay the bills, make doctor's appointments, have meaningful visits with family and friends, and find the time to express our feelings for those that we love.

We may find a change in our normal rhythms in this time of year. There are weather changes, school lets out, and picnics become a higher priority than sledding in the snow. I think that interdependence can of the make us think Independence is an elusive dream. But we need to place our thoughts, perhaps, in a different direction. Our independence is actually the ability to create the lack of independence that we are most suited to. We give up a little piece of our independence with full knowledge to our spouse when we marry. We give up that independence for a joy. It happens again when children arrive, when job promotions occur or when any priority in love occurs that we feel compelled to respond to. Defining ourselves as not independent because of the ideals we pursue with our independence is a misnomer. So this July, this Independence Day, remember that your choices to limit your independence really is the definition of your independence. And rejoice in your freedom to choose for this is the American Dream.



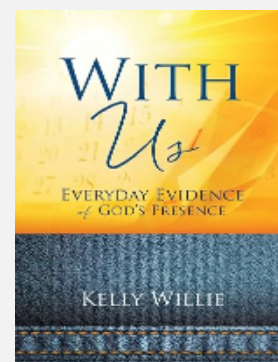
FREE INDEED

Have you ever heard of the traditional way of training an elephant? The young elephant is chained to a stake and whenever the elephant attempts to escape or pull away, its leg experiences great pain and bruising until the poor elephant's spirit is broken. Once his spirit is broken the stake is removed and, out of muscle memory, he will still believe he is in chains.

Unfortunately, we too can mentally and spiritually fall into a similar trap. There are chains from our past that bind us to patterns of imprisonment much like the elephant. These chains can confine us in many ways, including thoughts such as "this will never change," "I am stuck in this situation and there is no way out," "I guess this is as good as it's going to get," or "this addiction will always have me in its grip." Such beliefs can become internalized restraints that limit our choices and hope

However, this is not the way of Jesus, nor the intention of our good and loving Father. God longs to set us free. In the Gospel of John (chapter 8) Jesus declares, **"If the Son has set you free, you are free indeed."** That promise points to a spiritual freedom that breaks the power of past hurts and shame.

Galatians 5:1 reinforces this truth: **"It is for freedom that Christ has set you free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."** This passage calls for steadfastness in the freedom already given and a refusal to return to the false securities of bondage.



As we mark the 250th anniversary of our country, we can reflect not only on those who gave their lives so that the chains of tyranny could be broken, but also on the greater freedom Christ secured for us: freedom from death, the forgiveness of sin, and the promise of an abundant life. In Christ we are no longer bound by the chains that prevent us from becoming all He intends us to be

Questions to consider as we celebrate freedom:

- ★ Which internal "chains" or beliefs are most limiting my life right now?
- ★ What steps—spiritual, relational, or practical—can I take to move away from those restraints?
- ★ How can I claim and live in the freedom promised in Christ today?
- ★ Who can I invite into my journey of freedom for support and accountability?

Reflection and action together help transform muscle memory into a renewed life of purpose and liberty. We are FREE INDEED!



Spotlight: Brandon Givens



From Addiction to the Winner's Circle: Brandon Givens' Journey of Faith, Family, and Redemption

Success came early for Brandon Givens. Failure came unexpectedly. Redemption took nearly two decades.

Today, Brandon is once again one of Delaware's premier harness racing drivers, leading the driver standings at Harrington Raceway. Watching him celebrate in the winner's circle, few would imagine the road he traveled to get there. Behind every victory is a story of devastating loss, addiction, unwavering faith, unconditional love, and the power of second chances.

Brandon grew up on his family's horse farm in Sussex County, Delaware. His father, grandfather, and uncle all raced horses, and from an early age he knew he had found his calling. Although he excelled in baseball, soccer, and wrestling, horse racing was where his heart belonged.

"My main gift was racehorses," Brandon says. "I can almost tell you what a horse is going to do before the horse even does it."

By age 18, Brandon was Delaware's leading harness racing driver while his father was the state's leading trainer. He was driving for the top stables, winning races, and living the dream he had pursued since childhood.

"I was on top of the world," he recalls. "I couldn't be beat."

Everything changed on May 11, 2006. During the first race of the day at Harrington Raceway, another horse reacted to a shadow crossing the track, causing a horrific accident. Brandon was thrown from his sulky, shattering his leg, while another driver tragically lost his life. Four surgeries and nearly a year of rehabilitation followed. During his recovery, Brandon was prescribed powerful opioid pain medications.

What began as treatment slowly became addiction. "It became a 30- or 40-pill-a-day habit," Brandon admits.

