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This episode is sponsored by a company I've used for well over a decade and that is 511.

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I wore their uniforms back in Anaheim, California and have used their products ever since.

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From their incredibly strong yet light footwear to their cut uniforms for both male and female

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responders, I found them hands down the best workwear in all the departments that I've worked for.

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Outside of the fire service, I use their luggage for everything and I travel a lot and they are

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also now sponsoring the 7X team as we embark around the world on the Human Performance Project.

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00:00:35,280 --> 00:00:40,720

We have Murph coming up in May and again I bought their plate carrier. I ended up buying real

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00:00:40,720 --> 00:00:45,760

ballistic plates rather than the fake weight plates and that has been my ride or die through

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00:00:45,760 --> 00:00:50,640

Murph the last few years as well. But one area I want to talk about that I haven't in previous

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sponsorship spots is their brick and mortar element. They were predominantly an online

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company up till more recently but now they are approaching 100 stores all over the US.

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00:01:01,520 --> 00:01:07,040

My local store is here in Gainesville Florida and I've been multiple times and the discounts you see

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00:01:07,040 --> 00:01:14,640

online are applied also in the stores. So as I mentioned 511 is offering you 15% off every

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00:01:14,640 --> 00:01:20,640

purchase that you make but I do want to say more often than not they have an even deeper discount

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00:01:20,640 --> 00:01:31,760

especially around holiday times. But if you use the code SHIELD15 you will get 15% off your order

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00:01:31,760 --> 00:01:37,840

or in the stores every time you make a purchase. And if you want to hear more about 511, who they

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stand for and who works with them, listen to episode 580 of Behind the Shield podcast with

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00:01:44,000 --> 00:01:51,280

511 regional director Will Ayers. I'm extremely excited to announce a brand new sponsor for the

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Behind the Shield podcast that is Transcend. Now for many of you listening you are probably

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00:01:56,800 --> 00:02:02,480

working the same brutal shifts that I did for 14 years. Suffering from sleep deprivation,

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00:02:02,480 --> 00:02:09,120

body composition challenges, mental health challenges, libido, hair loss etc. Now when

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00:02:09,120 --> 00:02:13,520

it comes to the world of hormone replacement and peptide therapy what I have seen is a shift from

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00:02:13,520 --> 00:02:17,920

doctors telling us that we were within normal limits which was definitely incorrect all the

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00:02:17,920 --> 00:02:24,080

way to the other way now where men's clinics are popping up left right and center. So I myself wanted

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00:02:24,080 --> 00:02:29,200

to find a reputable company that would do an analysis of my physiology and then offer

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00:02:29,200 --> 00:02:34,720

supplementations without ramming for example hormone replacement therapy down my throat.

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00:02:34,720 --> 00:02:39,680

Now I came across Transcend because they have an altruistic arm and they were a big reason why the

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00:02:39,680 --> 00:02:45,520

7x project I was a part of was able to proceed because of their generous donations. They also

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have the Transcend foundations where they are actually putting military and first responders

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00:02:49,840 --> 00:02:55,520

through some of their therapies at no cost to the individual. So my own personal journey so far

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00:02:56,160 --> 00:03:01,520

filled in the online form, went to Quest, got blood drawn and a few days later I'm talking to

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00:03:01,520 --> 00:03:06,160

one of their wellness professionals as they guide me through my results and the supplementation that

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00:03:06,160 --> 00:03:11,840

they suggest. In my case specifically because I transitioned out the fire service five years ago

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00:03:11,840 --> 00:03:18,000

and be very diligent with my health my testosterone was actually in a good place. So I went down the

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00:03:18,000 --> 00:03:23,120

peptide route and some other supplements to try and maximize my physiology knowing full well the

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00:03:23,120 --> 00:03:27,920

damage that 14 years of shift work has done. Now I also want to underline because I think this is

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00:03:27,920 --> 00:03:33,360

very important that each of the therapies they offer they will talk about the pros and cons.

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00:03:33,360 --> 00:03:38,640

So for example a lot of first responders and shift work our testosterone will be low but sometimes

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00:03:38,640 --> 00:03:44,560

nutrition, exercise and sleep can offset that on its own. So this company is not going to try and

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00:03:44,560 --> 00:03:50,000

push you down a path especially if it's one that you can't come back from. So whether it's libido,

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00:03:50,000 --> 00:03:57,440

brain fog, inflammation, gut health, performance, sleep, this is definitely one of the most powerful

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00:03:57,440 --> 00:04:05,680

tools in the toolbox. So to learn more go to transcendcompany.com or listen to episode 808

43

00:04:05,680 --> 00:04:11,680

of the Behind the Shield podcast with founder Ernie Colling. Welcome to the Behind the Shield

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00:04:11,680 --> 00:04:16,080

podcast as always my name is James Gearing and this week it is my absolute honor to welcome on

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00:04:16,080 --> 00:04:23,920

the show retired Anaheim firefighter Rick Cheatham. Now as you will hear this is such an important and

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00:04:23,920 --> 00:04:29,440

powerful conversation. Rick is courageously vulnerable and transparent when it comes to

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00:04:29,440 --> 00:04:34,960

some of his mental health journeys early in the fire service career. The murder of his son and

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00:04:34,960 --> 00:04:40,800

the ripple effect of that on him and his family. The freak accident after his retirement that

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00:04:40,800 --> 00:04:48,880

paralyzed him. His spiritual journey, overcoming grief, the mental health tools that work for him

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00:04:48,880 --> 00:04:53,840

and so much more. Now before we get to this incredible conversation as I say every week

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00:04:53,840 --> 00:04:59,280

please just take a moment go to whichever app you listen to this on, subscribe to the show,

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00:04:59,840 --> 00:05:06,640

leave feedback and leave a rating. Every single five star rating truly does elevate this podcast

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00:05:06,640 --> 00:05:14,320

therefore making it easier for others to find and this is a free library of over 900 episodes now.

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So all I ask in return is that you help share these incredible men and women stories

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00:05:20,000 --> 00:05:24,720

so I can get them to every single person on planet earth who needs to hear them.

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00:05:24,720 --> 00:05:45,040

So with that being said I introduce to you Rick Cheatham. Enjoy.

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00:05:45,040 --> 00:05:57,840

Well Rick I want to say firstly this is amazing. I worked in Anaheim I think it was 15 plus years

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00:05:57,840 --> 00:06:03,920

ago now and occasionally I've got sent to station three or I take some overtime there and that's

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00:06:03,920 --> 00:06:10,080

usually where our paths cross but now we're doing this bizarre thing called podcasting sitting face

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00:06:10,080 --> 00:06:16,000

to face on a computer so I want to welcome you to the Behind the Shield podcast today. Thank you,

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00:06:16,000 --> 00:06:20,880

thank you for having me I appreciate it. So where on planet earth are we finding you this afternoon?

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00:06:22,320 --> 00:06:28,160

Well this afternoon I happen to be sitting in my house in Nashville Tennessee where I retired

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00:06:29,200 --> 00:06:34,480

about three and a half years ago. Beautiful well before we even jump into the whole lifeline thing

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00:06:34,480 --> 00:06:40,960

so many of certainly it seemed like Anaheim specifically went to Montana, Tennessee.

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00:06:41,600 --> 00:06:47,680

So what is it that you found about where you live now that you love and why do you love it

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00:06:47,680 --> 00:06:55,920

in comparison to California? First of all my family was out here my sister and my mom moved out here

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00:06:57,280 --> 00:07:02,160

I don't know 20 years ago something like that 18 20 years ago so my family had been coming out

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00:07:02,160 --> 00:07:10,000

here for several years just visiting and we fell in love with it. The people were great that the

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00:07:13,200 --> 00:07:17,360

scenery around here I mean it's just absolutely beautiful I mean there's trees everywhere.

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00:07:18,800 --> 00:07:26,080

The only problem with this place is it gets a little cold. My winters here are not not what I

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00:07:26,080 --> 00:07:32,640

anticipated after having my injury just seems to set it off a little bit more being cold but other

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00:07:32,640 --> 00:07:40,000

than that my family brought me here the scenery brought me here and in a lot of ways freedom

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00:07:40,000 --> 00:07:46,720

brought me here. Leaving California at a time when I did it seemed like our freedoms were being stepped

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00:07:46,720 --> 00:07:53,140

on and manipulated in such a way that as much as I hated a little bit of the

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00:07:53,140 --> 00:07:58,040

but as much as I hated to leave I just needed to get out of California.

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00:07:59,080 --> 00:08:04,840

Absolutely it's funny people you know back home talk about you know America through let's say

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00:08:04,840 --> 00:08:13,160

you know the the British lens and their media and we are such an incredible tapestry of beautiful

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00:08:13,160 --> 00:08:19,480

humans but you know sometimes a few people get into I'm using this term very loosely leadership

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00:08:19,480 --> 00:08:26,200

positions and their shitty decisions can negatively impact or divide these communities of wonderful

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00:08:26,200 --> 00:08:31,240

humans that up until that point were actually you know thriving next to each other.

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00:08:31,880 --> 00:08:39,480

Absolutely absolutely you know spending my entire life in in California I got to see a lot of the

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00:08:39,480 --> 00:08:45,240

good along with the bad but overall it was primarily good I had a great upbringing great

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00:08:45,240 --> 00:08:51,480

life coming up in Southern California and you know some things change there towards the end and

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00:08:53,480 --> 00:08:56,680

I guess that's just the nature of the beast things always do change

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00:08:57,480 --> 00:09:02,600

but I felt it was just best for me to to leave at the time and come out here where my family was and

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00:09:03,320 --> 00:09:09,560

just get a new start. Absolutely well let's start the very beginning of your timeline then so tell

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00:09:09,560 --> 00:09:14,040

me where you were born and tell me a little bit about your family dynamic what your parents did

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00:09:14,040 --> 00:09:23,160

and how many siblings. Okay I was born in San Jose California so I was born out in Northern California

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00:09:23,160 --> 00:09:29,400

and that's where my my dad was from and my mom was was from Washington and and happened to move

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00:09:29,400 --> 00:09:33,800

down to Northern California and that's where she met my dad in high school.

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00:09:36,360 --> 00:09:42,920

My mom and dad were very young when they got married my mom was 16 my dad was 17

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00:09:42,920 --> 00:09:54,200

they had me at 17 and 18 so it was it was a pretty quick little rendezvous for them I just found out

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00:09:54,200 --> 00:10:01,240

here within the last two or three years that my mom and dad were married after six months of dating

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00:10:01,240 --> 00:10:06,200

each other and I thought that was rather interesting because my wife and I got married

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00:10:06,200 --> 00:10:14,760

after six months of dating ourselves but my dad was my dad was a preacher so I grew up in a very

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00:10:14,760 --> 00:10:23,960

very religious household upbringing my mom like I said had moved down from Washington met my dad in

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00:10:23,960 --> 00:10:35,800

high school and my mom's dad my grandfather ended up not keeping a job or for whatever reason

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00:10:35,800 --> 00:10:43,720

had to move back and so my mom and dad decided it would be better for my mom to stay so they stayed

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00:10:43,720 --> 00:10:51,800

they ran off to Reno got married and the rest is history as you say one interesting side note to

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00:10:51,800 --> 00:10:59,080

all that is I do have I was raised with a brother and a sister I have a brother that is

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00:10:59,080 --> 00:11:05,480

I have a brother that is nine and a half months younger than I am so we grew up pretty close and

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00:11:05,480 --> 00:11:12,520

then I have a sister that was several years behind us both and she was like seven years behind me

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00:11:15,160 --> 00:11:25,240

but in 2020 I got a phone call from my dad and he said you might want to sit down and I thought oh

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00:11:25,240 --> 00:11:31,960

dear I said are you dying and he said no but you might want to sit down for this I've got something

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00:11:31,960 --> 00:11:40,440

to share with you so he shared with me that I had another sister that I didn't know about so at

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00:11:41,880 --> 00:11:49,400

you know 2020 on my anniversary no doubt I got a phone call from my dad explaining this and

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00:11:49,400 --> 00:11:56,440

it turns out I have a sister that is eight months older than I am so it's kind of an interesting

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00:11:56,440 --> 00:12:05,320

dynamic three kids my dad had three kids and we were all within a year and a half of each other

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00:12:08,600 --> 00:12:14,280

but that's a side note to how many kids are in my family my brother is the one I grew up with my

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00:12:14,280 --> 00:12:23,160

my my my sister was several years younger than I was we grew up in a really religious environment

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00:12:24,440 --> 00:12:29,640

you know church three times a week of course when your dad's the preacher there's a lot of

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00:12:29,640 --> 00:12:36,360

expectations on you as the preacher's kid those expectations were not always met with the most

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00:12:36,360 --> 00:12:45,640

positive outcomes I challenged and tested a lot of my I wouldn't say I was testing my upbringing or

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00:12:45,640 --> 00:12:52,840

my religious background because I bought into it 100% I was I was sold out and but I also had a

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00:12:52,840 --> 00:13:02,040

wide wild side so I ended up leaving from high school and went off to the military and came back

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00:13:02,040 --> 00:13:08,200

and sowed my wild oats for a little bit and after that ended up meeting my wife

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00:13:10,920 --> 00:13:18,120

at our church where I was attending in Brea California and interesting story with her is that

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00:13:19,560 --> 00:13:31,080

I actually prayed for her very very specific prayer in fact from her her height her weight her

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00:13:31,080 --> 00:13:39,240

her skin complexion her hair tone everything about her and I think I the reason I prayed so vividly

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00:13:39,240 --> 00:13:47,720

and specifically was because I knew that I was kind of slow and probably wouldn't recognize the

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00:13:47,720 --> 00:13:54,360

woman of my dreams had I not had a visual imprint on my mind of what that would look like and two

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00:13:54,360 --> 00:14:00,280

weeks after that prayer my wife walked into my life and lo and behold she walked into my life on

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00:14:00,280 --> 00:14:12,040

a blind date for me so so it was a very very dynamic time just young in my in my life and

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00:14:13,400 --> 00:14:19,080

having this opportunity to have a wife after a prayer that was very specific it kind of just

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00:14:19,080 --> 00:14:25,320

opened the door for me to realize that there's something bigger than myself out there didn't

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00:14:25,320 --> 00:14:33,400

always know exactly what that meant didn't know exactly how that looked I looked at everything

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00:14:33,400 --> 00:14:42,040

through the lens of my religious upbringing and my religious beliefs and in my particular

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00:14:42,040 --> 00:14:48,360

denomination those kind of things praying for a woman and then have her show up in your
doorstep

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00:14:48,360 --> 00:14:56,760

two weeks later wasn't always a realistic understanding for most people in my denomination

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00:14:57,880 --> 00:15:07,720

but it kind of changed who I was and and and where my thought was headed when it comes to

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00:15:07,720 --> 00:15:17,240

God and you know a higher being and he became real he became real to me at that point and
so

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00:15:17,240 --> 00:15:24,440

it was no longer where I was tied up in my dad or my mom's religion I was more connected to my

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00:15:24,440 --> 00:15:33,000

own faith and ask things what have it I started questioning a lot of things and ended up questioning

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00:15:33,000 --> 00:15:40,040

and ended up questioning my questioning myself out of my denomination so I ended up leaving

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00:15:40,840 --> 00:15:51,160

that religious organization still love the people dearly I'm so thankful for the upbringing that I

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00:15:51,160 --> 00:16:00,760

did have because they taught me so much about just how to how to understand the Bible in a way to

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00:16:00,760 --> 00:16:06,840

always ask questions sometimes I think they might have thought I asked too many questions but I was

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00:16:06,840 --> 00:16:12,680

raised on the on the idea that the more questions you ask the better able you are to understand

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00:16:13,480 --> 00:16:17,400

and so I took that philosophy with me all the way through and finally ended up

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00:16:19,720 --> 00:16:28,120

leaving that denomination jumped into another one for a while and and just didn't really find

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00:16:28,120 --> 00:16:34,600

a my niche or my my my need there and it was during the time that my son ended up passing

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00:16:34,600 --> 00:16:44,360

away that my wife and I just finally pulled away from religion altogether and just started focusing

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00:16:44,360 --> 00:16:58,520

on our relationship with God so in a nutshell I went from California to Nevada back to California

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00:16:58,520 --> 00:17:06,680

getting in the fire service started working towards that in the late 80s was affirmative action was

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00:17:06,680 --> 00:17:14,280

real heavy back then and didn't know that I would be able to get on at that point but I had just

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00:17:14,280 --> 00:17:24,520

finished a a seminar type curriculum with my wife and it was basically

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00:17:28,680 --> 00:17:35,320

taking real estate agents and teaching them my wife was trying to become a realist realtor

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00:17:35,320 --> 00:17:41,400

and teaching them how to weed out all of the looky-loos that you might come across as you're

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00:17:42,120 --> 00:17:50,840

selling homes so it's just a way to streamline the process of finding out who was committed

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00:17:50,840 --> 00:17:56,680

and who was not committed the name of the course was life and career management training and what

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00:17:56,680 --> 00:18:04,200

they taught in that course was the power of commitment and once I went through that course

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00:18:04,200 --> 00:18:13,560

it became very clear to me that being a victim of at that time affirmative action where people

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00:18:13,560 --> 00:18:17,960

were telling me there's no way you can be a fireman you're you're number one you're you're too old

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00:18:19,240 --> 00:18:23,960

you're too white and you're too male and you're probably not going to ever

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00:18:25,400 --> 00:18:31,880

break into the fire service like the old days when they were allowing people to come in and

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00:18:31,880 --> 00:18:37,880

maybe it wasn't fair at the time I don't know but I know that for me after taking that course

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00:18:38,760 --> 00:18:45,000

it became very clear that it didn't matter what was going on or anything around me as far as that

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00:18:45,000 --> 00:18:50,680

was trying to keep me back the power of commitment taught me that there was no doubt that if you put

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00:18:50,680 --> 00:18:59,000

your mind to it and you focus and you're determined and you're disciplined you can achieve anything you

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00:18:59,000 --> 00:19:05,800

want so six years later I got a phone call from anaheim fire department and they offered me a job

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00:19:06,600 --> 00:19:16,280

they were my 28th or 29th department that I had tested with took me six years I had 28 or 29

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00:19:17,560 --> 00:19:25,800

thanks but no thank letters and finally I got the one from anaheim offering me a job and it was the

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00:19:25,800 --> 00:19:31,480

dream career of my life I mean I do have to thank there was one man in particular that was very

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00:19:31,480 --> 00:19:37,160

instrumental in helping me get that job and his name was Tommy Denson and Tommy Denson I don't

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00:19:37,160 --> 00:19:43,560

know if you were there when at the time or if you'd already left or if you knew of Tommy but Tommy was

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00:19:44,680 --> 00:19:51,240

a member of the church where I attended and so we became very very close and he put in a good word

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00:19:51,240 --> 00:19:57,160

for me and that good word was put into a man by the name of Jerry Austin and Jerry ended up hiring me

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00:19:59,560 --> 00:20:04,520

I think that name sounds familiar I want to say maybe Terry talked about him before I'm not sure

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00:20:04,520 --> 00:20:09,240

but um when you were talking about the affirmative actions it's it's an interesting conversation

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00:20:10,280 --> 00:20:15,400

because back in the day obviously you know that was that was a pendulum swinging all the way

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00:20:15,400 --> 00:20:20,840

to the other side and it happens so so many times and so many topics from you know certain

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00:20:20,840 --> 00:20:26,840

departments definitely arguably almost deliberately making sure that they weren't hiring you know the

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00:20:26,840 --> 00:20:31,720

minority groups whatever they look like through to the dragnetting of you know the knee-jerk

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00:20:31,720 --> 00:20:35,640

reaction to okay just go get me a hundred of this kind of person a hundred of that kind of person

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00:20:35,640 --> 00:20:41,960

so we can fill the quotas and when you fast forward to today the the beautiful answer to that is

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00:20:41,960 --> 00:20:46,680

mentorship programs and we got an amazing one that one of my friends started here in Ocala
Chris Hickman

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00:20:47,240 --> 00:20:52,520

but you go to those underserved populations that maybe there are legitimate barriers to entry
these

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00:20:52,520 --> 00:20:57,800

some some of these young boys and girls can't put themselves through a fire academy um and
you give

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00:20:57,800 --> 00:21:01,400

them this free training and then there are scholarships of fire academies and then

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00:21:01,400 --> 00:21:07,320

departments way into hire that is how you positively impact diversity so you go into these

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00:21:07,320 --> 00:21:13,400

communities and you find the kids that would be great firefighters not just find a whole bunch of

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00:21:13,400 --> 00:21:17,000

kids because they look a certain way and i think that was the real disconnect from that initial

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00:21:17,000 --> 00:21:23,080

knee-jerk um that i hope you know we're really starting to crack that nut now is whatever that

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00:21:23,080 --> 00:21:29,640

group is that was underserved before find the incredible candidates amongst them and then use

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00:21:29,640 --> 00:21:34,040

that tool as well to say to other kids okay you tried it but you know you don't want to be

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00:21:34,040 --> 00:21:37,800

a firefighter now and you learned that that's phenomenal too you know absolutely served a

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00:21:37,800 --> 00:21:44,760

purpose but that's when you bring great candidates in and then you basically eradicate that animosity

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00:21:44,760 --> 00:21:49,560

that it was you know let's be honest that's what really rubbed people the wrong way during that time

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00:21:49,960 --> 00:21:55,160

was you had people that looked the part for whatever they were trying to fill but couldn't do the job

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00:21:55,160 --> 00:22:00,920

that's that's the thing so by by finding the best candidates and really reaching into these

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00:22:00,920 --> 00:22:06,200

underserved communities that to me is the 2024 answer to the diversity issue

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00:22:06,840 --> 00:22:16,120

i agree we had uh very very strong candidates coming up when i was just coming on and um

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00:22:18,680 --> 00:22:25,800

by far i think anaheim did just that they they they did everything they could to hire the best

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00:22:25,800 --> 00:22:30,200

that they could now of course there was always those that slipped through the cracks and you

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00:22:30,200 --> 00:22:34,360

usually found those out either through the tower or when they got on the floor and they started

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00:22:34,360 --> 00:22:41,400

their probationary period but for the most part when i came on uh it was all a bunch of very

197

00:22:41,400 --> 00:22:53,960

talented individuals that uh you know i i just knew that for me to get on i i was going to have to

198

00:22:53,960 --> 00:22:58,120

uh not buy into the the the predominant

199

00:23:00,120 --> 00:23:07,320

the predominant thought at the time was uh sorry man but white men can't get a job with civil

200

00:23:07,320 --> 00:23:13,960

service anymore and southern california was just littered with that at the time and i know for me

201

00:23:14,280 --> 00:23:19,720

i never did i never bought into it and thankfully i didn't buy into it because of that course that

202

00:23:19,720 --> 00:23:25,960

i had taken and some of the management training that they had instilled in me in that two and a

203

00:23:25,960 --> 00:23:31,240

half years that my wife and i were heavily involved with them so i was able to sneak through the crack

204

00:23:31,240 --> 00:23:38,280

if you want if you will uh just through a determination that um this is what i want to do

205

00:23:39,000 --> 00:23:46,200

i'd come out of construction and had been a general contractor for for many years and i knew

206

00:23:46,200 --> 00:23:51,560

that i had a value that i could add to the department any department no matter what it

207

00:23:51,560 --> 00:23:58,440

where it was or or or when i knew that my background in construction was a huge value

208

00:23:59,480 --> 00:24:05,320

to any organization i just had to get my foot in the door and prove it and thankfully anaheim

209

00:24:05,720 --> 00:24:11,720

let me get my foot in the door and uh i i hope that everybody was happy with my construction

210

00:24:11,720 --> 00:24:17,800

background and what i was able to accomplish as a truck captain and teaching in the academy and

211

00:24:17,800 --> 00:24:22,600

teaching building construction throughout might have even taught building construction to you i

212

00:24:22,600 --> 00:24:29,240

don't remember i'm sure you did i'm sure you did that was funny when i came out of the academy i

213

00:24:29,240 --> 00:24:36,680

went to fire school in orlando and then my son's mother my ex wanted to move down to miami and it

214

00:24:36,680 --> 00:24:42,360

was the same thing oh you'll never get hired down there unless you speak spanish you're a paramedic

215

00:24:42,360 --> 00:24:46,520

and i remember thinking well i just need one job you can give away all the other ones to other

216

00:24:46,520 --> 00:24:51,720

people i just need just one you know and then fast forward four months i was working for hire

217

00:24:51,720 --> 00:24:58,600

leah so there we go yeah i guess you know that you hear the you hear the chatter a lot

218

00:24:58,600 --> 00:25:06,920

uh all these competing voices they're everywhere and you can listen to them and then just evaluate

219

00:25:06,920 --> 00:25:11,960

it and determine if that's going to work for you i think unfortunately for many people they listen

220

00:25:11,960 --> 00:25:15,960

to that chatter and they listen to the thoughts that they have in their own mind over what they

221

00:25:15,960 --> 00:25:23,080

can or can't do and you buy into it pretty soon you believe in it and once you believe a lie

222

00:25:23,080 --> 00:25:31,320

uh you're pretty much guaranteed to facilitate that reality and a lot of people came away being

223

00:25:31,320 --> 00:25:39,560

victims of the fire service you know it's too hard i you know i always tease my my my copper buddies

224

00:25:39,560 --> 00:25:45,000

and you know say that was an easier test to take back then when i came on anybody could be a cop

225

00:25:45,720 --> 00:25:51,400

but they weren't hiring very many firemen and the ones that they did uh they were not

226

00:25:51,400 --> 00:25:56,680

hiring many people and they were not hiring many people and the ones that they did uh

227

00:25:57,800 --> 00:26:03,720

there was there were certain criteria that they were looking for so there was a time when i might

228

00:26:03,720 --> 00:26:09,320

even have thought about just saying forget it i can't do it i'll just become a cop but uh i knew

229

00:26:09,320 --> 00:26:14,760

being a cop was not going to be an answer for me i was not cop mentality i don't think i have the

230

00:26:14,760 --> 00:26:21,960

really is you know we both need each other thank god yeah nothing like uh the the the teamwork that

231

00:26:21,960 --> 00:26:26,760

we had out there but i could not do their job especially towards the end of my career i was

232

00:26:26,760 --> 00:26:30,200

seeing the stuff that they were having to go through i mean we were going through our own but

233

00:26:31,080 --> 00:26:36,920

um man just to think what these guys were dealing with every single day and then we would show up

234

00:26:36,920 --> 00:26:43,880

on scene and our patients would turn around they'd have a completely different attitude towards us

235

00:26:43,880 --> 00:26:50,520

and a few more bruises i remember that we were the good guys but we used to be able to get a

236

00:26:50,520 --> 00:26:55,080

lot of information out of them because we were the good guys and of course you know that information

237

00:26:55,080 --> 00:27:00,840

if it was relevant got turned right on over to pd so they can do their jobs what about from the

238

00:27:00,840 --> 00:27:06,520

fitness side what were you playing during school age and then as you said six years of testing

239

00:27:06,520 --> 00:27:11,320

you know that's one of the things that we can own when it comes to improving our chances of getting

240

00:27:11,320 --> 00:27:15,800

hired so so what were you also doing physically after you left school to prepare for the fire

241

00:27:15,800 --> 00:27:24,040

service um i played baseball my sport was baseball i did play a little football uh junior and senior

242

00:27:24,040 --> 00:27:31,960

year of high school but predominantly my sport was baseball so i played a lot of ball uh once i

243

00:27:31,960 --> 00:27:41,320

finished with college um and then went to the military i ended up hurting my arm in college and uh

244

00:27:41,320 --> 00:27:47,160

redshirted and instead of coming back and playing again i decided to go to germany

245

00:27:47,720 --> 00:27:55,240

in the military and start having some fun but then when i got out and i just started playing

246

00:27:55,240 --> 00:28:01,720

softball after that so i was very competitive in men's softball leagues in effect that was one of

247

00:28:01,720 --> 00:28:07,000

my interview questions when i got hired with anaheim was they asked me if i played any sports and i

248

00:28:07,000 --> 00:28:14,840

said yeah i played baseball and the chief at the time was a was a guy that played a lot of baseball

249

00:28:17,480 --> 00:28:24,520

and i remember him asking me are you any good his name was jeff bowman and i said yeah i'm pretty

250

00:28:24,520 --> 00:28:30,840

good and he said all right we'll have to see about that and they ended up hiring me and i was i was

251

00:28:30,840 --> 00:28:37,640

a rookie playing on their softball team so i guess i was able to prove myself enough to get on the

252

00:28:37,640 --> 00:28:42,840

team as a rookie so that was a lot of fun a lot of fun so i just carried on with that throughout

253

00:28:42,840 --> 00:28:49,400

my career as long as i could played softball and outside of that there was not a lot of sports

254

00:28:49,400 --> 00:28:57,720

activity motorcycle riding maybe i did a lot of motorcycle riding we did water sports sea do's

255

00:28:57,720 --> 00:29:05,400

boating that kind of thing took a lot of trips with the the fire fire family river trips and whatnot

256

00:29:06,280 --> 00:29:12,840

yeah now chief bowman i think he was the chief just before chief smith wouldn't because smith was my

257

00:29:12,840 --> 00:29:19,240

chief so he must have been chief for quite a while then uh yeah jeff was a chief for many years many

258

00:29:19,240 --> 00:29:24,840

years i think he was one of the youngest chiefs in southern california if i'm not mistaken i don't

259

00:29:24,840 --> 00:29:29,480

know this for sure but i think he was around 32 or something like that when he became the chief

260

00:29:30,440 --> 00:29:38,520

and uh he was there for quite a while yeah when you look back at your childhood now through these

261

00:29:38,520 --> 00:29:46,520

mature eyes that you have were there any elements that you identify as as challenging traumatic

262

00:29:46,520 --> 00:29:51,160

however you want to label them and the reason i ask is i was blown away i mean i've done over

263

00:29:51,160 --> 00:29:58,520

900 interviews now how many of us in uniform had elements of that when we were younger and a lot

264

00:29:58,520 --> 00:30:03,880

of those are the reasons why you know it drove a lot of us to serve for for a multitude of reasons

265

00:30:03,880 --> 00:30:08,840

but they can also then manifest later in our career in a negative way if left unaddressed so

266

00:30:09,560 --> 00:30:12,920

when you look back now were there any any elements that you reflect upon

267

00:30:15,800 --> 00:30:16,120

uh

268

00:30:16,120 --> 00:30:23,320

i don't know if this is where you're going with this question i know that very early in my life

269

00:30:24,120 --> 00:30:31,160

i had a dream that i wanted to be a fireman at the age of seven i ended up burning down my next door

270

00:30:31,160 --> 00:30:40,200

neighbor's garage and la county responded and it was quite a show i mean the whole mushroom cloud

271

00:30:40,200 --> 00:30:48,520

blew the top of that doggone roof right off that garage and i remember being so scared thinking to

272

00:30:48,520 --> 00:30:54,040

myself i'm you know something's major gonna happen to me and i remember this captain came up to me

273

00:30:54,040 --> 00:30:59,720

and got down on his knee and licked me in the eye and was just thankful that i wasn't hurt and then

274

00:30:59,720 --> 00:31:09,960

very uh i don't know very fatherly just gave me some advice and uh talked to me about the dangers

275

00:31:09,960 --> 00:31:19,000

of what i had done and uh by the time i don't know four or five years past that rolled around

276

00:31:19,000 --> 00:31:27,480

uh i think it was early 70s that uh emergency came out and that's what hooked me that's what

277

00:31:27,480 --> 00:31:33,640

hooked me squad 51 did it to me man and that's where i thought that man i gotta do this but

278

00:31:34,680 --> 00:31:36,040

at the time

279

00:31:39,880 --> 00:31:44,200

i was still too young to figure out what exactly or how exactly i would do it i was still too young

280

00:31:44,200 --> 00:31:50,360

to figure out what exactly or how exactly i would do it i didn't have anybody in my in my circle of

281

00:31:50,360 --> 00:31:54,920

influence at the time that had ever been a firefighter so i didn't know much about it

282

00:31:55,400 --> 00:32:01,720

so i just went about doing my own thing came back from the military and got into construction

283

00:32:02,760 --> 00:32:12,040

and at about 1987 or eight i started seeing the writing on the wall that

284

00:32:12,040 --> 00:32:18,840

now that i'm married i probably ought to look at a more stable career than swinging a hammer for a living

285

00:32:19,720 --> 00:32:29,800

and by 1989 i was heavy into it so i had started really pursuing that dream if you will and uh

286

00:32:30,840 --> 00:32:37,320

i think a lot of it just had to do with you know the upbringing i had uh my dad was always

287

00:32:37,320 --> 00:32:42,440

a person that was serving people as a as a preacher my mom as well as the preacher's wife

288

00:32:43,080 --> 00:32:47,720

so they were always helping people overcome whatever they were trying to overcome so it

289

00:32:47,720 --> 00:32:52,920

kind of just inherently was in me to want to do something where i could help people

290

00:32:52,920 --> 00:33:00,440

and do something that was respectable um and that's probably what caused me to go in that direction

291

00:33:00,440 --> 00:33:08,680

what were the fitness standards or expectations when you entered anaheim and what has been your

292

00:33:08,680 --> 00:33:15,240

observation of the evolution or devolution of fitness in the fire service well i'm probably

293

00:33:15,240 --> 00:33:19,640

the wrong guy to ask about that there's a running joke in anaheim i didn't do a lot of

294

00:33:20,280 --> 00:33:24,920

physical fitness i didn't do a lot of working out at the stations i did a little bit here and there

295

00:33:24,920 --> 00:33:33,320

but most of my activity is what kept me sane kept me healthy and fit but there was a running joke

296

00:33:33,320 --> 00:33:39,560

at our firehouse where i would go and hit the gym every day and it was literally me going into the

297

00:33:39,560 --> 00:33:43,720

weight room and hitting the gym just hitting the weights and knocking on them and letting everybody

298

00:33:43,720 --> 00:33:49,480

go okay i hit the weights i'm done i'm out of here and go do my thing but i was just a little bit

299

00:33:49,480 --> 00:33:55,800

and feed back on, but when i first came on, I was the way i knew i had to do it.

300

00:33:56,920 --> 00:34:03,720

so when i first came on, i worked construction all my days off even as a rookie

301

00:34:05,560 --> 00:34:13,080

so my activity level was always super high so for me to go and and do all the

302

00:34:13,080 --> 00:34:15,880

the weights and the things like that,

303

00:34:15,880 --> 00:34:18,760

I was more focused on maybe doing more cardio

304

00:34:18,760 --> 00:34:19,800

than I was muscle building,

305

00:34:19,800 --> 00:34:22,200

because I felt like construction was giving me

306

00:34:22,200 --> 00:34:23,760

the workout I needed.

307

00:34:23,760 --> 00:34:28,760

And once I got in, I could start to see the evolution

308

00:34:29,360 --> 00:34:31,800

where it was becoming much more

309

00:34:35,100 --> 00:34:40,100

of a requirement to stay physically fit

310

00:34:40,320 --> 00:34:42,800

just to keep your mind healthy.

311

00:34:42,800 --> 00:34:44,720

And I did that.

312

00:34:44,720 --> 00:34:47,640

I tried to stay as fit as I possibly could

313

00:34:47,640 --> 00:34:49,880

throughout my entire career,

314

00:34:49,880 --> 00:34:54,560

but didn't ever get into the day-to-day grind

315

00:34:54,560 --> 00:34:56,640

of just making sure I was hitting the gym every day,

316

00:34:56,640 --> 00:34:57,480

doing whatever I did.

317

00:34:57,480 --> 00:35:01,060

I just kind of just went along with my own program

318

00:35:01,060 --> 00:35:06,060

of working, enjoying my time off

319

00:35:06,940 --> 00:35:08,120

to the best of my ability

320

00:35:08,120 --> 00:35:11,240

and let the chips fall where they may.

321

00:35:11,240 --> 00:35:13,400

Seemed like I always stayed pretty healthy.

322

00:35:14,920 --> 00:35:18,120

What about the attrition rate for your probationary class?

323

00:35:18,120 --> 00:35:20,280

By the time I got there in, when did I get hired?

324

00:35:20,280 --> 00:35:21,960

Oh, five.

325

00:35:21,960 --> 00:35:26,960

There was basically a history of about 25% attrition rate

326

00:35:28,520 --> 00:35:30,760

where by the time you got to the end of the probation,

327

00:35:30,760 --> 00:35:32,360

and that's the thing about Anaheim's probation

328

00:35:32,360 --> 00:35:34,200

is it was a solid probation.

329

00:35:34,200 --> 00:35:35,920

One of my classmates got let go

330

00:35:35,920 --> 00:35:38,160

literally the day before we hit a year.

331

00:35:38,160 --> 00:35:40,640

So, you held that bar high

332

00:35:40,640 --> 00:35:42,200

and that was it.

333

00:35:42,200 --> 00:35:44,000

We were either gonna make it or we weren't.

334

00:35:44,000 --> 00:35:45,340

And it was gracious.

335

00:35:45,340 --> 00:35:46,840

It was like, look, there's other departments around.

336

00:35:46,840 --> 00:35:47,680

You'd be a great fit.

337

00:35:47,680 --> 00:35:49,160

You're just not the right fit for us.

338

00:35:49,160 --> 00:35:51,460

So, I was terrified for 365 days

339

00:35:51,460 --> 00:35:52,960

and then just slightly less terrified

340

00:35:52,960 --> 00:35:55,040

for the next several years.

341

00:35:55,040 --> 00:35:57,880

But what was that like when you got hired

342

00:35:57,880 --> 00:35:59,660

and then through your eyes,

343

00:35:59,660 --> 00:36:01,240

how were they able to maintain

344

00:36:01,240 --> 00:36:03,180

or create that very high standard

345

00:36:03,180 --> 00:36:05,740

when maybe some of the departments around them

346

00:36:05,740 --> 00:36:07,780

weren't holding it quite as high?

347

00:36:07,780 --> 00:36:12,780

Well, our training cadre held a very high standard.

348

00:36:13,100 --> 00:36:17,100

And it's like you said,

349

00:36:19,580 --> 00:36:23,060

through the tower itself, that was stressful enough.

350

00:36:23,060 --> 00:36:25,420

I mean, that was just every single day.

351

00:36:25,420 --> 00:36:27,580

It was intense.

352

00:36:27,580 --> 00:36:29,220

But once we got on the floor

353

00:36:29,220 --> 00:36:32,260

and got into our probationary rhythms,

354

00:36:34,260 --> 00:36:36,100

I think a lot of guys would have had

355

00:36:36,100 --> 00:36:38,140

that's where they have most of their issues

356

00:36:38,140 --> 00:36:41,820

because there's such a fear when you're in that environment

357

00:36:41,820 --> 00:36:45,180

and everybody's just looking at you

358

00:36:45,180 --> 00:36:47,580

and examining you and evaluating you.

359

00:36:47,580 --> 00:36:52,580

And it can be daunting.

360

00:36:52,580 --> 00:36:55,420

For me, I don't know that

361

00:36:56,820 --> 00:36:59,580

what the attrition rate was per se.

362

00:36:59,580 --> 00:37:02,500

I do know that we ended up losing one guy

363

00:37:02,500 --> 00:37:03,340

out of our academy.

364

00:37:03,340 --> 00:37:05,300

And our academy only had one guy

365

00:37:05,300 --> 00:37:09,220

and our academy only had six people, I think,

366

00:37:09,220 --> 00:37:10,380

something like six or seven.

367

00:37:10,380 --> 00:37:13,140

So we were very small groups back then.

368

00:37:13,140 --> 00:37:15,580

And then by the time you guys came around,

369

00:37:15,580 --> 00:37:18,620

I mean, we were having classes that were 20 plus,

370

00:37:18,620 --> 00:37:20,540

15, 20, easy.

371

00:37:20,540 --> 00:37:22,140

But my class was very small.

372

00:37:22,140 --> 00:37:23,140

We lost one man.

373

00:37:23,140 --> 00:37:23,980

That was it.

374

00:37:25,460 --> 00:37:27,200

Class before that lost a few.

375

00:37:28,860 --> 00:37:31,900

But we didn't start losing people

376

00:37:31,900 --> 00:37:35,740

on a higher level from what I could recall

377

00:37:35,740 --> 00:37:40,620

until we started having these big classes come through.

378

00:37:40,620 --> 00:37:44,460

And we were trying to catch up on the hiring.