Although he returned to racing and continued winning, addiction quietly took control of his life. Drug tests eventually exposed what he had been hiding, leading to suspensions that grew from thirty days to six months to five years. Rehab after rehab ended with the same heartbreaking result.

"I kept doing the same cycle," Brandon remembers. "Get clean, get sober, use, relapse."

Over the next fifteen years, addiction stole nearly everything. Prescription pills led to heroin. Brandon entered rehabilitation programs between fifteen and twenty times, spent nearly two years in prison, lost his racing career, and missed valuable time with his children.

Looking back, Brandon realized recovery wasn't simply about quitting drugs—it required changing his entire life. Every time he left treatment, he returned to the same people, the same places, and the same routines that had fueled his addiction.

"Home was probably one of the worst things for me," he says. "I'd see the same drug dealers...and I would relapse."

Recovery wasn't simply about quitting drugs—it required changing his entire life.

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Spotlight: Brandon Givens (continued from page 4)



Everything began to change five days after leaving prison in 2019, when he met Keesha. She knew about his addiction, his prison sentence, and his relapses, yet she chose to see beyond his past. Her Mennonite family welcomed Brandon with grace, introducing him to a life centered on faith, prayer, and church.

"They overlooked me being an addict," Brandon says. "They seen me as the person who I really am."

Recovery was still a process, but Brandon now had something he had never truly experienced before—a support system built on faith rather than addiction. Keesha stood beside him. His parents never stopped believing in him. His family never stopped praying for him.

The defining moment came in 2022. After unknowingly using drugs laced with fentanyl, Brandon overdosed while riding a four-wheeler with his young son, Jaxson. The crash nearly cost both of them their lives.

"I felt like God had reached inside of me and took all the drugs out of me."

"It scared me to death that I had hurt him," Brandon says. "I felt like God had reached inside of me and took all the drugs out of me."

Then he adds the words that define his comeback:

"That's the last time I've ever touched it. I haven't touched it since, and I haven't thought about it."

Today, Brandon believes recovery happened because he surrendered completely. He stopped trying to live the same life while expecting different results. Instead, he changed everything.

His advice is simple: **"Do everything the complete opposite of what you were doing."**

For Brandon, that meant leaving behind the people and places tied to addiction and surrounding himself with people of faith. It meant replacing old habits with church, prayer, accountability, and family. It meant accepting help instead of hiding his struggles and trusting God to do what he could not do on his own.

Today, Brandon and Keesha are raising a blended family of seven children. After nearly fifteen years away from Delaware racing, he earned another opportunity to compete. Starting from the bottom, he rebuilt the trust of trainers who remembered the extraordinary talent addiction had nearly destroyed.

"They realized I still have that talent," Brandon says. "They're giving me these good horses to drive, and it's made me back on top again."

Brandon Givens' greatest victory isn't measured by trophies or purse money. It is measured by restored relationships, renewed faith, a loving family, and a life with purpose. His story reminds us that no matter how far someone falls, redemption is possible when they are willing to change direction, surround themselves with the right people, and never give up hope.





Mental Health: Nicole Luther



Freedom Begins Before the Temptation

When we think about freedom, we often think about having more choices. But true freedom is often found in making intentional choices before temptation ever arrives.

Many of us rely on willpower to help us make good decisions. We tell ourselves we'll resist the junk food at the store, stick to our budget, or avoid habits we know aren't serving us. Yet when we're tired, stressed, hungry, or emotional, those good intentions can quickly disappear.

The problem isn't a lack of discipline. It's waiting until we're in the middle of temptation to decide what we're going to do.

That's why planning ahead is so powerful.

When we meal plan before shopping, create a budget before spending, or decide in advance how we'll respond to challenges, we're setting ourselves up for success. What may feel restrictive in the moment actually creates greater freedom later—freedom from regret, guilt, stress, and the consequences of impulsive decisions.

Scripture reminds us:

"Everything is permissible for me, but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be mastered by anything." (1 Corinthians 6:12)

True freedom isn't found in saying yes to every impulse. It's found in refusing to be controlled by them.

This month, consider one area where you tend to struggle. What decisions can you make today that will help you walk in freedom tomorrow?

Because freedom rarely begins in the moment of temptation. It begins with the intentional choices we make beforehand.



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Freedom Begins with Your Choices

When people hear the word freedom, they often think about having more choices. In reality, true freedom comes from making better choices. Every decision we make either moves us closer to the life we want or farther away from it. Within the PRG framework, freedom is found when our Priorities, Roles, and Goals work together in alignment.