379

00:37:46,180 --> 00:37:51,180

We had such a rate of people retiring

380

00:37:52,340 --> 00:37:55,460

and leaving a lot of those positions void

381

00:37:55,460 --> 00:37:58,740

that we had to start hiring a much,

382

00:37:58,740 --> 00:38:01,620
a greater amount of individuals

383

00:38:01,620 --> 00:38:02,860
to be able to keep up with it.

384

00:38:02,860 --> 00:38:04,400
And even then we couldn't keep up with it.

385

00:38:04,400 --> 00:38:08,100
So I don't know exactly what that rate was,

386

00:38:08,100 --> 00:38:10,500
but I know that it was,

387

00:38:10,500 --> 00:38:13,020
or at least Anaheim was known

388

00:38:13,020 --> 00:38:18,020
for having a very tough tower and probationary period.

389

00:38:19,620 --> 00:38:21,780
And there were a couple of guys,

390

00:38:21,780 --> 00:38:23,080
one in particular I know of,

391

00:38:23,080 --> 00:38:26,060
that he was very well known for being the Axeman.

392

00:38:29,260 --> 00:38:31,440
If he felt like you couldn't make it

393

00:38:31,440 --> 00:38:33,540

and the thing they always said was that

394

00:38:35,060 --> 00:38:37,440

you're gonna be put in the back seat

395

00:38:37,440 --> 00:38:41,020

and you gotta make sure that that person in the back seat

396

00:38:41,020 --> 00:38:42,300

knows what they're doing enough

397

00:38:42,300 --> 00:38:46,580

because your whole crew could rely on them one day.

398

00:38:46,580 --> 00:38:48,580

So it was taken very seriously.

399

00:38:50,140 --> 00:38:52,120

I think it's a really important perspective

400

00:38:52,120 --> 00:38:55,580

because you mentioned about trying to hire.

401

00:38:55,580 --> 00:38:57,660

And I remember, I think there was two groups.

402

00:38:57,660 --> 00:38:58,900

I think there was 15 in each.

403

00:38:58,900 --> 00:39:00,600

So it was my group and then Jimmy Timbos

404

00:39:00,600 --> 00:39:02,540

was the one, Portillo, all those guys,

405

00:39:02,540 --> 00:39:04,420

was the one, I think they were six months

406

00:39:04,420 --> 00:39:05,520

or a year behind us.

407

00:39:06,780 --> 00:39:10,460

But despite needing to fill those vacancies,

408

00:39:10,460 --> 00:39:14,220

you still got rid of 25%.

409

00:39:14,220 --> 00:39:17,140

And what I've told a lot of people recently,

410

00:39:17,140 --> 00:39:19,020

what I observed with Anaheim

411

00:39:19,020 --> 00:39:21,120

is the bar was set high and kept high.

412

00:39:21,120 --> 00:39:22,020

So people would line,

413

00:39:22,020 --> 00:39:26,740

I tested against a thousand plus people for 30 positions.

414

00:39:26,740 --> 00:39:30,060

So fast forward to today where people are struggling,

415

00:39:30,060 --> 00:39:31,860
there's this, in my opinion,

416

00:39:31,860 --> 00:39:33,500
I'd love to get your take on it,

417

00:39:33,500 --> 00:39:36,100
completely backwards thinking that,

418

00:39:36,100 --> 00:39:39,060
oh, if we just lower standards, we can get more people.

419

00:39:39,060 --> 00:39:41,100
I disagree because I feel like

420

00:39:41,100 --> 00:39:43,820
when you have departments that hold that bar up

421

00:39:43,820 --> 00:39:47,220
and are known for good training and aggressive firefighting

422

00:39:47,220 --> 00:39:48,980
and taking care of their people,

423

00:39:48,980 --> 00:39:51,620
that is how you have people lining up out the front door,

424

00:39:51,620 --> 00:39:53,780
not lowering the standards.

425

00:39:53,780 --> 00:39:54,620
I agree.

426

00:39:57,140 --> 00:39:59,860

One of the things that we were always challenged with

427

00:39:59,860 --> 00:40:02,980

is there was a pervasive thought

428

00:40:05,940 --> 00:40:09,060

once people got in some leadership positions

429

00:40:09,060 --> 00:40:11,540

where they felt that

430

00:40:17,000 --> 00:40:20,120

you had a 30 year career to learn this stuff.

431

00:40:20,120 --> 00:40:22,860

So maybe you can go a little bit easier on folks

432

00:40:22,860 --> 00:40:23,940

because they had such a,

433

00:40:23,940 --> 00:40:26,660

they had a 30 year career to learn it.

434

00:40:26,660 --> 00:40:30,040

And I could understand the reasoning behind that.

435

00:40:30,040 --> 00:40:35,040

Without a doubt, I learned way more about fire service

436

00:40:36,580 --> 00:40:39,380

and the firefighting industry, if you will,

437

00:40:39,380 --> 00:40:42,980
after getting into the department.

438

00:40:42,980 --> 00:40:47,780
And so you do learn a substantial amount of information

439

00:40:47,780 --> 00:40:51,040
over the course of your year or the course of your career.

440

00:40:52,120 --> 00:40:56,060
However, there's gotta be a standard

441

00:40:56,060 --> 00:41:00,460
that you gotta meet before getting on the floor.

442

00:41:01,380 --> 00:41:06,380
And that standard is there to develop trust.

443

00:41:08,340 --> 00:41:11,440
The trust in our department to train,

444

00:41:12,340 --> 00:41:17,340
the trust in the individual crew on whatever rig you're on.

445

00:41:19,980 --> 00:41:22,480
And when you lower the standards,

446

00:41:22,480 --> 00:41:27,480
then you give trust a fisher in the foundation.

447

00:41:30,900 --> 00:41:34,820
And now you're wondering, okay, how did they get here?

448

00:41:34,820 --> 00:41:39,820

Was this a quota or was this the cream of the crop?

449

00:41:44,500 --> 00:41:48,880

And when you have a department like we came from in Anaheim,

450

00:41:48,880 --> 00:41:51,360

we were always hiring the best of the best,

451

00:41:51,360 --> 00:41:53,160

the cream of the crop.

452

00:41:53,160 --> 00:41:56,940

And that was the way it was, at least for my career.

453

00:41:57,840 --> 00:42:00,940

But I did start to see some of those standards get lowered.

454

00:42:00,940 --> 00:42:03,740

And a lot of those folks that ended up

455

00:42:03,740 --> 00:42:06,340

not making it through our process,

456

00:42:06,340 --> 00:42:08,580

you could see turn around and sue the city

457

00:42:08,580 --> 00:42:12,500

or go after individuals on the training cadre

458

00:42:12,500 --> 00:42:15,640

or whatever that may be, which was sad for me

459

00:42:15,640 --> 00:42:20,640

because without the trust of those individuals coming on to

460

00:42:26,900 --> 00:42:31,900

our crew and knowing that they knew what was going on,

461

00:42:31,980 --> 00:42:36,340

they had an understanding of the seriousness

462

00:42:36,340 --> 00:42:38,200

of what we were entering into.

463

00:42:38,200 --> 00:42:43,200

It's very difficult for me to look back and go,

464

00:42:45,960 --> 00:42:47,800

yeah, I wish we would have kept that person around

465

00:42:47,800 --> 00:42:52,800

because they could not keep up or do what was necessary

466

00:42:52,960 --> 00:42:57,960

to maintain that factor of trust within our department.

467

00:42:58,280 --> 00:43:00,860

So I know that on an individual level down

468

00:43:00,860 --> 00:43:03,300

at maybe a crew level, perhaps,

469

00:43:03,300 --> 00:43:05,400

it was gonna even be more difficult.

470

00:43:05,400 --> 00:43:07,080

And so you had people come through

471

00:43:07,080 --> 00:43:10,120

that you would see people looking at like,

472

00:43:10,120 --> 00:43:13,240

okay, we gotta keep an eye on this one.

473

00:43:13,240 --> 00:43:16,000

So let's do everything we can to bring them up

474

00:43:16,000 --> 00:43:17,720

to the standard we need them.

475

00:43:17,720 --> 00:43:19,960

And we'll use their entire probationary period

476

00:43:19,960 --> 00:43:21,160

to get them there.

477

00:43:21,160 --> 00:43:23,160

But at the end of that probationary period,

478

00:43:23,160 --> 00:43:27,320

if they're not there, we're gonna have to let them go.

479

00:43:27,320 --> 00:43:30,220

And I got very comfortable with that mentality.

480

00:43:31,480 --> 00:43:33,400

I shit myself when I first got there.

481

00:43:33,400 --> 00:43:36,520

Reason being, the way we were shown how to throw ladders

482

00:43:36,520 --> 00:43:40,520

in the Florida Academy was you suitcase carry the ladder

483

00:43:40,520 --> 00:43:45,080

to the wall of a completely open drill tower apron,

484

00:43:45,080 --> 00:43:47,600

lay it flat, walk up the rungs,

485

00:43:47,600 --> 00:43:49,560

then you had to do, pull it away

486

00:43:49,560 --> 00:43:52,360

and you would actually foot it from the side,

487

00:43:52,360 --> 00:43:54,980

which once I learned the other way, made no sense to me.

488

00:43:54,980 --> 00:43:56,560

Then you'd have to flip it.

489

00:43:56,560 --> 00:43:58,960

And it was just, that's all we knew at the time.

490

00:43:58,960 --> 00:44:02,120

Then I come to Anaheim and guys are high shouldering it

491

00:44:02,120 --> 00:44:04,440

and sticking ladders and I'm like, oh shit,

492

00:44:04,440 --> 00:44:06,880

I have got a steep learning curve.

493

00:44:06,880 --> 00:44:09,680

And I know, I'm sure some of the cadre in the Academy

494

00:44:09,680 --> 00:44:12,480

were like, I'm not so sure about this English guy.

495

00:44:12,480 --> 00:44:13,720

But it was just that.

496

00:44:13,720 --> 00:44:17,000

At the same time, it wasn't like I was ridiculed.

497

00:44:17,000 --> 00:44:19,920

With my classmates and then the cadre,

498

00:44:19,920 --> 00:44:21,160

I was shown the right way.

499

00:44:21,160 --> 00:44:24,280

It took some time and I got it and ended up, as you said,

500

00:44:24,280 --> 00:44:26,360

meeting expectations at the end.

501

00:44:26,360 --> 00:44:28,840

So it wasn't like it was unfair,

502

00:44:28,840 --> 00:44:32,440

but each one of us had the opportunity to own our skills

503

00:44:32,440 --> 00:44:34,600

and our fitness and our book smarts.

504

00:44:34,600 --> 00:44:37,000

And so it's ultimately up to the individual

505

00:44:37,000 --> 00:44:39,520

to be either be prepared or not be prepared.

506

00:44:39,520 --> 00:44:42,640

And I think the way that I've always looked at it is,

507

00:44:42,640 --> 00:44:44,840

an Academy and orientation should prepare you.

508

00:44:44,840 --> 00:44:48,320

So if you get a fire on your very first call

509

00:44:48,320 --> 00:44:51,080

on your very first day, you're prepared.

510

00:44:51,080 --> 00:44:52,560

Doesn't mean your experience doesn't mean

511

00:44:52,560 --> 00:44:54,200

that you're gonna run the call,

512

00:44:54,200 --> 00:44:56,120

but you can at least do what you're asked of you.

513

00:44:56,120 --> 00:44:59,920

So this kind of softly, gently, what if you get,

514

00:44:59,920 --> 00:45:02,800

a Grenfell fire situation or the Vegas shooting

515

00:45:02,800 --> 00:45:04,320

on your first day, are you ready?

516

00:45:04,320 --> 00:45:05,160

Yes or no?

517

00:45:05,160 --> 00:45:06,800

Right, that's exactly right.

518

00:45:06,800 --> 00:45:11,800

And looking in that backseat, as a captain,

519

00:45:13,680 --> 00:45:18,680

I was very fortunate that I spent most of my career

520

00:45:20,520 --> 00:45:24,120

in a specialty assignment on the USAR team.

521

00:45:24,120 --> 00:45:27,820

And so the people I always had there were assigned to me.

522

00:45:27,820 --> 00:45:30,740

So we always had people that were at a level

523

00:45:30,740 --> 00:45:35,740

of proficiency and skillset that I never had to worry.

524

00:45:36,860 --> 00:45:37,700

I really didn't.

525

00:45:39,020 --> 00:45:41,460

The only time I had to worry is if I had an overtime

526

00:45:41,460 --> 00:45:44,140

or coming in and I didn't know them that well,

527

00:45:44,140 --> 00:45:46,620

or I didn't know what they could or couldn't do.

528

00:45:46,620 --> 00:45:49,180

So in those cases, you just keep an eye on them

529

00:45:49,180 --> 00:45:50,180

until they earn your trust.

530

00:45:50,180 --> 00:45:53,300

And then once they have your trust, it's a no brainer.

531

00:45:54,540 --> 00:45:55,860

Absolutely.

532

00:45:55,860 --> 00:45:59,020

When I first came on Anaheim, I remember we just missed,

533

00:45:59,020 --> 00:46:00,060

I can't remember if it was in the Academy

534

00:46:00,060 --> 00:46:01,380

or if it was right before we got there,

535

00:46:01,380 --> 00:46:03,700

but it was the Stadium Lofts fire,

536

00:46:03,700 --> 00:46:06,140

which once they rebuilt, Mikey ended up buying a place

537

00:46:06,140 --> 00:46:07,460

in there for a crazy amount of money.

538

00:46:07,460 --> 00:46:08,300

I was on that fire.

539

00:46:08,300 --> 00:46:10,060

Oh yeah, so that's what I was gonna ask you.

540

00:46:10,060 --> 00:46:13,100

So in your career, what was some of the,

541

00:46:13,100 --> 00:46:15,180

the quote unquote career calls,

542

00:46:15,180 --> 00:46:16,780

whether they're fires or anything else?

543

00:46:18,540 --> 00:46:23,540

Well, I don't look at, I can remember the stadium calls

544

00:46:23,540 --> 00:46:27,780

and I can remember the Stadium Lofts fire

545

00:46:27,780 --> 00:46:28,900

because I was on that.

546

00:46:32,300 --> 00:46:34,620

Shoot, the fires, they've all run together.

547

00:46:34,620 --> 00:46:36,940

I'm not even sure what the big ones were anymore.

548

00:46:36,940 --> 00:46:39,380

I mean, I know we had one over off of Rob Way,

549

00:46:41,180 --> 00:46:43,580

which is in two's first in,

550

00:46:43,580 --> 00:46:47,540

that I was actually on the roof, me and Dave Baker

551

00:46:47,540 --> 00:46:50,100

were on the roof cutting a trench.

552

00:46:50,100 --> 00:46:54,260

And man, the thing was blowing up on us.

553

00:46:54,260 --> 00:46:59,260

And I walked away with my face mask melted,

554

00:47:02,460 --> 00:47:05,860

burn marks on my turnout coat,

555

00:47:07,580 --> 00:47:10,980

had some singe marks around my hood.

556

00:47:10,980 --> 00:47:14,220

So it was getting hot pretty quick and we finished up.

557

00:47:14,220 --> 00:47:16,740

And I remember getting down on the ground

558

00:47:16,740 --> 00:47:21,260

and doing a little rehab and Chief Smith came up to me

559

00:47:21,260 --> 00:47:23,860

and was telling us, man, we saw you guys up there.

560

00:47:25,020 --> 00:47:26,300

That fire was on you guys.

561

00:47:26,300 --> 00:47:28,340

I'm surprised you guys stayed up that long world.

562

00:47:28,340 --> 00:47:30,460

We had a job to do and we felt safe.

563

00:47:30,460 --> 00:47:31,820

So we were getting it done.

564

00:47:33,220 --> 00:47:34,820

But I never looked at the fires like,

565

00:47:34,820 --> 00:47:37,180

okay, that fire was named this, that's what it was.

566

00:47:37,180 --> 00:47:39,420

This fire was named that, that's what it was.

567

00:47:41,180 --> 00:47:44,380

But the big fires that we ended up going on

568

00:47:44,380 --> 00:47:47,020

were pretty good size.

569

00:47:47,020 --> 00:47:50,140

Three heads, that stadium loss fire,

570

00:47:50,140 --> 00:47:54,820

we could see the header from the station.

571

00:47:54,820 --> 00:47:59,820

We pulled out on to Cotella there and boy,

572

00:48:00,220 --> 00:48:03,420

you could see the thing from all the way down

573

00:48:03,420 --> 00:48:05,140

from where we were close to Disneyland.

574

00:48:05,140 --> 00:48:07,780

That thing was almost to the 57 freeway.

575

00:48:07,780 --> 00:48:11,900

And by the time we got there, that building had already,

576

00:48:11,900 --> 00:48:13,620

that was in framing stages.

577

00:48:13,620 --> 00:48:16,820

So that's the first time I've ever been on a fire

578

00:48:16,820 --> 00:48:19,140

where we actually lost the foundation.

579

00:48:19,140 --> 00:48:20,980

They had to rip the foundation out of that thing

580

00:48:20,980 --> 00:48:21,880

and start over.

581

00:48:23,540 --> 00:48:26,100

But the heat, the BTUs coming off that thing

582

00:48:26,100 --> 00:48:27,940

were melting signs across the street.

583

00:48:27,940 --> 00:48:29,700

That was a big fire.

584

00:48:31,740 --> 00:48:35,220

I remember the Pallette Farm fire that we had.

585

00:48:35,220 --> 00:48:36,540

I think it was on our shift

586

00:48:36,540 --> 00:48:40,340

because I think it was me and Jimmy on that one and Terry.

587

00:48:40,340 --> 00:48:43,180

But again, same thing, we were coming out one

588

00:48:43,180 --> 00:48:44,780

and you could see the glow.

589

00:48:44,780 --> 00:48:47,220

And that was in five's first year, I think.

590

00:48:48,120 --> 00:48:48,960

I mean, crazy fire.

591

00:48:48,960 --> 00:48:53,180

And that was the one where engine eight, I think,

592

00:48:53,180 --> 00:48:55,460

was kind of trapped behind the fence

593

00:48:55,460 --> 00:48:56,800

and we ended up cutting the fence

594

00:48:56,800 --> 00:48:59,980

and the gauges had melted like a Picasso painting.

595

00:48:59,980 --> 00:49:01,660

I do, yeah, I do remember that.

596

00:49:01,660 --> 00:49:04,740

I remember, yeah, I remember burning up some gauges

597

00:49:04,740 --> 00:49:06,020

on a fire.

598

00:49:06,020 --> 00:49:08,700

Yeah, that was crazy fire too.

599

00:49:08,700 --> 00:49:10,700

Well, I know that we talked about this

600

00:49:10,700 --> 00:49:12,220

when we spoke not too long ago,

601

00:49:12,220 --> 00:49:17,220

but the mental health journey of a lot of us in uniform

602

00:49:17,760 --> 00:49:18,940

as you progress through,

603

00:49:18,940 --> 00:49:21,960

and again, I talk about this all the time,

604

00:49:21,960 --> 00:49:24,740

you added in the work week and Anaheim was 56 hours,

605

00:49:24,740 --> 00:49:28,460

no Kelly Day, so a brutal work schedule

606

00:49:28,460 --> 00:49:31,820

before you even mentioned things like mandatory overtime.

607

00:49:31,820 --> 00:49:36,820

When you look back, when did you start to experience

608

00:49:37,140 --> 00:49:39,740

challenges when it came to the mental health side?

609

00:49:39,740 --> 00:49:41,340

I think it was pretty early actually,

610

00:49:41,340 --> 00:49:46,340

because my wife would tell you that I would come home cranky

611

00:49:47,220 --> 00:49:52,220

or I'd come home short tempered or kind of the typical

612

00:49:55,660 --> 00:49:59,220

sleep deprivation kind of issues that you would have.

613

00:50:01,940 --> 00:50:06,940

But I think when it really started to take off for me,

614

00:50:06,940 --> 00:50:09,860

I can't say that I ever experienced

615

00:50:09,860 --> 00:50:11,780

the mental health side of things

616

00:50:11,780 --> 00:50:14,060

because of the fire service.

617

00:50:14,060 --> 00:50:16,980

I was experiencing mental health stuff

618

00:50:16,980 --> 00:50:20,260

before I even went in to the fire service.

619

00:50:20,260 --> 00:50:22,860

And I'll explain how that works is that

620

00:50:27,260 --> 00:50:30,620

I spent the first 10 years of my marriage

621

00:50:30,620 --> 00:50:33,660

not in the fire service, I was a contractor.

622

00:50:33,660 --> 00:50:38,660

And unfortunately, I had developed a wayward eye,

623

00:50:42,140 --> 00:50:47,140

if you will, and I got caught up into an addiction.

624

00:50:47,860 --> 00:50:52,860

And that addiction was sexual addiction, pornography,

625

00:50:53,620 --> 00:50:56,860

and unfortunately for me,

626

00:50:56,860 --> 00:50:59,380

it led way beyond just pornography.

627

00:50:59,380 --> 00:51:04,380

And just before getting hired on into the fire service,

628

00:51:06,380 --> 00:51:10,060

I had already been working for three solid years

629

00:51:10,060 --> 00:51:11,980

on my sobriety, had a mentor,

630

00:51:11,980 --> 00:51:14,580

had a guy walking me through it, helping me.

631

00:51:14,580 --> 00:51:19,580

And he ended up teaching me how to look past my addiction

632

00:51:22,860 --> 00:51:25,140

and see it for what it really was.

633

00:51:25,140 --> 00:51:26,940

He says, that addiction,

634

00:51:26,940 --> 00:51:29,860

is how you anesthetize your trauma.

635

00:51:29,860 --> 00:51:33,060

So then I started realizing at that point,

636

00:51:33,060 --> 00:51:34,340

okay, well, what's the trauma?

637

00:51:34,340 --> 00:51:36,220

I thought I had a great childhood, man.

638

00:51:36,220 --> 00:51:38,420

I mean, I love my childhood,

639

00:51:38,420 --> 00:51:42,580

but there were some traumas that happened in my life

640

00:51:42,580 --> 00:51:45,580

at a very young age that caused me

641

00:51:45,580 --> 00:51:48,180

to feel certain ways about myself.

642

00:51:48,180 --> 00:51:53,180

And those feelings over a course of time,

643

00:51:53,180 --> 00:51:58,180

start creating a desire to anesthetize the hurt,

644

00:51:59,220 --> 00:52:02,500

the shame, the fear, the guilt.

645

00:52:02,500 --> 00:52:06,020

And so when I ended up leaving for the military

646

00:52:06,020 --> 00:52:11,020

and going overseas, I completely went off the deep end

647

00:52:11,860 --> 00:52:15,860

sexually with, you know, I just, you know,

648

00:52:17,380 --> 00:52:19,140

it's not something I'm trying to do.

649

00:52:19,140 --> 00:52:20,740

I'm trying to do it for myself.

650

00:52:20,740 --> 00:52:23,780

You know, it's not something I'm proud of,

651

00:52:23,780 --> 00:52:28,780

but I had my eyes opened up when you go to Europe,

652

00:52:30,700 --> 00:52:34,180

their sexual tendencies or their appetites

653

00:52:34,180 --> 00:52:35,860

are a little different than ours.

654

00:52:35,860 --> 00:52:40,580

There was much more available in the 80s,

655

00:52:40,580 --> 00:52:45,580

in the early 80s out there than there were here.

656

00:52:45,580 --> 00:52:49,940

And so I got my appetite wet a little bit, if you will,

657

00:52:49,940 --> 00:52:54,940

on the variety of women and all of the ability

658

00:52:55,980 --> 00:53:00,980

that was out there to have these little rendezvous.

659

00:53:03,140 --> 00:53:05,340

And so by the time I got stateside,

660

00:53:06,100 --> 00:53:10,460

I was kind of well versed in my addiction,

661

00:53:10,460 --> 00:53:15,460

but kind of devaluing it, if you will, by just saying,

662

00:53:15,460 --> 00:53:16,300

well, that's just normal.

663

00:53:16,300 --> 00:53:17,540

I mean, all guys are like this.

664

00:53:17,540 --> 00:53:19,260

I mean, that's just what guys do.

665

00:53:20,300 --> 00:53:25,300

And then I got married and I thought getting married

666

00:53:25,420 --> 00:53:28,340

would end that and it didn't.

667

00:53:28,340 --> 00:53:31,380

And in fact, getting married, it just intensified it

668

00:53:31,380 --> 00:53:35,300

because now I'm looking at being married

669

00:53:35,300 --> 00:53:38,900

and only having, you know, my wife and making sure

670

00:53:38,900 --> 00:53:42,340

that she was the only one, but all of this success

671

00:53:42,340 --> 00:53:47,340

that I'd had made it very difficult for me to be monogamous.

672

00:53:50,540 --> 00:53:55,540

And after my two boys were born, I knew I was in trouble

673

00:53:57,780 --> 00:54:00,260

and I knew I needed to get help.

674

00:54:00,260 --> 00:54:05,260

And I just remember crying out for help.

675

00:54:05,580 --> 00:54:08,500

Actually, as I was, you know, I'm gonna say this,

676

00:54:08,500 --> 00:54:10,740

probably the most difficult thing I've ever done

677

00:54:10,740 --> 00:54:15,740

is I've been very frank and open and honest with them,

678

00:54:16,300 --> 00:54:20,060

with my background in sexual addiction.

679

00:54:20,060 --> 00:54:25,060

So, you know, I was out cruising for prostitutes

680

00:54:25,180 --> 00:54:30,180

and just crying tears down my face.

681

00:54:30,180 --> 00:54:31,420

Why?

682

00:54:31,420 --> 00:54:32,260

I gotta stop this.

683

00:54:32,260 --> 00:54:33,700

I can't do this.

684

00:54:33,700 --> 00:54:35,020

I'm destroying my life.

685

00:54:35,020 --> 00:54:39,020

I'm destroying my wife, my family, my family.

686

00:54:39,020 --> 00:54:42,300

My wife, my family, myself.

687

00:54:42,300 --> 00:54:44,620

If I was to get caught, there's no way I'd ever get

688

00:54:44,620 --> 00:54:46,500

on the fire department.

689

00:54:46,500 --> 00:54:51,500

But yet the risk was not outweighing that benefit

690

00:54:52,420 --> 00:54:55,580
that I had, that short term fix of,

691

00:54:55,580 --> 00:54:59,500
man, I can just get over this by just a real quick hit

692

00:54:59,500 --> 00:55:03,900
of the drug of my choice and I'll feel fine again.

693

00:55:03,900 --> 00:55:08,900
Well, that didn't go over well with my wife, of course.

694

00:55:10,460 --> 00:55:14,140
So we struggled for so many years back and forth

695

00:55:14,140 --> 00:55:16,060
and trying to get through it.

696

00:55:16,060 --> 00:55:20,900
And about 10 years in, two small boys,

697

00:55:20,900 --> 00:55:25,900
she grabs me by the arms and she's kind of like shaking me.

698

00:55:26,060 --> 00:55:28,500
And she just, these were the words she said to me

699

00:55:28,500 --> 00:55:29,340
that woke me up.

700

00:55:29,340 --> 00:55:34,340
She says, she says, I hate you, I hate God,

701

00:55:34,340 --> 00:55:36,500

I hate the church, I quit.

702

00:55:38,020 --> 00:55:42,060

And that rocked me to my core.

703

00:55:42,060 --> 00:55:46,060

And that gave me the drive to figure out

704

00:55:46,060 --> 00:55:49,940

how am I gonna get past this?

705

00:55:49,940 --> 00:55:52,140

I gotta do whatever I gotta do

706

00:55:52,140 --> 00:55:55,820

because I cannot imagine living the rest of my life

707

00:55:55,820 --> 00:56:00,300

in bondage to this addiction.

708

00:56:00,300 --> 00:56:05,300

And as things would have it, my mom had a book

709

00:56:06,860 --> 00:56:10,060

that she had, I'm not even sure where she got the book,

710

00:56:10,060 --> 00:56:12,140

but she gave me this book.

711

00:56:12,140 --> 00:56:15,500

It's called, Discover the Mind of a Woman.

712

00:56:16,540 --> 00:56:19,620

And I read that book for the first time

713

00:56:19,620 --> 00:56:22,700

and my light bulb was just going off in my head.

714

00:56:22,700 --> 00:56:25,060

Well, no wonder I'm the way I am, no wonder I do this,

715

00:56:25,060 --> 00:56:27,700

no wonder, and it was all starting to make sense.

716

00:56:27,700 --> 00:56:29,340

So I read that thing from cover to cover

717

00:56:29,340 --> 00:56:32,900

and then eventually I decided, you know what,

718

00:56:32,900 --> 00:56:34,380

I'm gonna give this author a call.

719

00:56:34,380 --> 00:56:36,580

I'm gonna call the guy that wrote this book

720

00:56:36,580 --> 00:56:38,900

and have a talk with him and see if there's any way

721

00:56:38,900 --> 00:56:42,220

that I could be mentored by him or something, man,

722

00:56:42,220 --> 00:56:43,700

because I need this guy's help.

723

00:56:43,700 --> 00:56:46,580

So I gave him a call and as luck would have it,

724

00:56:46,580 --> 00:56:49,180

he was gonna be in Southern California,

725

00:56:49,180 --> 00:56:50,740

he was out of Arizona.

726

00:56:50,740 --> 00:56:52,420

He was gonna be in Southern California

727

00:56:52,420 --> 00:56:56,380

and he invited us to a seminar where he was gonna be speaking

728

00:56:56,380 --> 00:56:59,420

on that very book and that topic.

729

00:56:59,420 --> 00:57:02,900

So my wife and I went and I approached him afterwards

730

00:57:02,900 --> 00:57:06,380

and I asked him if he would be interested in mentoring me.

731

00:57:06,380 --> 00:57:11,380

And he said, well, I can, but you're gonna have to come

732

00:57:11,580 --> 00:57:16,580

to Phoenix, Arizona on every Wednesday

733

00:57:16,820 --> 00:57:18,660

for the next three years.

734

00:57:18,660 --> 00:57:21,660

And I thought to myself, well, that's not gonna be possible

735

00:57:21,660 --> 00:57:26,540

since at that time I had just got hired by Anaheim.

736

00:57:26,540 --> 00:57:29,260

Man, I can't do that.

737

00:57:29,260 --> 00:57:31,220

And so I said, is there anybody out here

738

00:57:31,220 --> 00:57:33,140

that you would recommend?

739

00:57:33,140 --> 00:57:35,580

And he pointed to this guy, standing this big, tall dude,

740

00:57:35,580 --> 00:57:38,740

about six, seven, six, eight, just a big dude.

741

00:57:40,740 --> 00:57:42,620

He said, go talk to Kevin.

742

00:57:42,620 --> 00:57:47,100

He went through my three-year mentorship program

743

00:57:47,100 --> 00:57:49,020

and he'd probably be able to help you out.

744

00:57:49,020 --> 00:57:51,100

So I went to Kevin and I asked him and sure enough,

745

00:57:51,100 --> 00:57:52,620
the guy was able to help me out

746

00:57:52,620 --> 00:57:57,620
and started a three-plus-year mentorship program with him.

747

00:58:00,940 --> 00:58:05,940
And through all of that, was finally able

748

00:58:05,940 --> 00:58:09,980
to get to a place where I could come clean with my wife

749

00:58:09,980 --> 00:58:12,220
as to what had happened and what I'd been doing

750

00:58:12,220 --> 00:58:17,220
and worked through the rebuilding process

751

00:58:17,220 --> 00:58:19,300
of rebuilding that trust.

752

00:58:20,180 --> 00:58:23,660
And once that was completed,

753

00:58:26,420 --> 00:58:28,700
we ended up having a little girl.

754

00:58:28,700 --> 00:58:29,540
We got pregnant.

755

00:58:29,540 --> 00:58:31,460
Actually, I ended up telling my wife everything

756

00:58:31,460 --> 00:58:34,620

that was going on while my wife was pregnant with my daughter.

757

00:58:35,500 --> 00:58:38,300

But when our daughter was,

758

00:58:38,300 --> 00:58:40,300

when she was pregnant with our daughter,

759

00:58:42,980 --> 00:58:45,500

my mentor told me, he said,

760

00:58:45,500 --> 00:58:47,900

I just want you to do one thing for me.

761

00:58:47,900 --> 00:58:50,580

If you ever feel like there's that voice,

762

00:58:50,580 --> 00:58:53,100

and he called that voice the Holy Spirit,

763

00:58:53,100 --> 00:58:55,020

if you ever feel like the Holy Spirit

764

00:58:55,020 --> 00:58:58,340

is putting it on your heart to tell your wife

765

00:58:58,340 --> 00:59:01,100

everything you've done, trust him,

766

00:59:01,100 --> 00:59:06,100

and let your wife know so that you guys can get it all out

767

00:59:06,100 --> 00:59:09,660

and then you could start rebuilding your trust

768

00:59:09,660 --> 00:59:12,660

back on solid foundation.

769

00:59:12,660 --> 00:59:14,940

I thought, okay, I'm gonna do that.

770

00:59:14,940 --> 00:59:17,340

I thought, okay, well, that ain't gonna ever happen.

771

00:59:17,340 --> 00:59:19,380

But yeah, I'll agree to that, sure.

772

00:59:19,380 --> 00:59:21,220

Ain't no way in hell I'm gonna tell my wife

773

00:59:21,220 --> 00:59:22,900

what I've been up to.

774

00:59:22,900 --> 00:59:24,660

And I don't know what happened to James,

775

00:59:24,660 --> 00:59:27,780

but whatever happened, if something came over me,

776

00:59:27,780 --> 00:59:29,580

as we're having this conversation,

777

00:59:29,580 --> 00:59:32,100

her and I back and forth, and she was really saying,

778

00:59:32,100 --> 00:59:35,500

look, I know that you've got a lot of skeletons

779

00:59:35,500 --> 00:59:39,180

in your closet that are keeping you in the dark,

780

00:59:39,180 --> 00:59:42,860

keeping you in shame, it's keeping you hurting.

781

00:59:42,860 --> 00:59:46,940

And you can trust me to be able to tell you,

782

00:59:46,940 --> 00:59:49,140

or to be able to hear what you've got to say.

783

00:59:50,020 --> 00:59:53,020

And I thought, well, okay, man, if you're,

784

00:59:53,020 --> 00:59:55,260

I would much rather you just realize,

785

00:59:55,260 --> 00:59:57,500

I got some shit in my back, in my closet

786

00:59:57,500 --> 00:59:58,980

that I don't need to be exposed.

787

00:59:58,980 --> 01:00:02,420

Let's just pretend like we both know it's there,

788

01:00:02,420 --> 01:00:04,340

but we don't need to deal with it.

789

01:00:05,180 --> 01:00:06,420

And that wasn't working.

790

01:00:07,380 --> 01:00:09,340

So I finally came clean with her,

791

01:00:09,340 --> 01:00:13,860

and to my surprise, she handled it extremely well.

792

01:00:13,860 --> 01:00:17,380

And then I ended up going to work the next day,

793

01:00:18,220 --> 01:00:21,380

and got a phone, I called her that night,

794

01:00:21,380 --> 01:00:25,180

and started talking to her, and she had had a change of mind,

795

01:00:26,180 --> 01:00:31,180

and told me that, I don't know that I can deal

796

01:00:31,180 --> 01:00:34,060

with what you just explained, what you just expressed to me.

797

01:00:34,060 --> 01:00:35,820

I don't know that I can handle that.

798

01:00:35,820 --> 01:00:39,340

I don't know that I even wanna be married to you.

799

01:00:39,340 --> 01:00:43,780

And I don't even know if I wanna carry this child anymore.

800

01:00:45,180 --> 01:00:47,580

And my world just dropped.

801

01:00:47,580 --> 01:00:52,580

I'm living up in the mountains in Crestline,

802

01:00:53,740 --> 01:00:56,340

and I'm all the way downtown Anaheim

803

01:00:56,340 --> 01:00:58,500

at station one headquarters, and I'm hearing this,

804

01:00:58,500 --> 01:01:00,300

and I'm freaking out.

805

01:01:00,300 --> 01:01:03,420

And so I called up my mentor,

806

01:01:03,420 --> 01:01:06,740

and proceeded to just cuss him up one side and down the other.

807

01:01:06,740 --> 01:01:10,740

I was so angry that he would even suggest

808

01:01:11,220 --> 01:01:13,820

that I be that honest,

809

01:01:15,020 --> 01:01:18,580

when really I had told him what was going on.

810

01:01:18,580 --> 01:01:20,260

I figured, you know what, you know what's going on,

811

01:01:20,260 --> 01:01:22,500

and why do I gotta bring my wife into this?

812

01:01:22,500 --> 01:01:24,340

Why do I gotta tell her?

813

01:01:24,340 --> 01:01:25,820

Can't we just let it go?

814

01:01:25,820 --> 01:01:29,180

Well, anyway, I ended up calling him up,

815

01:01:29,180 --> 01:01:31,980

and I ended up very upset, very upset,

816

01:01:31,980 --> 01:01:36,980

very angry, and told him, I said,

817

01:01:37,860 --> 01:01:42,860

I don't know how in the world I trusted you

818

01:01:44,380 --> 01:01:45,820

with that advice.

819

01:01:45,820 --> 01:01:48,660

That was the worst advice anybody could give me.

820

01:01:50,180 --> 01:01:52,860

Now, because I listened to you,

821

01:01:52,860 --> 01:01:54,980

my wife doesn't wanna stay married to me,

822

01:01:56,380 --> 01:01:58,580

and she doesn't even wanna carry our baby anymore.

823

01:01:58,580 --> 01:02:01,900

So what am I gonna do?

824

01:02:02,940 --> 01:02:05,700

And these were his words, he said, Rick,

825

01:02:05,700 --> 01:02:09,340

if you think God has taken you and your wife

826

01:02:09,340 --> 01:02:14,340

on the journey that he has for this last three plus years,

827

01:02:14,340 --> 01:02:17,580

only to drop you off at the doorstep of an abortion clinic,

828

01:02:18,460 --> 01:02:19,740

you don't know my God.

829

01:02:21,220 --> 01:02:24,580

I said, well, right now, that seems like the only thing

830

01:02:24,580 --> 01:02:26,140

that I've got going for me.

831

01:02:26,140 --> 01:02:29,940

Man, is because I've been honest, I'm done.

832

01:02:29,940 --> 01:02:32,660

My marriage is over, my kids are gonna get raised

833

01:02:32,660 --> 01:02:36,540

by somebody else, and I may not even have this baby

834

01:02:36,540 --> 01:02:40,220

that we've been praying for, for so long to have.

835

01:02:40,220 --> 01:02:43,500

And now finally, as my life starts to clean up,

836

01:02:43,500 --> 01:02:46,140

we finally get pregnant, and now here she's telling me,

837

01:02:46,140 --> 01:02:51,140

I don't even know if I could stay pregnant anymore.

838

01:02:51,140 --> 01:02:54,300

So it started a journey with my wife and I,

839

01:02:56,300 --> 01:02:59,540

she started to really work with Kevin's wife,

840

01:02:59,540 --> 01:03:02,660

and I was working heavily with Kevin,

841

01:03:02,660 --> 01:03:07,260

and man, lo and behold, within a year or so,

842

01:03:07,260 --> 01:03:10,380

man, we were rocking and rolling back on track,

843

01:03:10,380 --> 01:03:15,380

everything was going great, and it's because of that experience

844

01:03:16,660 --> 01:03:18,700
that I was able to get pregnant.

845

01:03:18,700 --> 01:03:23,300
It's because of that experience that by the time

846

01:03:23,300 --> 01:03:27,020
I was in the fire service and going hard to the hole,

847

01:03:28,540 --> 01:03:31,300
my mind was already in a good spot.

848

01:03:31,300 --> 01:03:36,300
So I wasn't having to go and do all of that rebranding

849

01:03:36,700 --> 01:03:41,220
and that rebuilding of the destructive nature of my past

850

01:03:41,220 --> 01:03:43,540
while I was new in the fire service,

851

01:03:43,540 --> 01:03:45,500
because I'd already done all that work.