Start with your Priorities. What matters most right now? Your faith, family, health, career, finances, or personal growth? If everything is a priority, then nothing truly is. Clarity allows you to focus your time and energy where it matters most.

Next, consider your Roles. Whether you are a parent, spouse, employee, student, coach, or friend, each role carries responsibilities. Living intentionally means asking yourself each day, "How can I show up well in the roles that matter most?" Our actions should reflect the values we claim to hold.

Finally, establish meaningful Goals. Goals transform good intentions into action. They should be specific, realistic, and connected to your priorities and roles. Progress is made through small, consistent decisions—not dramatic changes.

Brandon Givens' story in this month's newsletter reminds us that lasting freedom required more than breaking an addiction. It required changing his environment, his habits, and the people who influenced his life. As Brandon said, "Do everything the complete opposite of what you were doing." That principle applies to all of us. If we want different results, we must be willing to make different choices.

This month, choose one priority to strengthen, identify one role that deserves your best effort, and set one goal that moves you forward. Freedom isn't found by chance—it is built one intentional decision at a time. When your Priorities, Roles, and Goals are aligned, you don't just experience success—you experience purpose.

Quote of the Month



"The secret of happiness is freedom, and the secret of freedom is courage."

Thucydides

True happiness comes from living with freedom—not simply the freedom to do whatever we want, but the freedom to live according to our values and purpose. That kind of freedom requires courage: the courage to face fear, overcome adversity, make difficult choices, and leave unhealthy habits behind. Real freedom is earned through brave decisions that lead to a meaningful and fulfilling life.



Physical Health: Marc Dickerson



Freedom Through Fitness

When we think about freedom, we often think about the ability to choose where we go or what we do. However, one form of freedom is often overlooked—the freedom that comes from a healthy body. Our physical health determines how well we can care for our families, perform our jobs, enjoy retirement, serve our communities, and pursue the goals that matter most.

The truth is that fitness isn't about looking perfect; it's about living fully. Every healthy choice you make today gives you more opportunities tomorrow. Walking without pain, climbing stairs with ease, playing with your children or grandchildren, traveling, gardening, or simply having the energy to enjoy life are all gifts that come from taking care of your body.

The good news is that you don't have to make dramatic changes overnight. Lasting health is built through small, consistent habits. A daily walk, strength training a few times each week, drinking more water, choosing nutritious foods, and getting enough sleep may seem like simple decisions, but together they create a stronger, healthier future.

The PRG framework reminds us that our health is one of our greatest priorities because it affects every role we play. Whether you're a parent, spouse, employee, coach, teacher, or volunteer, your ability to serve others depends on how well you care for yourself. Investing in your health isn't selfish—it's one of the best ways to fulfill your responsibilities and achieve your goals.

This month, challenge yourself to make one healthy change. Progress isn't measured by perfection but by consistency. Every step you take, every healthy meal you choose, and every workout you complete is an investment in your future.

Remember, physical freedom isn't found in doing whatever you want. It's found in building a body that allows you to do the things you love for years to come.

Remember: Small daily habits create lifelong freedom.

PRG Physical Health Challenge

Daily Habit

Goal

 Move Your Body	30 minutes of walking or exercise
 Stay Hydrated	Drink 8–10 glasses of water
 Fuel Your Body	Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables
 Prioritize Sleep	Get 7–9 hours of sleep
 Build Strength	Strength train 2–3 times this week



Dealing with Stress: Fred Sayin



When the Thunder Rolls: Managing Stress and Staying Safe During Summer Storms

Summer brings sunshine, family gatherings, vacations, and time outdoors—but it also brings thunderstorms. For many children, teenagers, and even adults, thunderstorms can be stressful. The bright flashes of lightning, booming thunder, strong winds, and uncertainty can trigger anxiety and fear. Many people have wondered what causes thunder. While some children believe it comes from clouds bumping into each other, the real explanation is that lightning rapidly heats the surrounding air, causing it to expand explosively and create the sound wave we hear as thunder. **Understanding how thunderstorms work can replace fear with knowledge and help people make safer decisions.** A simple phrase to remember is: **"When thunder roars, go indoors."**

Thunder is nature's warning system. If you hear thunder, lightning is close enough to be dangerous. Many people mistakenly believe they are safe if it is not raining where they are standing. However, lightning can strike **up to 10 miles away** from the center of a thunderstorm. Once indoors, stay away from windows and doors, avoid showers, baths, and washing dishes because plumbing can conduct electricity, and avoid using electronics plugged into wall outlets. **Having a family safety plan before a storm arrives can reduce anxiety and help everyone respond quickly and confidently.** Preparing ahead of time helps reduce anxiety because everyone knows what to do when bad weather approaches.