852

01:03:45,500 --> 01:03:50,500
So I guess in a way, having the tools to walk through it

853

01:03:53,580 --> 01:03:57,780
gave me the ability that when I started to see things

854

01:03:57,780 --> 01:04:01,100
that were affecting me in certain ways,

855

01:04:01,100 --> 01:04:05,300

I was able to pull back, assess, find out what triggered,

856

01:04:05,300 --> 01:04:08,140

go deal with that trigger, change the narrative

857

01:04:08,140 --> 01:04:11,620

on that trigger, and change the paradigm

858

01:04:11,620 --> 01:04:16,620

and walk through with a much healthier understanding

859

01:04:16,620 --> 01:04:17,860

of mental health.

860

01:04:19,860 --> 01:04:22,140

Well, firstly, thank you for sharing that story.

861

01:04:22,140 --> 01:04:25,660

I think it's a very common story behind closed doors.

862

01:04:25,660 --> 01:04:28,140

I mean, we know from the firehouse, we know the guys,

863

01:04:28,140 --> 01:04:31,180

we're talking, bragging about strange and all that stuff.

864

01:04:31,180 --> 01:04:32,020

Oh yeah.

865

01:04:32,020 --> 01:04:35,460

However, as I alluded to earlier,

866

01:04:35,460 --> 01:04:37,380

one of the least discussed elements

867

01:04:37,380 --> 01:04:40,180

of the first responder mental health conversation

868

01:04:40,180 --> 01:04:42,260

is what happened before you ever put the uniform on.

869

01:04:42,260 --> 01:04:43,100

And this is exactly it.

870

01:04:43,100 --> 01:04:45,660

You'd already not only had traumas,

871

01:04:45,660 --> 01:04:49,180

but created resilience before you really entered

872

01:04:49,180 --> 01:04:51,020

Anaheim Fire Service.

873

01:04:51,020 --> 01:04:54,820

When you look back now, I mean, the sexual side,

874

01:04:54,820 --> 01:04:57,380

it's interesting, I've known many, many people

875

01:04:57,380 --> 01:05:01,060

that there was sexual confusion.

876

01:05:01,060 --> 01:05:03,940

A lot of times that was sexual abuse when they were younger.

877

01:05:03,940 --> 01:05:06,780

There's other times that, again, it just became an addiction,

878

01:05:06,780 --> 01:05:09,620

no different than an opioid or alcohol or something else.

879

01:05:09,620 --> 01:05:11,460

It was a way of filling that void.

880

01:05:11,460 --> 01:05:12,900

And the way that you phrased it,

881

01:05:12,900 --> 01:05:15,860

that hit was more important than the devastation

882

01:05:15,860 --> 01:05:19,500

that it left behind, that you insert whatever drug,

883

01:05:19,500 --> 01:05:23,140

gambling, sex addiction, it's the same feeling.

884

01:05:23,140 --> 01:05:26,020

So when you look back, what were some of those traumas,

885

01:05:26,020 --> 01:05:27,340

you don't have to be specific, don't want to,

886

01:05:27,340 --> 01:05:29,820

but what were some of the things that you,

887

01:05:29,820 --> 01:05:33,540

as I say, what was the pee under the mattress for you

888

01:05:33,540 --> 01:05:37,540

that allows you to then start unpacking what was going on?

889

01:05:37,540 --> 01:05:42,540

First of all, I didn't realize I had any trauma in my life

890

01:05:42,620 --> 01:05:46,620

until I ended up going to that workshop in Long Beach,

891

01:05:46,620 --> 01:05:48,820

learning through the power of commitment,

892

01:05:50,740 --> 01:05:53,820

that there was trauma in my past.

893

01:05:53,820 --> 01:05:57,820

And at that point, I thought the trauma

894

01:05:57,820 --> 01:06:00,220

was geared at my dad.

895

01:06:00,220 --> 01:06:05,220

And I thought that trauma was geared at my dad.

896

01:06:05,220 --> 01:06:10,220

And I went through an exercise to train

897

01:06:11,540 --> 01:06:16,540

or not train, but to rebrand or tell the story,

898

01:06:17,740 --> 01:06:22,740

tell a different story behind why my childhood

899

01:06:22,940 --> 01:06:26,660

was the way it was at that given time.

900

01:06:26,660 --> 01:06:31,660

And my dad was a, he was a preacher, very approachable,

901

01:06:31,660 --> 01:06:36,660

very likable, to me, he was always loving.

902

01:06:38,940 --> 01:06:41,020

I know that I would do things as a kid

903

01:06:41,020 --> 01:06:43,300

and my mom would end up telling me,

904

01:06:43,300 --> 01:06:44,540

well, wait till your dad gets home.

905

01:06:44,540 --> 01:06:47,700

My dad would come back from the office and my mom would say,

906

01:06:47,700 --> 01:06:49,180

well, this is what Rick and Jim have been doing.

907

01:06:49,180 --> 01:06:51,220

This is what Rick did, or this is what he did.

908

01:06:51,220 --> 01:06:55,380

And next thing I know, it was requiring a belt.

909

01:06:55,380 --> 01:06:57,620

So I got a lot of belts growing up.

910

01:06:57,620 --> 01:07:00,220

And I was like, well, I'm gonna go to the gym.

911

01:07:00,220 --> 01:07:01,820

That's growing up.

912

01:07:01,820 --> 01:07:03,940

But I think the real trauma had nothing

913

01:07:03,940 --> 01:07:05,980

to do with my dad, per se.

914

01:07:07,640 --> 01:07:10,680

It had to do with how young my mom

915

01:07:10,680 --> 01:07:13,020

and dad were when they got married.

916

01:07:13,020 --> 01:07:17,620

I mean, can you imagine at 16 and 17 being married?

917

01:07:17,620 --> 01:07:20,220

And then by the time you're 17 and 18,

918

01:07:20,220 --> 01:07:21,940

you've got your first kid.

919

01:07:21,940 --> 01:07:23,560

Well, and my dad didn't even know this,

920

01:07:23,560 --> 01:07:25,700

but he had a kid before I was even born.

921

01:07:25,700 --> 01:07:28,820

So when you look back at that,

922

01:07:28,820 --> 01:07:34,900

And then my brother's being born just nine and a half months later than I am.

923

01:07:34,900 --> 01:07:41,720

You got a lot of things going on in two very young people's lives.

924

01:07:41,720 --> 01:07:47,620

My mom was the oldest of I think seven kids.

925

01:07:47,620 --> 01:07:50,760

I think it was seven.

926

01:07:50,760 --> 01:08:02,860

She was the oldest and her father was an alcoholic and had a very difficult time keeping a job.

927

01:08:02,860 --> 01:08:08,760

By all intents and purposes, my grandmother went out, she worked to kind of make sure

928

01:08:08,760 --> 01:08:14,780

that they were guaranteed the money because grandpa might have, you know, drank it away

929

01:08:14,780 --> 01:08:16,900

on payday.

930

01:08:16,900 --> 01:08:25,020

So my mom was thrashed at a very young age into watching her kids, her siblings, as though

931

01:08:25,020 --> 01:08:26,100

they were her kids.

932

01:08:26,100 --> 01:08:34,600

So she was not only the oldest sibling, but she was also the disciplinarian.

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01:08:34,600 --> 01:08:37,980

She was also the one that had to control all those brothers and sisters.

934

01:08:37,980 --> 01:08:45,380

Well, what girl at 14, 15, and even 16, when you've got that many kids that you're responsible

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01:08:45,380 --> 01:08:48,460

for, when they don't listen to you, what's the natural response?

936

01:08:48,460 --> 01:08:52,020

Well, back then it was like she would smack them around.

937

01:08:52,020 --> 01:08:54,020

She would scream and yell.

938

01:08:54,020 --> 01:08:56,980

And that was her parenting style.

939

01:08:56,980 --> 01:09:01,180

So when I came along, I was just another one of her brothers and sisters.

940

01:09:01,180 --> 01:09:02,340

I just happened to be a lot younger.

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01:09:02,340 --> 01:09:05,260

Well, she was only 17 years older than I am.

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01:09:05,260 --> 01:09:14,740

So the way that she responded to me when I was not doing the things I should have been

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01:09:14,740 --> 01:09:22,260

doing was with screaming, yelling, slapping, hitting, all those kinds of things.

944

01:09:22,260 --> 01:09:25,620

And I grew up resenting her for it.

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01:09:25,620 --> 01:09:34,220

And that kind of brought me up not understanding from my mom's perspective.

946

01:09:34,220 --> 01:09:35,340

I mean, how can I?

947

01:09:35,340 --> 01:09:37,380

I'm a little kid.

948

01:09:37,380 --> 01:09:43,100

And the struggles and the frustrations and the things that she was dealing with at a

949

01:09:43,100 --> 01:09:44,320

young age.

950

01:09:44,320 --> 01:09:49,300

And so it just caused me to feel like I wasn't loved.

951

01:09:49,300 --> 01:09:52,140

I had no value.

952

01:09:52,140 --> 01:09:55,700

Although playing baseball in Little League, I got plenty of that value.

953

01:09:55,700 --> 01:09:57,020

I got plenty of that love.

954

01:09:57,020 --> 01:09:59,900

I mean, I had great friends in my neighborhood.

955

01:09:59,900 --> 01:10:02,940

I had a wonderful life growing up.

956

01:10:02,940 --> 01:10:11,780

But just that little hint of trauma going way back to when I was two, three, four years

957

01:10:11,780 --> 01:10:22,020

old started to develop in me a story in my own head about who my mom was to me.

958

01:10:22,020 --> 01:10:26,940

And that caused me to go down that road.

959

01:10:26,940 --> 01:10:30,700

That was the trauma in my past anyway.

960

01:10:30,700 --> 01:10:32,900

It's such an important conversation.

961

01:10:32,900 --> 01:10:35,140

There's that phrase, don't compare trauma.

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01:10:35,140 --> 01:10:36,140

And it's true.

963

01:10:36,140 --> 01:10:39,740

I mean, I've had people on here who were literally boy soldiers.

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01:10:39,740 --> 01:10:43,220

One gentleman, Ishmael Bay, was a boy soldier in Sierra Leone.

965

01:10:43,220 --> 01:10:44,260

His parents were murdered.

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01:10:44,260 --> 01:10:47,860

He was forced to kill because you have two options, kill or be killed.

967

01:10:47,860 --> 01:10:49,620

That's it.

968

01:10:49,620 --> 01:10:56,020

Hooked on drugs and then saved by the Red Cross and now is a UNICEF ambassador for child

969

01:10:56,020 --> 01:10:57,020

soldiers.

970

01:10:57,020 --> 01:10:58,020

Amazing.

971

01:10:58,020 --> 01:11:02,140

I've got a friend who was the middle child and the parents had a boy and they wanted

972

01:11:02,140 --> 01:11:03,140

a girl.

973

01:11:03,140 --> 01:11:04,900

They had another boy, which was him.

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01:11:04,900 --> 01:11:08,620

And then they had a daughter and he fell in love.

975

01:11:08,620 --> 01:11:12,740

And I've met his parents since and I still see it today.

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01:11:12,740 --> 01:11:16,580

This kind of lack of any maternal, paternal elements.

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01:11:16,580 --> 01:11:19,940

So it doesn't matter what that backstory is.

978

01:11:19,940 --> 01:11:25,700

If it's trauma or if it's unaddressed struggles, then it needs to be addressed.

979

01:11:25,700 --> 01:11:31,700

So it's powerful, I think, for people to hear because something seemingly somewhat small,

980

01:11:31,700 --> 01:11:38,020

I mean, when you compare it to sexual abuse and something else, it's not at all.

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01:11:38,020 --> 01:11:41,700

We pigeonhole these things and label them and almost rank them.

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01:11:41,700 --> 01:11:46,700

But something, if you look at the hierarchy of needs, safety, security, love, all these

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01:11:46,700 --> 01:11:52,620

elements, if a child is raised not having them, then their barometer is skewed.

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01:11:52,620 --> 01:12:00,460

Then they go into the outside world and they're finding love from a gang or prostitutes or

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01:12:00,460 --> 01:12:02,140

whatever it is to fill that void.

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01:12:02,140 --> 01:12:04,620

But as you mentioned, it's chasing the dragon.

987

01:12:04,620 --> 01:12:09,060

It's never filling it because you're never really addressing the thing beneath the thing.

988

01:12:09,060 --> 01:12:10,060

That's right.

989

01:12:10,060 --> 01:12:11,060

That's exactly right.

990

01:12:11,060 --> 01:12:16,820

And, you know, I don't hold my parents responsible in any way, shape or form anymore.

991

01:12:16,820 --> 01:12:23,620

I mean, there was a time that I did have anger and I did have some animosity, but that left

992

01:12:23,620 --> 01:12:26,620

me years and years ago.

993

01:12:26,620 --> 01:12:32,020

I can't even remember the last time I even felt that way towards my parents, both of

994

01:12:32,020 --> 01:12:41,700

whom, you know, I've gone back and retold the story rather than the story of how a three,

995

01:12:41,700 --> 01:12:45,780

four, five year old would interpret what was going on.

996

01:12:45,780 --> 01:12:53,220

I went back and revisited that child trauma as an adult and I changed that story.

997

01:12:53,220 --> 01:12:55,300

And that story is what I just told you.

998

01:12:55,300 --> 01:13:00,540

You know, my mom young, parents young, you know, just trying to figure out life themselves.

999

01:13:00,540 --> 01:13:05,220

And when you really get down to it, we're all struggling in that area.

1000

01:13:05,220 --> 01:13:06,740

We're all trying to find our way.

1001

01:13:06,740 --> 01:13:09,700

We're all trying to figure out this thing called life.

1002

01:13:09,700 --> 01:13:11,880

We all make mistakes.

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01:13:11,880 --> 01:13:18,340

Some mistakes are so detrimental to who we are as people and the relationships that we

1004

01:13:18,340 --> 01:13:22,480

carry from then on out.

1005

01:13:22,480 --> 01:13:29,020

That if we don't go back and readdress that and change the storyline, that actually is

1006

01:13:29,020 --> 01:13:35,020

more in line with the truth of what was going on rather than the illusion of truth that

1007

01:13:35,020 --> 01:13:42,340

we somehow interpret things to be when we don't deal with the childhood traumas in an

1008

01:13:42,340 --> 01:13:44,340

adult fashion.

1009

01:13:44,340 --> 01:13:45,820

Absolutely.

1010

01:13:45,820 --> 01:13:52,380

Well, speaking of parenting, you kind of led us through, you know, you had this turbulent

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01:13:52,380 --> 01:13:57,340

time, then you were able to just find these incredible tools and, you know, solidify your

1012

01:13:57,340 --> 01:13:59,140

marriage again.

1013

01:13:59,140 --> 01:14:05,060

And then December 2013 comes and just cuts you and your wife's or your family's legs

1014

01:14:05,060 --> 01:14:06,220

from under you again.

1015

01:14:06,220 --> 01:14:12,460

So talk to me about Michael, the man, and then kind of lead me through that horrific

1016

01:14:12,460 --> 01:14:16,740

day and the following weeks, months and years.

1017

01:14:16,740 --> 01:14:18,420

Sure.

1018

01:14:18,420 --> 01:14:19,860

Michael McClain Cheatham.

1019

01:14:19,860 --> 01:14:20,860

I tell his name.

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01:14:20,860 --> 01:14:22,800

I say his name.

1021

01:14:22,800 --> 01:14:32,140

We remember his name every day, and Mike was 23 when he was murdered.

1022

01:14:32,140 --> 01:14:44,580

Leading up to his murder, my son was going to be headed off to the Navy as a corpsman.

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01:14:44,580 --> 01:14:51,080

He was accepted and tested and was headed for boot camp to become a corpsman and wanted

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01:14:51,080 --> 01:14:59,620

nothing more than to go into the military and fight for our freedoms.

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01:14:59,620 --> 01:15:05,100

And I don't know if it was the week before or a couple weeks before he was actually supposed

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01:15:05,100 --> 01:15:06,460

to get shipped off.

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01:15:06,460 --> 01:15:11,700

He was out with his buddies and had a little bit too much to drink and tried to drive home

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01:15:11,700 --> 01:15:17,860

and ran through a stop sign and ended up crashing into some guy's yard.

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01:15:17,860 --> 01:15:24,060

A minor damage, nothing big, but I got a phone call from, it was this chippy at the time,

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01:15:24,060 --> 01:15:28,460

CHP officer out in California, called me up and explained to me what was going on.

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01:15:28,460 --> 01:15:35,460

And so I drove out to my son and sure enough, he was arrested that night for a deuce and

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01:15:35,460 --> 01:15:40,300

just completely changed the course of where he was headed.

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01:15:40,300 --> 01:15:49,940

And he had already been very heavily involved with trying to get people to wean off pharmaceutical

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01:15:49,940 --> 01:15:51,820

medication.

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01:15:51,820 --> 01:16:01,060

In his mind, pharmaceuticals were the root of why he was burying a lot of his friends.

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01:16:01,060 --> 01:16:06,460

They would be injured in sporting events, football, basketball, baseball, whatever,

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01:16:06,460 --> 01:16:09,460

and they would get put on painkillers.

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01:16:09,460 --> 01:16:13,980

And before you know it, they're addicted to these painkillers and docs take them off those

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01:16:13,980 --> 01:16:14,980

painkillers.

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01:16:14,980 --> 01:16:19,380

And the next thing you know, they're seeking help on the street side.

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01:16:19,380 --> 01:16:25,940

And so a lot of this stuff was turning a lot of his friends to heroin and a good handful

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01:16:25,940 --> 01:16:30,720

of his friends were being buried at a young age.

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01:16:30,720 --> 01:16:42,180

And so he got into the cannabis industry and started to develop the different strains that

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01:16:42,180 --> 01:16:46,380

could help offset different ailments.

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01:16:46,380 --> 01:16:50,900

And I knew that he was going in that direction.

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01:16:50,900 --> 01:16:55,120

I just didn't know to the degree at the time.

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01:16:55,120 --> 01:16:59,420

And I didn't even know if I really agreed with it yet.

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01:16:59,420 --> 01:17:07,080

And I tried to talk him out of it several times to just this is not the time.

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01:17:07,080 --> 01:17:14,340

This is still too early in the cannabis industry for you to be doing what you're doing.

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01:17:14,340 --> 01:17:24,140

And he had a mobile delivery service out in Corona Riverside area and was getting pretty

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01:17:24,140 --> 01:17:26,260

well known.

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01:17:26,260 --> 01:17:35,180

And he was also living in a mother-in-law quarters that I had in the back half of our

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01:17:35,180 --> 01:17:37,000

property.

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01:17:37,000 --> 01:17:38,820

And he was living there.

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01:17:38,820 --> 01:17:45,740

And I addressed him one time I went to I said, look, man, I can't stop you from doing this.

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01:17:45,740 --> 01:17:52,880

I mean, no matter what I say to you, no matter what type of information I give you, from

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01:17:52,880 --> 01:18:01,220

my perspective, from what I see on a day to day in my profession when it comes to cannabis,

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01:18:01,220 --> 01:18:08,300

when it comes to weed, when it comes to drugs in general, there's a black market that is

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01:18:08,300 --> 01:18:09,820

dangerous.

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01:18:09,820 --> 01:18:16,260

And I said, I'm fearful of what could happen if you continue going down this road.

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01:18:16,260 --> 01:18:23,820

I said, so what I'm going to ask of you is sit down and tell me your why.

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01:18:23,820 --> 01:18:25,180

Why are you doing this?

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01:18:25,180 --> 01:18:33,100

What is it that makes you so passionate that you're willing to risk all this because it's

1064

01:18:33,100 --> 01:18:34,100
your pursuit?

1065

01:18:34,100 --> 01:18:35,260
It's what your purpose is.

1066

01:18:35,260 --> 01:18:36,940
So just explain it to me.

1067

01:18:36,940 --> 01:18:43,420
And he sat down for the next hour and a half, two hours and proceeded to tell me his why,

1068

01:18:43,420 --> 01:18:47,060
why he was in the cannabis industry.

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01:18:47,060 --> 01:18:53,140
And with tears running down his cheek, he said, Dad, I'm tired of burying my friends.

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01:18:53,140 --> 01:18:59,340
And I've got the cure to get them off the pharmaceuticals that are killing them.

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01:18:59,340 --> 01:19:08,420
And he started telling me story after story after story of people that he's helped wean

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01:19:08,420 --> 01:19:14,940
themselves off all of the antidepressants and the painkillers where they could actually

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01:19:14,940 --> 01:19:18,100
be functioning as a parent again.

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01:19:18,100 --> 01:19:25,900
He told me one lady that one girl that he was, was this client that or patient as he

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01:19:25,900 --> 01:19:33,500

referred to it, that was so lucid during the day from all the medications, she couldn't

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01:19:33,500 --> 01:19:35,360

even watch her own kids.

1077

01:19:35,360 --> 01:19:39,800

And he would show up to deliver the product to her, the medication to her.

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01:19:39,800 --> 01:19:44,420

And she was already passed out from the drugs that she was on keeping her sane and kids

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01:19:44,420 --> 01:19:45,420

running wild.

1080

01:19:45,420 --> 01:19:51,220

And he said, as I started to develop this relationship with her pretty soon, she was

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01:19:51,220 --> 01:19:55,900

weaned off of all those bad pharmacies.

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01:19:55,900 --> 01:20:00,980

And now she's on a regiment of cannabis that I'm prescribing to her.

1083

01:20:00,980 --> 01:20:03,960

And now she's a functioning mom.

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01:20:03,960 --> 01:20:07,420

And then he talked about the professionals that he deals with.

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01:20:07,420 --> 01:20:12,820

And I mean, I didn't know, I mean, lawyers and doctors and cops and firemen and all these

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01:20:12,820 --> 01:20:15,580

people that he was telling me, he didn't tell me who they were.

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01:20:15,580 --> 01:20:23,620

But he says, there's a lot of people out there, dad, that are turning to cannabis as an option

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01:20:23,620 --> 01:20:27,060

to the pharmaceutical industry.

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01:20:27,060 --> 01:20:33,480

And after he told me all that, I said, well, I cannot deny your why.

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01:20:33,480 --> 01:20:37,660

And I can see that this is your passion.

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01:20:37,660 --> 01:20:46,140

And one thing I know about passion is passion will drive you like no other instrument.

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01:20:46,140 --> 01:20:52,360

I mean, it will literally, when you find your passion, you find your why.

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01:20:52,360 --> 01:20:54,260

Why are you here?

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01:20:54,260 --> 01:20:55,820

And he had found his.

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01:20:55,820 --> 01:21:02,860

And I only, what I told him was I said, I realized that you have a strong desire and

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01:21:02,860 --> 01:21:04,580

a strong passion to help people with this.

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01:21:04,580 --> 01:21:10,980

I said, but there's so many people out there that are going to see this totally different.

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01:21:10,980 --> 01:21:14,340

I said, but primarily there's people out there that know that even though what you're doing

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01:21:14,340 --> 01:21:23,580

is legal, there's a black market that can take your product and completely turn it around

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01:21:23,580 --> 01:21:31,980

and be willing to hurt you or even kill you for what you have.

1101

01:21:31,980 --> 01:21:41,260

And within a month, he had moved out of the house because I couldn't have him doing it

1102

01:21:41,260 --> 01:21:42,260

in my house.

1103

01:21:42,260 --> 01:21:49,820

I mean, I fear if someone came to my house and saw you growing back there, and I mean,

1104

01:21:49,820 --> 01:21:53,020

he wasn't growing in the outside, he did indoor grows.

1105

01:21:53,020 --> 01:21:57,980

I said, man, they'll take my pension away.

1106

01:21:57,980 --> 01:22:03,740

I'll end up, you know, probably getting fired, probably get arrested because it's going on.

1107

01:22:03,740 --> 01:22:07,340

I said, son, you cannot do this at my house.

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01:22:07,340 --> 01:22:13,420

And so he ended up moving out and he moved out into an apartment.

1109

01:22:13,420 --> 01:22:21,420

He had this guy that was now his delivery driver.

1110

01:22:21,420 --> 01:22:32,340

And he brought him in to teach him how to grow indoor quality medical grade cannabis

1111

01:22:32,340 --> 01:22:40,020

and set the guy up in his house, converted his garage into this indoor grow room, paid

1112

01:22:40,020 --> 01:22:47,520

off all of his previous bills for water and electricity because he tried to do it on his

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01:22:47,520 --> 01:22:52,420

own before he got connected with Mike and lost everything.

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01:22:52,420 --> 01:22:53,900

I mean, he was terrible.

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01:22:53,900 --> 01:22:59,060

So Mike made a deal with him, said, look, if you'll do this, I will teach you how to

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01:22:59,060 --> 01:23:01,000

do what I do.

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01:23:01,000 --> 01:23:03,060

I will set you up for success.

1118

01:23:03,060 --> 01:23:05,560

I'll pay all your previous bills.

1119

01:23:05,560 --> 01:23:11,380

The only thing I ask of you is that the first grow, the first harvest is mine.

1120

01:23:11,380 --> 01:23:18,060

And then after that, I will buy from you and you will be my grower.

1121

01:23:18,060 --> 01:23:20,700

And everything was on the up and up.

1122

01:23:20,700 --> 01:23:24,380

Everything looked good until it wasn't.

1123

01:23:24,380 --> 01:23:29,700

And all the product was at my son's apartment.

1124

01:23:29,700 --> 01:23:37,260

And this fella ended up coming back from the day's deliveries.

1125

01:23:37,260 --> 01:23:44,380

And he had stolen his brother-in-law's 38 special.

1126

01:23:44,380 --> 01:23:56,020

He had premeditated, fixed the weapon with a homemade silencer by taking a water bottle,

1127

01:23:56,020 --> 01:24:02,780

stuffing it full of microfiber towels and taping it to the muzzle of a 38.

1128

01:24:02,780 --> 01:24:05,460

And Michael got up.

1129

01:24:05,460 --> 01:24:09,500

They were both watching TV and Michael got up to go use the restroom.

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01:24:09,500 --> 01:24:17,940

And as he got to the restroom, this guy, the murderer, ended up coming up behind him and

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01:24:17,940 --> 01:24:19,780

tried to shoot him.

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01:24:19,780 --> 01:24:30,380

And because of the silencer, homemade silencer, the microfiber, the tape on the muzzle, so

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01:24:30,380 --> 01:24:37,360

it couldn't rack to reload, so he got one shot off and it missed him, hit the water

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01:24:37,360 --> 01:24:40,380

faucet in the bathroom and ricocheted up into the ceiling.

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01:24:40,380 --> 01:24:43,080

And then at that point, the fight was on.

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01:24:43,080 --> 01:24:50,100

And so this guy was almost twice Michael's age.

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01:24:50,100 --> 01:24:56,540

He probably outweighed him by 75 plus pounds.

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01:24:56,540 --> 01:25:01,860

And Michael, like the cops told me, Michael fought for his life.

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01:25:01,860 --> 01:25:10,540

And as he was struggling to get to his room to where he kept his weapon, the guy picked

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01:25:10,540 --> 01:25:17,340

up Michael's skateboard and clocked him over the side of the head with it and proceeded

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01:25:17,340 --> 01:25:23,300

to beat him over the head with his skateboard and then took his belt off and strangled him

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01:25:23,300 --> 01:25:33,140

and left my son next to his bed and then took the nightstand that was there and put it over

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01:25:33,140 --> 01:25:34,820

Michael's head so he couldn't see it.

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01:25:34,820 --> 01:25:39,220

I'm not sure what the reasoning behind that was, but he ended up putting that nightstand

1145

01:25:39,220 --> 01:25:48,920

over my son's head and then played possum as though he was fighting for his life.

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01:25:48,920 --> 01:25:58,640

In the scuffle of all of that that was going on, the downstairs neighbor heard Michael

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01:25:58,640 --> 01:26:03,860

scream for help and called the police.

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01:26:03,860 --> 01:26:11,940

And so Corona police showed up to my son's apartment and along with Corona fire, one

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01:26:11,940 --> 01:26:19,020

of the gentlemen there by the name of Jim Steiner was the captain on that call and was

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01:26:19,020 --> 01:26:22,940

a friend of mine, was also their union president.

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01:26:22,940 --> 01:26:32,820

And so even though all that was going on, I still had people who I had come to know

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01:26:32,820 --> 01:26:40,320

and respect who were on that call with and saw everything that they were dealing with.

1153

01:26:40,320 --> 01:26:46,780

And then the man ended up playing possum next to my son and pretended like he was the one

1154

01:26:46,780 --> 01:26:52,060

that was beat and he was just protecting, he fought in self-defense.

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01:26:52,060 --> 01:26:57,820

They ended up taking away arresting him that night and next morning is when we found out

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01:26:57,820 --> 01:27:07,020

what it actually happened and went to the police department to discuss what the next

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01:27:07,020 --> 01:27:08,340

steps were and everything.

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01:27:08,340 --> 01:27:13,100

And they just started to ask a lot of questions about who this Frank character was.

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01:27:13,100 --> 01:27:14,100

And I had no idea.

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01:27:14,100 --> 01:27:19,220

I knew he was working with Mike and had no idea to the level and what was going on.

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01:27:19,220 --> 01:27:21,060

He kept that stuff away from me.

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01:27:21,060 --> 01:27:26,620

I don't think he wanted to get me to be afraid of what was happening.

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01:27:26,620 --> 01:27:34,940

But nonetheless, the guy was arrested and had the second shortest trial, a conviction

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01:27:34,940 --> 01:27:37,100

in a trial in Riverside County history.

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01:27:37,100 --> 01:27:38,700

It was just a little over a year.

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01:27:38,700 --> 01:27:45,220

He was convicted and off to prison for pretty much the rest of his life and leaving us to

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01:27:45,220 --> 01:27:53,340

deal with the aftermath of being a victim of a violent crime and the trauma that that

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01:27:53,340 --> 01:27:55,700

throws a family into.

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01:27:55,700 --> 01:28:06,060

And so here I am, now my early 50s, I think I was 51 at the time, and dealing with the

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01:28:06,060 --> 01:28:18,420

loss of my oldest son and the trauma that it was causing his brother, Kyle, who he knew

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01:28:18,420 --> 01:28:20,660

his whole life revolved around Mike.

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01:28:20,660 --> 01:28:24,300

Those two were so tight and so close.

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01:28:24,300 --> 01:28:26,960

And they did everything together.

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01:28:26,960 --> 01:28:30,460

And I'll even tell you another little story about that.

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01:28:30,460 --> 01:28:35,700

They were so close that for the first four years of Kyle's life, Kyle didn't even have

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01:28:35,700 --> 01:28:40,180

to speak because Michael spoke for him.

1177

01:28:40,180 --> 01:28:46,420

So he just sat back and Kyle just observed everything that was going on around him and

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01:28:46,420 --> 01:28:51,260

didn't have to engage in any communication because his big brother was there.

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01:28:51,260 --> 01:28:54,140

He would come up and ask us for something and we couldn't even understand what he said

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01:28:54,140 --> 01:28:55,260

because he wasn't speaking.

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01:28:55,260 --> 01:29:01,420

He was just talking and just pointing.

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01:29:01,420 --> 01:29:03,820

And his brother would interpret, oh, he wants this.

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01:29:03,820 --> 01:29:06,020

I'm like, how do you understand what he's asking?

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01:29:06,020 --> 01:29:07,020

He goes, I don't know.

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01:29:07,020 --> 01:29:08,020

That's what he wants.

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01:29:08,020 --> 01:29:10,620

And sure enough, I'd ask him, is that what you want?

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01:29:10,620 --> 01:29:11,620

And he'd shake his head.

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01:29:11,620 --> 01:29:12,620

Yeah.

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01:29:12,620 --> 01:29:16,460

So their bond was almost more than just through language.

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01:29:16,460 --> 01:29:19,340

It was almost telepathy.

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01:29:19,340 --> 01:29:25,660

These two were so close that their thoughts were entwined with each other.

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01:29:25,660 --> 01:29:32,180

And to watch what happened to him and to see his world cave in was just heartbreaking.

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01:29:32,180 --> 01:29:35,460

And then my daughter, who was 13 at the time, she's 23 now.

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01:29:35,460 --> 01:29:39,660

She's the same age as my son was when he lost his life.

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01:29:39,660 --> 01:29:46,900

So at 13, to see what she went through breaks a father's heart.

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01:29:46,900 --> 01:29:51,420

And then to see what my wife was going through breaks a husband's heart.

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01:29:51,420 --> 01:30:00,580

So as a dad, as a husband, I wanted to help everyone get through what was going on because

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01:30:00,580 --> 01:30:10,820

I knew we were about to go into a world when a crucible of life that is enough to take

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01:30:10,820 --> 01:30:12,260

most families out.

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01:30:12,260 --> 01:30:18,020

In fact, most marriages end in divorce after the loss of a child.

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01:30:18,020 --> 01:30:21,120

And I didn't want that to happen to our family.

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01:30:21,120 --> 01:30:36,420

And so I pulled our whole family together and I said, I want you all to promise me,

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01:30:36,420 --> 01:30:44,580

promise me that we will not allow this to break our family apart and that we will do

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01:30:44,580 --> 01:30:51,620

anything and everything we can in our power to come together and work through it.

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01:30:51,620 --> 01:30:54,580

And we all agreed.

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01:30:54,580 --> 01:31:04,020

And as much as I wanted that to be the case, I knew that I had to start speaking that.

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01:31:04,020 --> 01:31:06,060

I had to start saying that.

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01:31:06,060 --> 01:31:10,620

Otherwise we were going to end up just spinning out of control.

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01:31:10,620 --> 01:31:13,700

So I wanted to verbalize it, get it out there into the world.

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01:31:13,700 --> 01:31:15,340

Take it.

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01:31:15,340 --> 01:31:18,100

We will not let this break our family up.

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01:31:18,100 --> 01:31:20,140

We will work through this.

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01:31:20,140 --> 01:31:22,100

We will come out of this.

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01:31:22,100 --> 01:31:24,220

We will get on the other side of this.

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01:31:24,220 --> 01:31:27,940

We will become an influence to help others going through this.

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01:31:27,940 --> 01:31:31,020

And I just kept saying that over and over in my head.

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01:31:31,020 --> 01:31:39,600

And my family agreed with me that they would not allow this to break us up.

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01:31:39,600 --> 01:31:50,380

But watching what my son had to go through as he navigated that, people have no idea.

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01:31:50,380 --> 01:31:51,380

It's hard on the parents.

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01:31:51,380 --> 01:31:52,380

Yeah, it is.

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01:31:52,380 --> 01:31:56,300

It's hard on the parents.

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01:31:56,300 --> 01:32:05,940

But in so many ways, it's even harder on the children, especially a brother and a brother

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01:32:05,940 --> 01:32:07,980

that were so close.

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01:32:07,980 --> 01:32:13,260

And it literally drove my son into a tailspin where he had to now start fighting his own

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01:32:13,260 --> 01:32:16,880

dragons and his own demons.

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01:32:16,880 --> 01:32:21,820

And we navigated through a lot of shit.

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01:32:21,820 --> 01:32:29,340

And he came out on the other side recently, just recently.

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01:32:29,340 --> 01:32:32,060

It's been a 10-year journey for him.

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01:32:32,060 --> 01:32:39,940

And one of the things that helped him to get through it is he was hired by Anaheim Fire.

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01:32:39,940 --> 01:32:41,340

He got hired by our department.

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01:32:41,340 --> 01:32:49,500

Yeah, but unfortunately, because of all that he was going through at the time, he got put

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01:32:49,500 --> 01:32:55,780

in that position very quickly because we had the ambulance program at Anaheim and my son

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01:32:55,780 --> 01:32:56,900

got hired with that.

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01:32:56,900 --> 01:33:02,300

So the first ambulance program with Anaheim, my son got hired with it.

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01:33:02,300 --> 01:33:07,140

So he was starting his career, wanted to be a fireman, and everything was moving in the

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01:33:07,140 --> 01:33:08,140

right direction.

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01:33:08,140 --> 01:33:09,140

But he had no fire experience.

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01:33:09,140 --> 01:33:10,580

He only had his EMT stuff.

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01:33:10,580 --> 01:33:12,620

So he didn't have a lot of skill set on the fire side.

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01:33:12,620 --> 01:33:16,840

Well, I was already out here in Tennessee and he was still in California.

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01:33:16,840 --> 01:33:22,480

So I wasn't able to really pour into him as far as training goes and what he needed.

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01:33:22,480 --> 01:33:26,980

So he ended up going through the academy and unfortunately he was not successful and they

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01:33:26,980 --> 01:33:29,460

had to let him go in the academy.

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01:33:29,460 --> 01:33:32,700

And that rocked his world.

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01:33:32,700 --> 01:33:39,920

And it put him in a place where he had to start dealing with that trauma.

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01:33:39,920 --> 01:33:40,920

And he did.

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01:33:40,920 --> 01:33:47,780

And he called me up back this last August and explained to me a lot of the stuff that

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01:33:47,780 --> 01:33:53,100

he was dealing with and the trauma that I had caused even as a dad.

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01:33:53,100 --> 01:33:57,020

And we walked through it and we worked it out and went through counseling.

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01:33:57,020 --> 01:33:58,020

We still do that.

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01:33:58,020 --> 01:34:02,900

We still counsel together even to this day.

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01:34:02,900 --> 01:34:12,580

And he's now taken that story and revamped his own history.

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01:34:12,580 --> 01:34:16,640

And now he's got his first season under his belt with CAL FIRE.

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01:34:16,640 --> 01:34:22,060

He's getting the fire training that he needs to get now and to finally see him at that

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01:34:22,060 --> 01:34:25,080

level of been over 10 years now.

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01:34:25,080 --> 01:34:31,780

And he's starting to get his groove and he's starting to move in the direction that makes

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01:34:31,780 --> 01:34:33,560

a dad so proud.

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01:34:33,560 --> 01:34:40,020

But I just keep remembering back to that challenge, do not let this break our family up.

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01:34:40,020 --> 01:34:44,480

And as hard as it's been, our family has stayed together.

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01:34:44,480 --> 01:34:47,600

My wife and I have stayed connected.

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01:34:47,600 --> 01:34:50,980

We've watched our children struggle and it's okay.

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01:34:50,980 --> 01:34:52,120

We just love them.

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01:34:52,120 --> 01:34:53,120

We love them through it.

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01:34:53,120 --> 01:34:57,880

We don't try to criticize them or condemn them or judge them for stupid things that

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01:34:57,880 --> 01:35:00,480

they do or say.

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01:35:00,480 --> 01:35:06,620

But we just encourage them to continue to move forward and don't stop.

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01:35:06,620 --> 01:35:18,540

And it's been very inspiring as a dad to watch both of them deal with their own shit and

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01:35:18,540 --> 01:35:21,180

their own trauma.

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01:35:21,180 --> 01:35:26,900

But at the same time, they have the resources of their mom and dad to talk to them about

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01:35:26,900 --> 01:35:33,680

it, which in many cases you lose that after the death because parents ended up, they end

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01:35:33,680 --> 01:35:35,760

up divorcing.

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01:35:35,760 --> 01:35:41,760

And that brings in a whole new set of traumas that you got to deal with.

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01:35:41,760 --> 01:35:46,960

So I guess all that to say, that was the story that happened with Mike.

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01:35:46,960 --> 01:35:56,000

The 10 year journey after that has created the opportunity for not only me and Kelly

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01:35:56,000 --> 01:36:01,660

to go through this together, my wife, but to watch our children as they navigate through

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01:36:01,660 --> 01:36:03,620

it as well.

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01:36:03,620 --> 01:36:10,160

Well, firstly, again, thank you for sharing Mike's story.

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01:36:10,160 --> 01:36:16,160

The takeaways from what you guys dealt with, but also this is another opportunity to bring

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01:36:16,160 --> 01:36:21,080

to life someone who was snatched from the world.

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01:36:21,080 --> 01:36:26,960

But I think what's so important or so powerful about your family's journey is again, that

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01:36:26,960 --> 01:36:28,880

post-traumatic growth conversation.

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01:36:28,880 --> 01:36:34,240

I think when it comes to mental health, it's almost like we got our trouser leg caught

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01:36:34,240 --> 01:36:35,240

in 2015.

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01:36:35,240 --> 01:36:38,880

We're trying to move forward, but it's like, oh, stigma, stigma, stigma.

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01:36:38,880 --> 01:36:40,440

We're way beyond that now.

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01:36:40,440 --> 01:36:41,960

Not everyone, but most of us.

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01:36:41,960 --> 01:36:46,320

It's like, how do we find the tools that are going to help?