Tips for Reducing Thunderstorm Stress

Stress-Reducing Strategy	Why It Helps
Learn the facts about thunderstorms	Knowledge replaces fear with understanding.
Create a family storm plan	Knowing what to do reduces uncertainty.
Practice slow, deep breathing	Helps calm the body's stress response.
Stay informed with weather alerts	Reliable information reduces unnecessary worry.
Keep an emergency kit ready	Preparation builds confidence.
Read, play games, or talk together	Healthy distractions shift attention away from fear.
Comfort children with reassurance	Calm adults help children remain calm.
Pray or reflect quietly	Faith and mindfulness can provide peace during stressful moments.

Thunderstorms are a normal part of summer, but they do not have to create panic. Preparation, knowledge, and a calm response can make storms much less stressful for both children and adults. Think of thunder like a fire alarm—it is nature's way of warning us to seek shelter before danger arrives. The next time you hear thunder, don't wait for the rain. Go indoors, follow simple safety precautions, and remember that being prepared not only protects you and your family, but also brings confidence and peace of mind when the thunder rolls.



Facing Adversity: Freedom Is Found in Your Response

Life doesn't promise a path without obstacles. Every person experiences disappointment, failure, loss, illness, rejection, or unexpected change. While we can't always control what happens to us, we can always choose how we respond. Our greatest growth often comes during life's most difficult seasons, when challenges push us to become stronger than we ever thought possible.

Many people become stuck because they spend too much energy asking, "Why is this happening to me?" A better question is, "What can I learn from this?" Every challenge presents an opportunity to grow stronger, wiser, and more resilient. When we shift our focus from the problem to the lesson, adversity becomes a teacher rather than an obstacle.

This month's spotlight, Brandon Givens, reminds us that even our greatest setbacks do not have to define our future. Recovery began when he stopped making excuses, accepted responsibility, surrounded himself with the right people, and chose a completely different direction. Adversity became the turning point that transformed his life. His story is a powerful reminder that with faith, perseverance, and the courage to change, even the darkest chapters can lead to a brighter future.

Turning Adversity into Opportunity

Instead of...	Choose...
"Why me?"	"What can I learn?"
Fear	Faith
Excuses	Responsibility
Giving Up	Perseverance
Complaining	Gratitude
Isolation	Seeking Support
Dwelling on the Past	Building a Better Future

When you face difficulties, remember that challenges are temporary, but the lessons you learn can last a lifetime.

5 Steps to Overcoming Adversity

Step	Action
1. Accept Reality	Face the situation honestly.
2. Control What You Can	Focus on your attitude and actions.
3. Build a Support Team	Lean on family, friends, mentors, and faith.
4. Take One Small Step	Progress beats perfection.
5. Never Stop Growing	Every setback can become a setup for success.

Adversity doesn't determine your future. Your response does.

Every challenge is an opportunity to become stronger, deepen your faith, and move one step closer to the person you were created to be.

PRG Pulse

July 2026



Key Takeaways for This Month:



- Freedom is found in the choices you make each day. Align your Priorities, Roles, and Goals with the life you want to live.
- Real change requires a new direction. As Brandon Givens' story demonstrates, lasting transformation begins when you change your habits, your environment, and the people who influence your life.
- Every setback can become a comeback. Face adversity with faith, perseverance, and hope, knowing that today's challenges can become tomorrow's greatest victories.

Call to Action



- Live with Intention. Choose one priority, strengthen one role, and take one meaningful step toward a goal this week.
- Change One Habit. Identify one unhealthy habit that's holding you back and replace it with a positive habit that supports the life you want to build.
- Share Hope. If this month's PRG Pulse inspired you, share it with a friend or family member who could benefit from a message of faith, purpose, and second chances.
- Keep Moving Forward. Progress isn't about perfection—it's about taking the next right step every day.

Upcoming PRG Events



Event:

Author Meet and Greet

Health and Wellness Seminar

Date:

Summer

Fall 2026

Location:

Rehoboth Barnes and Noble

Eastern Sussex County

"Keep summer simple: protect what matters, release what clutters, and live with intention."

PRG Products and Services



PRG Life offers practical services like group classes, workshops, and keynote speeches to help individuals and teams live with clarity and purpose. Each service is designed to align your values with meaningful action through the PRG framework. Visit www.prglife.org for more information.

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"Priorities, Roles, and Goals: The Program" Book

The PRG Power Plan

Free PRG Program Summary

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