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01:36:46,320 --> 01:36:52,760

And again, whether it's cannabis, psychedelics, ayahuasca, equine therapy, EMDR, whatever

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01:36:52,760 --> 01:36:53,760

the thing is.

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01:36:53,760 --> 01:36:58,000

There's so much out there that we don't even know about, at least I didn't know about until

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01:36:58,000 --> 01:36:59,960

I was thrust into it.

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01:36:59,960 --> 01:37:01,560

Exactly, exactly.

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01:37:01,560 --> 01:37:03,640

But I think it's that hope conversation.

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01:37:03,640 --> 01:37:08,640

You can't change what happened, but you can change the way that you react to it.

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01:37:08,640 --> 01:37:13,240

And your trauma from being a little boy, which arguably again, is a theme that comes up over

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01:37:13,240 --> 01:37:17,840

and over again, multi-generational trauma, the environment that your parents were raised

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01:37:17,840 --> 01:37:20,840

in, and their parents, et cetera, et cetera.

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01:37:20,840 --> 01:37:27,480

But also the hope, the resilience that going through the crucible, going through that trauma

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01:37:27,480 --> 01:37:31,040

with your son now on that fire journey.

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01:37:31,040 --> 01:37:35,280

He just wasn't ready when he first went, but now he's ready because he was forced to go

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01:37:35,280 --> 01:37:36,280

through that.

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01:37:36,280 --> 01:37:39,520

So I think there's such a powerful takeaway.

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01:37:39,520 --> 01:37:42,560

One time did you say, oh, did I mention it was fun?

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01:37:42,560 --> 01:37:43,560

No.

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01:37:43,560 --> 01:37:45,400

You know what I mean?

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01:37:45,400 --> 01:37:51,440

It's going to be horrible, but the hope, that beacon of light, that post-traumatic growth,

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01:37:51,440 --> 01:37:57,680

that resilience that is forged when you are forced to go through that trauma and heal

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01:37:57,680 --> 01:38:02,480

from that trauma and have that extra strength that you've got, that extra layer of scar

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01:38:02,480 --> 01:38:05,520

tissue that you never would have had before.

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01:38:05,520 --> 01:38:10,440

That is out of such a tragic story, a beautiful ending to it.

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01:38:10,440 --> 01:38:16,360

I would say ending's the wrong word, but a beautiful ripple effect of Michael's death.

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01:38:16,360 --> 01:38:17,360

Right.

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01:38:17,360 --> 01:38:18,360

Right.

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01:38:18,360 --> 01:38:19,360

Yeah.

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01:38:19,360 --> 01:38:20,360

Yeah, I agree.

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01:38:20,360 --> 01:38:27,040

Grieving is so different for everyone.

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01:38:27,040 --> 01:38:31,280

Everybody grieves differently.

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01:38:31,280 --> 01:38:44,520

I knew that my grief could take me down a dark path, but I also knew from my history

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01:38:44,520 --> 01:38:48,880

that you can change that storyline.

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01:38:48,880 --> 01:38:54,000

You can, for lack of a better word, rebrand what happened.

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01:38:54,000 --> 01:39:01,240

It doesn't have to be the final act.

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01:39:01,240 --> 01:39:10,240

It's just something that happened, and then based off of that, it propels you into a new

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01:39:10,240 --> 01:39:16,720

era or a new journey of life where you have to find purpose and meaning.

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01:39:16,720 --> 01:39:21,880

Finding that purpose and meaning through the death of a son, I don't even know if I've

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01:39:21,880 --> 01:39:34,480

ever have found it totally, but I do know that his death set me free from the bondage

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01:39:34,480 --> 01:39:38,040

of religion.

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01:39:38,040 --> 01:39:43,080

It was after his death that I was able to finally know all the stuff that has been swirling

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01:39:43,080 --> 01:39:51,920

in the questions and the concerns and the inconsistencies that the paradigm of religion

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01:39:51,920 --> 01:40:04,480

puts out there as well-intentioned as it may be and as pure as it might be from a position

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01:40:04,480 --> 01:40:17,160

of doing what's best for other people, there's so much in the jargon of religion that does

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01:40:17,160 --> 01:40:29,080

more to disable us to find that purpose and move forward and gives people a reason or

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01:40:29,080 --> 01:40:38,160

justification to hate, to not forgive.

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01:40:38,160 --> 01:40:46,480

The hardest thing in the journey for me was forgiving the man that brutally murdered my

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01:40:46,480 --> 01:40:48,920

son.

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01:40:48,920 --> 01:40:54,320

I knew that the minute that happened, I knew that my next journey was going to be a journey

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01:40:54,320 --> 01:41:01,160

of learning how to forgive like I had learned how to forgive myself because I know how wretched

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01:41:01,160 --> 01:41:02,160

I was.

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01:41:02,160 --> 01:41:13,920

I don't want to say evil, but for the lack of a better word, what I was doing to my wife

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01:41:13,920 --> 01:41:15,360

was evil.

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01:41:15,360 --> 01:41:17,000

It was hurtful.

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01:41:17,000 --> 01:41:20,720

It was self-centered.

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01:41:20,720 --> 01:41:25,840

I could see that I didn't want to do that, but yet there was something taking me down

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01:41:25,840 --> 01:41:26,840

that road.

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01:41:26,840 --> 01:41:36,440

When it came to Frank, I had to come to grips with that and say, okay, this is what you

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01:41:36,440 --> 01:41:37,440

believe.

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01:41:37,440 --> 01:41:38,440

Now, do you really believe it?

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01:41:38,440 --> 01:41:46,520

I mean, is he forgivable or is it justified to hold on to the anger and the resentment

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01:41:46,520 --> 01:41:50,800

and the bitterness and the hate that you have for this man?

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01:41:50,800 --> 01:42:00,920

Believe me, going through the trial, I literally sat on the front row with a wall between me

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01:42:00,920 --> 01:42:09,000

and maybe about 10 feet of space between where he sat at the defendant's table.

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01:42:09,000 --> 01:42:14,640

There was more than one occasion I would look around to kind of see where all the bailiffs

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01:42:14,640 --> 01:42:23,280

were and calculate in my own mind how quick I could go over there and take this guy out

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01:42:23,280 --> 01:42:25,720

before getting caught.

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01:42:25,720 --> 01:42:31,200

What kind of damage could I do before getting taken down by the cops?

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01:42:31,200 --> 01:42:33,500

Those thoughts came through my head.

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01:42:33,500 --> 01:42:39,800

As I'm wrestling with all that during the trial, I knew I can't live my life like that.

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01:42:39,800 --> 01:42:44,420

I'm going to have to learn to forgive even this.

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01:42:44,420 --> 01:42:47,520

That was my journey, was learning how to do that.

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01:42:47,520 --> 01:42:56,180

Forgive the man that killed my son and love on my own family enough to where they too

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01:42:56,180 --> 01:43:00,400

could get to a place, maybe not a forgiveness if that was the case, but at least they could

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01:43:00,400 --> 01:43:04,640

get to a place where they could function with a purpose.

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01:43:04,640 --> 01:43:09,480

That was the mindset at the time.

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01:43:09,480 --> 01:43:14,000

It's an interesting perspective when you're talking about religion versus your specific

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01:43:14,000 --> 01:43:16,480

individual faith or spirituality.

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01:43:16,480 --> 01:43:19,600

This is where I've just been for a long, long time.

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01:43:19,600 --> 01:43:20,800

I was raised in the Church of England.

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01:43:20,800 --> 01:43:28,760

I went to Sunday school and watched my parents not really seemingly believe themselves, but

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01:43:28,760 --> 01:43:34,000

they took us to church and gave us every opportunity to be pulled into that.

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01:43:34,000 --> 01:43:41,160

That particular way of presenting the teachings to me didn't resonate even as a little boy,

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01:43:41,160 --> 01:43:45,520

but I've been incredibly spiritual my whole life.

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01:43:45,520 --> 01:43:48,320

To me, you just walk outside and see nature.

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01:43:48,320 --> 01:43:53,800

To me, that's God's work, my God, the one that I believe in.

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01:43:53,800 --> 01:43:59,720

When you have, for example, a nation that's supposed to be so faith-based, whatever their

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01:43:59,720 --> 01:44:06,960

faith is, and yet you hear the rhetoric on homelessness or addiction or sex workers,

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01:44:06,960 --> 01:44:11,800

it's not what Buddha or Jesus would say or do.

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01:44:11,800 --> 01:44:13,280

This is where I have that disconnect.

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01:44:13,280 --> 01:44:14,760

It's like, well, hold on a second.

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01:44:14,760 --> 01:44:19,560

Every Sunday, you tell me you're in this building and you tell me you're this fucking amazingly

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01:44:19,560 --> 01:44:26,000

Christian, Muslim, Jewish, whatever person, but then you walk out the door and you don't

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01:44:26,000 --> 01:44:30,800

seem to understand the core tenets, which for me is a white belt Bible understander,

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01:44:30,800 --> 01:44:37,440

for lack of a better word, get, love, community, compassion, acceptance.

1382

01:44:37,440 --> 01:44:38,440

Where's this disconnect?

1383

01:44:38,440 --> 01:44:43,240

So not picking on any particular group, but this is where I feel that that pigeonholing

1384

01:44:43,240 --> 01:44:44,240

gets dangerous.

1385

01:44:44,240 --> 01:44:48,840

And then you start saying, oh, well, God loves everyone except the gay, so whatever.

1386

01:44:48,840 --> 01:44:51,640

And then you really fucking lost me after that point.

1387

01:44:51,640 --> 01:44:54,040

But it's that disconnect.

1388

01:44:54,040 --> 01:44:58,160

If you're not being a good person, if someone says to you, what do we need to do about the

1389

01:44:58,160 --> 01:45:02,800

addiction crisis or the obesity and your answer or the immigration, whatever the answer is

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01:45:02,800 --> 01:45:09,880

anything less than what Jesus would reply with or, you know, whoever your your deity

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01:45:09,880 --> 01:45:13,160

or your prophet is, then you've missed the point.

1392

01:45:13,160 --> 01:45:18,520

If it's not coming from love and community and kindness and empathy, to me, you've missed

1393

01:45:18,520 --> 01:45:19,520

the point.

1394

01:45:19,520 --> 01:45:26,240

So that's where I love this kind of the stoke bespoke version of spirituality.

1395

01:45:26,240 --> 01:45:30,180

Why should mine be the same as my wife's, the same as my son with three different types

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01:45:30,180 --> 01:45:35,280

of people on our own journey, with our own trauma and our own passions?

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01:45:35,280 --> 01:45:40,760

And so if the tenants are there, that to me is the most important thing.

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01:45:40,760 --> 01:45:45,160

And if you're in whatever the churches that we just mentioned and you're a beautiful,

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01:45:45,160 --> 01:45:48,240

kind person, then your religion is working for you 100 percent.

1400

01:45:48,240 --> 01:45:49,240

Absolutely.

1401

01:45:49,240 --> 01:45:56,000

But if you're not, then maybe just maybe it's time to kind of think, oh, can I can I take

1402

01:45:56,000 --> 01:46:00,160

the things that are working for me, but also take some other things and get myself back

1403

01:46:00,160 --> 01:46:04,520

onto a road where, as they say, you know, what would Jesus do?

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01:46:04,520 --> 01:46:06,860

I'm not talking about singing songs about him.

1405

01:46:06,860 --> 01:46:08,360

What would he actually do?

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01:46:08,360 --> 01:46:12,840

He'd be anointing the poor and raising the fallen.

1407

01:46:12,840 --> 01:46:15,040

He wouldn't be judging and building walls.

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01:46:15,040 --> 01:46:16,640

Exactly right.

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01:46:16,640 --> 01:46:26,320

I think the words he said was, you know, you go out into the world and you try to teach

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01:46:26,320 --> 01:46:30,640

them how to have a relationship with God.

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01:46:30,640 --> 01:46:34,780

And one of the tools he used was, first of all, you got to know who God is.

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01:46:34,780 --> 01:46:37,480

So let's define him first.

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01:46:37,480 --> 01:46:42,400

And once we define who God is, then we can have a roadmap to follow.

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01:46:42,400 --> 01:46:44,080

And here's who God is.

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01:46:44,080 --> 01:46:47,040

God is love.

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01:46:47,040 --> 01:46:48,040

Period.

1417

01:46:48,040 --> 01:46:50,200

That's who God is.

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01:46:50,200 --> 01:46:51,200

It's love.

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01:46:51,200 --> 01:46:54,080

So when we act in love, we're being godly.

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01:46:54,080 --> 01:46:59,160

When we act in judgment, criticism, anger, resentment, bitterness, hostility, and the

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01:46:59,160 --> 01:47:11,360

whole gamut of what our flesh, our physical nature finds as normal or natural, those are

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01:47:11,360 --> 01:47:14,080

things we do out of fear.

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01:47:14,080 --> 01:47:23,840

And so for me, it became very easy to dissect what was being spoken.

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01:47:23,840 --> 01:47:29,120

I looked at things through two lenses, fear and love.

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01:47:29,120 --> 01:47:35,640

And I came to the agreement with myself in understanding that anything that is acting

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01:47:35,640 --> 01:47:42,000

out of love was acting out of God, and anything that was acting out of fear was acting out

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01:47:42,000 --> 01:47:49,500

of my own insecurities where I need to start working at why am I fearful of this and start

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01:47:49,500 --> 01:47:53,520

dissecting it and start doing the work.

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01:47:53,520 --> 01:47:55,480

There's only two emotions that I know of.

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01:47:55,480 --> 01:47:56,780

It's fear and love.

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01:47:56,780 --> 01:47:59,220

But each one of those emotions, those are the root emotions.

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01:47:59,220 --> 01:48:05,040

But each emotion has a core or a set of other emotions that stem from that.

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01:48:05,040 --> 01:48:08,640

So they're either a positive emotion or a negative emotion.

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01:48:08,640 --> 01:48:13,720

And the negative emotion is what drives us down away from love.

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01:48:13,720 --> 01:48:20,540

Whereas love pulls us away from the negative emotions that we can classify as our flesh

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01:48:20,540 --> 01:48:27,720

or our natural being or the natural state of what we are and what we strive for.

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01:48:27,720 --> 01:48:36,200

And looking at through those two lenses gave me the ability to look at my own religion.

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01:48:36,200 --> 01:48:40,040

My dad was a preacher in this particular church.

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01:48:40,040 --> 01:48:42,360

My uncle was a preacher in the church.

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01:48:42,360 --> 01:48:44,160

My grandfather was in the church.

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01:48:44,160 --> 01:48:49,480

I've got four generations that went back almost to where this denomination began, although

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01:48:49,480 --> 01:48:53,640

they won't tell you they're a denomination, they're a non-denomination.

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01:48:53,640 --> 01:49:00,240

They just don't have any central headquarters or somebody over the entire organization.

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01:49:00,240 --> 01:49:03,040

They're all independent, which is a beautiful thing.

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01:49:03,040 --> 01:49:05,360

It really is.

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01:49:05,360 --> 01:49:09,760

But when I started looking at it through the lens of fear and love, and then I looked at

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01:49:09,760 --> 01:49:14,600

the results, what were the results we were producing?

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01:49:14,600 --> 01:49:19,120

Because I know what the power of commitment produces, it produces results.

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01:49:19,120 --> 01:49:25,520

So if this is who we say we are, and this is what we say we believe, then we should

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01:49:25,520 --> 01:49:33,240

have an influence in the world and the world should start changing to be more like the

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01:49:33,240 --> 01:49:37,520

loving God that we profess to teach.

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01:49:37,520 --> 01:49:39,880

But what I saw was the actual opposite.

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01:49:39,880 --> 01:49:41,640

I saw more division.

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01:49:41,640 --> 01:49:44,040

I saw the lack of unity.

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01:49:44,040 --> 01:49:51,760

I saw the judgment and criticism of not only other religions, but other denominations within

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01:49:51,760 --> 01:49:53,600

my own religion.

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01:49:53,600 --> 01:50:00,000

And then I was coming from a group of folks that I'm not trying to badmouth or bash because

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01:50:00,000 --> 01:50:01,000

I am not.

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01:50:01,000 --> 01:50:03,680

I love the denomination I came out of.

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01:50:03,680 --> 01:50:11,620

They did so much for my development into understanding the scripture and interpreting it in a way

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01:50:11,620 --> 01:50:16,480

that works.

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01:50:16,480 --> 01:50:22,040

On the other hand of that though, it becomes very legalistic.

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01:50:22,040 --> 01:50:29,660

And love, as much as it's a proponent of who we need to be and who God is, we are also

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01:50:29,660 --> 01:50:35,480

justified in righteous indignation against the gays or against people that we don't

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01:50:35,480 --> 01:50:38,760

think God loves.

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01:50:38,760 --> 01:50:42,760

And when we get to a place in our lives where we can say, well, God favors me more than

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01:50:42,760 --> 01:50:45,000

he favors you, then we ain't serving God anymore.

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01:50:45,000 --> 01:50:46,000

I'm just sorry.

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01:50:46,000 --> 01:50:47,000

You can't.

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01:50:47,000 --> 01:50:48,000

Love doesn't do that.

1471

01:50:48,000 --> 01:50:54,420

Love does not favor somebody over somebody else, regardless of what they're doing, because

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01:50:54,420 --> 01:50:55,840

God knows my situation.

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01:50:55,840 --> 01:51:03,080

And going through addiction and going through the death of my son, there's a lot of things

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01:51:03,080 --> 01:51:08,440

that, you know, I'm certain that what I was doing and what I was thinking from a religious

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01:51:08,440 --> 01:51:13,920

point of reference, I was certain that I was wrong.

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01:51:13,920 --> 01:51:19,180

I remember my wife even saying, what if Michael's in hell?

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01:51:19,180 --> 01:51:22,480

And I told her, I said, baby, we don't got to worry about that.

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01:51:22,480 --> 01:51:29,240

I said, hell doesn't even exist except in the minds of those who want to believe that

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01:51:29,240 --> 01:51:32,360

there is a fear that we have to stay away from.

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01:51:32,360 --> 01:51:37,680

And so they use it as a fear to keep us from moving in a direction that will by nature

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01:51:37,680 --> 01:51:43,760

help us to understand the spiritual principles that are being taught in the Bible.

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01:51:43,760 --> 01:51:46,880

Love your enemies as yourself.

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01:51:46,880 --> 01:51:48,480

Love your neighbor as yourself.

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01:51:48,480 --> 01:51:56,480

And for God's sake, I mean, the very people that nailed Jesus to a cross after, you know,

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01:51:56,480 --> 01:52:04,480

putting them through a mock trial and convicting him on lies and beating him and opening his

1486

01:52:04,480 --> 01:52:10,000

back with leather straps so that blood was just gushing down his backside and then throw

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01:52:10,000 --> 01:52:15,880

a linen garment on it so it coagulated to the backside of his skin.

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01:52:15,880 --> 01:52:22,000

And then to rip that off after the scabs had coagulated to nail him on a cross and, you

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01:52:22,000 --> 01:52:26,680

know, raise that cross up and kick it into a four foot hole after his hands have been

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01:52:26,680 --> 01:52:29,200

nailed to it and just starting to rip the tenon.

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01:52:29,200 --> 01:52:34,100

It's a part of a, I mean, you just think about what he went through.

1492

01:52:34,100 --> 01:52:44,960

And his words, not mine, his words, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

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01:52:44,960 --> 01:52:54,680

That started to question my own understanding of if they can be forgiven and if I can be

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01:52:54,680 --> 01:52:59,080

forgiven then everybody can be forgiven.

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01:52:59,080 --> 01:53:05,040

The question is, is forgiveness something that I have to literally ask for and accept

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01:53:05,040 --> 01:53:10,400

or can my life naturally cause me to go and go, you know what, that ain't working for

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01:53:10,400 --> 01:53:11,400

me no more.

1498

01:53:11,400 --> 01:53:14,080

I got to, I'm not feeling love.

1499

01:53:14,080 --> 01:53:15,080

I'm feeling resentment.

1500

01:53:15,080 --> 01:53:16,080

I'm feeling anger.

1501

01:53:16,080 --> 01:53:17,080

I'm feeling hostility.

1502

01:53:17,080 --> 01:53:18,080

I'm feeling all these things.

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01:53:18,080 --> 01:53:23,600

And that has to be what changes our focus.

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01:53:23,600 --> 01:53:29,460

Instead of trying to dial in on the dogma and trying to take scripture and apply it

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01:53:29,460 --> 01:53:34,520

literally in every single case, you know, I'm going to get a lot of heat from a lot

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01:53:34,520 --> 01:53:41,560

of the religious folks out there, but the reality is this.

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01:53:41,560 --> 01:53:49,800

If I believed what I was taught, then I would have no hope of going to heaven because every

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01:53:49,800 --> 01:53:57,120

time I did what I did, I did it knowingly and I chose it.

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01:53:57,120 --> 01:54:04,040

So how does a guy that chooses to cheat on his wife, not with indiscriminate affairs,

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01:54:04,040 --> 01:54:17,080

but with prostitutes, strip clubs, pornography, and rip a family apart, if I can be forgiven

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01:54:17,080 --> 01:54:23,960

of that, even when I was in my guilt, even when I was still doing, I mean, like I said,

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01:54:23,960 --> 01:54:27,640

my most vivid prayer, I was literally looking for prostitutes.

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01:54:27,640 --> 01:54:33,280

I was driving the street looking for prostitutes, crying, looking and asking, God, please help

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01:54:33,280 --> 01:54:34,280

me.

1515

01:54:34,280 --> 01:54:35,280

I don't want to do this.

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01:54:35,280 --> 01:54:38,320

I don't want to be doing this and did it anyway.

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01:54:38,320 --> 01:54:42,340

So had I died at that very moment where I'm crying out, please help me.

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01:54:42,340 --> 01:54:43,340

But I still continued.

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01:54:43,340 --> 01:54:44,880

Sorry, dude, you're going to hell.

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01:54:44,880 --> 01:54:45,880

Don't care.

1521

01:54:45,880 --> 01:54:46,880

You're done.

1522

01:54:46,880 --> 01:54:55,080

That's a hard thing for me to understand because I'm very honest with who I am.

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01:54:55,080 --> 01:55:00,760

And I know that my journey is despicable as my addiction was.

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01:55:00,760 --> 01:55:02,800

It's made me who I am.

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01:55:02,800 --> 01:55:06,800

And without it, I wouldn't be Rick Cheatham standing here today talking to you.

1526

01:55:06,800 --> 01:55:10,180

I wouldn't be that guy.

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01:55:10,180 --> 01:55:17,640

But it took me that experience to become who I was to get into the fire service.

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01:55:17,640 --> 01:55:23,000

And it was through that fire service journey that I was able to deal with so much trauma

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01:55:23,000 --> 01:55:28,920

and so much tragedy on the people we respond to that that was able to be parlayed into

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01:55:28,920 --> 01:55:33,720

what was going on with my own son and our own family suffered that tragedy.

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01:55:33,720 --> 01:55:39,560

I mean, it's such a powerful perspective and I couldn't agree with you more.

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01:55:39,560 --> 01:55:44,280

And if people have issues with what you said, it doesn't matter because you're in your

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01:55:44,280 --> 01:55:45,280

own journey as well.

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01:55:45,280 --> 01:55:46,280

And they can say it.

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01:55:46,280 --> 01:55:47,280

I don't even care anymore, man.

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01:55:47,280 --> 01:55:50,320

In fact, most people don't even they won't even come up and talk to me about it anymore.

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01:55:50,320 --> 01:55:54,800

They know that trying to talk to me about it now is I'll listen, but you're going to

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01:55:54,800 --> 01:55:58,320

get nowhere real fast.

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01:55:58,320 --> 01:56:01,320

And I'll ask some questions that you're not going to be able to answer and you're going

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01:56:01,320 --> 01:56:03,720

to go back to just dogma.

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01:56:03,720 --> 01:56:11,280

And whenever you interpret our current standards of religion today by what was written 2000

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01:56:11,280 --> 01:56:16,880

years ago in a different time, a different culture, a different people, a different land,

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01:56:16,880 --> 01:56:18,220

everything was different.

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01:56:18,220 --> 01:56:21,360

And you want to take everything and say this is literal.

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01:56:21,360 --> 01:56:24,760

I mean, for God's sake, we're waiting for Armageddon right now.

1546

01:56:24,760 --> 01:56:27,680

Everybody everybody I hear saying, oh, wow, and the end's coming soon.

1547

01:56:27,680 --> 01:56:29,520

The world's going to burn up and blow up.

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01:56:29,520 --> 01:56:32,560

And you know that Jesus is going to come back and all this stuff.

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01:56:32,560 --> 01:56:39,320

And I just sit back and I shake my head and say, well, that's not how I see it.

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01:56:39,320 --> 01:56:40,960

That's not how I see it at all.

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01:56:40,960 --> 01:56:49,760

In fact, it's that very mentality that has got people so fearful that the predominant

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01:56:49,760 --> 01:56:56,680

emotion today in Christian circles is fear God.

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01:56:56,680 --> 01:56:57,680

That is what we do.

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01:56:57,680 --> 01:56:59,360

We fear God to keep his commandments.

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01:56:59,360 --> 01:57:03,280

No, I'm going to start preaching here in a minute, and I don't want to do that.

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01:57:03,280 --> 01:57:07,320

But you know, fearing God, how do you fear love?

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01:57:07,320 --> 01:57:08,320

I just curious.

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01:57:08,320 --> 01:57:13,200

I mean, if anybody loves me unconditionally, no matter what I do, they're going to love

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01:57:13,200 --> 01:57:14,520

me unconditionally.

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01:57:14,520 --> 01:57:15,680

What does unconditionally means?

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01:57:15,680 --> 01:57:17,540

That means without condition.

1562

01:57:17,540 --> 01:57:22,360

He loves me without condition until I die and I didn't get baptized and I didn't believe

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01:57:22,360 --> 01:57:25,320

the way I was supposed to believe and I didn't go to the church I was supposed to go.

1564

01:57:25,320 --> 01:57:27,680

Sorry, man, you're going to hell for the rest of your life.

1565

01:57:27,680 --> 01:57:28,680

What kind of God is that?

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01:57:28,680 --> 01:57:29,680

God is not love.

1567

01:57:29,680 --> 01:57:31,800

I'm sorry, it's not love.

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01:57:31,800 --> 01:57:35,640

But he's a just God and God being just is loving.

1569

01:57:35,640 --> 01:57:37,520

Well, that's your God.

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01:57:37,520 --> 01:57:41,760

My God is the guy that was nailed on that cross and said, Father, forgive them, for

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01:57:41,760 --> 01:57:43,400

they know not what they do.

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01:57:43,400 --> 01:57:48,040

Just like I didn't know what I was doing when I was nailing them to the cross.

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01:57:48,040 --> 01:57:54,200

And it was through the experience of those consequences that changed my behavior, not

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01:57:54,200 --> 01:57:57,520

the doctrine that I read in the scripture.

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01:57:57,520 --> 01:57:58,840

Absolutely.

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01:57:58,840 --> 01:58:03,160

There's a guy, Wayne Dyer, who I loved, absolutely loved.

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01:58:03,160 --> 01:58:04,160

You familiar with this work?

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01:58:04,160 --> 01:58:05,160

Phenomenal, man.

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01:58:05,160 --> 01:58:06,160

Phenomenal.

1580

01:58:06,160 --> 01:58:07,160

And I loved it.

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01:58:07,160 --> 01:58:12,720

I forget how he phrased it, but he was like, I don't think that God is a withholding God,

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01:58:12,720 --> 01:58:18,480

meaning that he's got the answers to your prayers, but you have to kneel down and say

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01:58:18,480 --> 01:58:23,040

enough prayers first before he goes, all right, then go have this stuff now.

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01:58:23,040 --> 01:58:26,080

And I was like, that's it.

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01:58:26,080 --> 01:58:40,760

And to try to tell somebody who's gone through the loss of their son that because your son

1586

01:58:40,760 --> 01:58:45,080

didn't go to the church that you thought he should have or believe what you think he should

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01:58:45,080 --> 01:58:51,280

have or was acting the way you think he should have, that somehow he's in fear of judgment

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01:58:51,280 --> 01:58:53,880

for condemnation.

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01:58:53,880 --> 01:59:00,400

Man, with that kind of fear out there, there's no wonder this world's in the mess that it's

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01:59:00,400 --> 01:59:01,400

in.

1591

01:59:01,400 --> 01:59:06,360

It's not because of the people that live here.

1592

01:59:06,360 --> 01:59:09,080

It's because of the belief systems that we've bought into.

1593

01:59:09,080 --> 01:59:16,240

We've bought into a lot of lies, and those lies are destroying the fabric of our society.

1594

01:59:16,240 --> 01:59:19,520

And if we would all just come together and say, hey, look, here's what God is.

1595

01:59:19,520 --> 01:59:20,520

He's love.

1596

01:59:20,520 --> 01:59:23,280

How loving are you today?

1597

01:59:23,280 --> 01:59:24,880

And be honest with it.

1598

01:59:24,880 --> 01:59:29,320

Well, I'm judging this man over here because I have the right to.

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01:59:29,320 --> 01:59:31,320

Well, who gives you the right to judge?

1600

01:59:31,320 --> 01:59:33,520

Righteous indignation, righteous anger.

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01:59:33,520 --> 01:59:38,720

I'm sorry, man, but I can be angry and I can be upset.

1602

01:59:38,720 --> 01:59:40,400

And believe me, I do.

1603

01:59:40,400 --> 01:59:41,840

I am.

1604

01:59:41,840 --> 01:59:49,960

However, it doesn't grab me the way that it did at one time and hold me locked in to that

1605

01:59:49,960 --> 01:59:51,960

fear-based mentality.

1606

01:59:51,960 --> 01:59:54,640

It set me free since Michael died.

1607

01:59:54,640 --> 01:59:56,960

I've been set free from that.

1608

01:59:56,960 --> 02:00:03,520

And I truly sought after that relationship with God in a way that became so real that

1609

02:00:03,520 --> 02:00:04,520

it was undeniable.

1610

02:00:04,520 --> 02:00:10,440

And I can go for hours on the stuff that God has taken me down different roads and different

1611

02:00:10,440 --> 02:00:15,480

paths that you cannot deny His existence.

1612

02:00:15,480 --> 02:00:20,000

And if He was doing that, and I'm not practicing what you think I should be practicing as my

1613

02:00:20,000 --> 02:00:27,520

religious heritage, then how in the hell am I getting this?

1614

02:00:27,520 --> 02:00:35,240

How is this deity influencing me and causing me to go down these paths that I would have

1615

02:00:35,240 --> 02:00:36,240

never...

1616

02:00:36,240 --> 02:00:41,860

Who tells their wife they've been cheating on them with hookers?

1617

02:00:41,860 --> 02:00:44,280

But God told me to do that.

1618

02:00:44,280 --> 02:00:50,120

He spoke it into my life through the words of my mentor, and I trusted Him enough to

1619

02:00:50,120 --> 02:00:51,120

do it.

1620

02:00:51,120 --> 02:00:59,000

And when you step out on faith and trust something bigger than yourself, and you find out that,

1621

02:00:59,000 --> 02:01:00,720

wow, that's real.

1622

02:01:00,720 --> 02:01:02,880

That just happened.

1623

02:01:02,880 --> 02:01:07,200

It doesn't turn you off to God.

1624

02:01:07,200 --> 02:01:08,600

It does just the opposite.

1625

02:01:08,600 --> 02:01:10,360

It fires you up.

1626

02:01:10,360 --> 02:01:11,480

It excites you.

1627

02:01:11,480 --> 02:01:12,520

It motivates you.

1628

02:01:12,520 --> 02:01:18,480

It inspires you to know that the God I serve is so real that I can have a communication

1629

02:01:18,480 --> 02:01:19,480

with Him.

1630

02:01:19,480 --> 02:01:20,480

And it's not just me praying to Him.

1631

02:01:20,480 --> 02:01:27,640

He actually communicates back through my own thought and through my own conversations with

1632

02:01:27,640 --> 02:01:30,880

comparing love and fear, love and fear.

1633

02:01:30,880 --> 02:01:33,740

And when I'm in a fearful state, it's cool.

1634

02:01:33,740 --> 02:01:35,840

The question is, what am I learning?

1635

02:01:35,840 --> 02:01:40,360

And as long as I'm learning in that fearful state and I'm not becoming a victim in that

1636

02:01:40,360 --> 02:01:44,000

fearful state, I'm going to have success.

1637

02:01:44,000 --> 02:01:46,500

Absolutely.

1638

02:01:46,500 --> 02:01:50,600

We have hit two hours, but we've got one more conversation to have.

1639

02:01:50,600 --> 02:01:56,880

People listening are like, well, okay, well, at least Rick's life from growing after losing

1640

02:01:56,880 --> 02:02:03,320

his son remained stable and happy until forever after.

1641

02:02:03,320 --> 02:02:09,560

However, talk to me about the accident that once again threw an incredible wrench into

1642

02:02:09,560 --> 02:02:13,320

everything for you, physically, mentally, spiritually.

1643

02:02:13,320 --> 02:02:19,640

Yeah, it just completely threw me back into a whole new mindset of trying to figure out

1644

02:02:19,640 --> 02:02:21,240

how to dig myself out of a hole.

1645

02:02:21,240 --> 02:02:31,080

But five months after I retired to Nashville, I came back from the restroom at one in the

1646

02:02:31,080 --> 02:02:34,040
morning and had a sinkable.

1647
02:02:34,040 --> 02:02:45,120
And from what I'm told now is my head hit my bed, the side of my bed and whiplashed

1648
02:02:45,120 --> 02:02:50,480
my neck back and broke C4 and five.

1649
02:02:50,480 --> 02:02:57,980
So I had a broken neck at C4 and five, was unconscious, woke up.

1650
02:02:57,980 --> 02:02:59,200
My wife was over me.

1651
02:02:59,200 --> 02:03:08,000
She had heard me fall and she ended up asking me if I was okay, but I'm sitting down face

1652
02:03:08,000 --> 02:03:11,320
down, but I can't move.

1653
02:03:11,320 --> 02:03:18,880
So she grabs my head and she kind of helps her and gets me on my backside.

1654
02:03:18,880 --> 02:03:26,360
As soon as I got on my back, I started to go to corticot and all of my extremities started

1655
02:03:26,360 --> 02:03:32,000
to come in and I knew that that was not a good sign.

1656
02:03:32,000 --> 02:03:33,720
And I told her, I said, I think I broke my neck.

1657

02:03:33,720 --> 02:03:35,840
I can't feel anything.

1658
02:03:35,840 --> 02:03:37,800
And she says, no, you didn't.

1659
02:03:37,800 --> 02:03:42,480
And so she takes my arms down to my side and sure enough, they came back up again.

1660
02:03:42,480 --> 02:03:44,400
And there was a running joke in my house.

1661
02:03:44,400 --> 02:03:46,280
You never call 911 in our house.

1662
02:03:46,280 --> 02:03:48,800
Don't you ever call 911.

1663
02:03:48,800 --> 02:03:51,920
You better be dying if you're going to call 911.

1664
02:03:51,920 --> 02:03:53,920
It sucks being a firefighters family.

1665
02:03:53,920 --> 02:03:54,920
It does.

1666
02:03:54,920 --> 02:03:55,920
It really does.

1667
02:03:55,920 --> 02:03:58,440
Well, she said, I think I'm going to have to call 911.

1668

02:03:58,440 --> 02:03:59,440

I said, yeah, this is the time.

1669

02:03:59,440 --> 02:04:00,440

This is when you got to do it.

1670

02:04:00,440 --> 02:04:02,040

This is the time to do it.

1671

02:04:02,040 --> 02:04:06,360

So long story short, I ended up breaking C4, C5.

1672

02:04:06,360 --> 02:04:12,320

I was paralyzed from the chest down, spent two and a half months in the hospital learning

1673

02:04:12,320 --> 02:04:22,640

how to feed myself, wipe myself, shower myself, everything for nearly the first two, I'd say

1674

02:04:22,640 --> 02:04:25,680

the first month and a half, I couldn't do any of that.

1675

02:04:25,680 --> 02:04:30,840

I was completely dependent on everyone.

1676

02:04:30,840 --> 02:04:37,600

And when I first got in there, my therapist came to me and asked me, what do you want

1677

02:04:37,600 --> 02:04:39,640

to accomplish while you're here?

1678

02:04:39,640 --> 02:04:41,920

And I told her, I want to walk out of there.

1679

02:04:41,920 --> 02:04:44,280
I want to walk out of this hospital.

1680
02:04:44,280 --> 02:04:49,240
And she says, well, then we got some work to do.

1681
02:04:49,240 --> 02:04:51,080
And so we just went to work.

1682
02:04:51,080 --> 02:04:58,760
And I was doing extra therapy on weekends, but even with all the therapy, that's not

1683
02:04:58,760 --> 02:05:00,840
what got me through it.

1684
02:05:00,840 --> 02:05:06,720
What got me through this, James, and you're going to understand this, is my fire family.

1685
02:05:06,720 --> 02:05:11,480
I'm 2000 and some odd miles away from Southern California.

1686
02:05:11,480 --> 02:05:17,040
And I just got my family here.

1687
02:05:17,040 --> 02:05:18,040
Just bought this house.

1688
02:05:18,040 --> 02:05:24,360
I was just getting the bottom half of my house turned into an Airbnb.

1689
02:05:24,360 --> 02:05:31,160
And I had guys flying out here from California, helping my wife with all the stuff that needed

1690

02:05:31,160 --> 02:05:36,160
to go on at the house and getting it ready and prepped.

1691
02:05:36,160 --> 02:05:41,000
And they were at my bedside the entire time I was in the hospital.

1692
02:05:41,000 --> 02:05:46,460
I had somebody at my bedside every single day I was in the hospital.

1693
02:05:46,460 --> 02:05:50,000
Sometimes I had two or three, sometimes I had five or seven.

1694
02:05:50,000 --> 02:05:56,920
And they were just, I had this revolving door of seeing my buddies showing up at the hospital.

1695
02:05:56,920 --> 02:06:01,880
And then they were there for me to walk out of the hospital.

1696
02:06:01,880 --> 02:06:05,600
And then when I got home, I had people staying with me at the house to make sure I was getting

1697
02:06:05,600 --> 02:06:06,920
to the doctor's appointment.

1698
02:06:06,920 --> 02:06:17,160
So the brotherly love, the love of that family, the love of these people who went out of their

1699
02:06:17,160 --> 02:06:28,560
way, bought plane tickets to come out here and support my wife and I and my family.

1700
02:06:28,560 --> 02:06:33,340
If that's not an act of God, I don't know what is.

1701

02:06:33,340 --> 02:06:37,980

And some of these people you wouldn't say are very godly people, but they sure showed

1702

02:06:37,980 --> 02:06:42,760

a lot of godly love to my family and to me.

1703

02:06:42,760 --> 02:06:50,720

In fact, one of the nurses that I had said to me, I don't know who you are, Rick, but

1704

02:06:50,720 --> 02:06:52,680

you are obviously a loved man.

1705

02:06:52,680 --> 02:06:56,080

And I said, well, why do you say that?

1706

02:06:56,080 --> 02:07:03,640

She says, I have people that come in here in your condition who have family that live

1707

02:07:03,640 --> 02:07:06,700

30 miles away.

1708

02:07:06,700 --> 02:07:15,060

And I never see their own family here, but you got people that are flying in from California.

1709

02:07:15,060 --> 02:07:20,140

And I've never seen so many people visit a person while they're in the hospital.

1710

02:07:20,140 --> 02:07:23,160

And your people are coming 2000 miles away.

1711

02:07:23,160 --> 02:07:26,160

She said, you must be a very loved man.

1712

02:07:26,160 --> 02:07:31,520

And I said, yeah, I guess you're right.

1713

02:07:31,520 --> 02:07:33,160

I guess you're right.

1714

02:07:33,160 --> 02:07:34,160

They love me.

1715

02:07:34,160 --> 02:07:37,480

I said, but it doesn't surprise me.

1716

02:07:37,480 --> 02:07:44,240

I said, because the family I come from in the fire service is very loving.

1717

02:07:44,240 --> 02:07:47,600

When our family suffers, everybody comes together.

1718

02:07:47,600 --> 02:07:55,400

And that's pretty much every fire family I know, they will move heaven and hell to help

1719

02:07:55,400 --> 02:07:57,320

a brother in need.

1720

02:07:57,320 --> 02:08:06,960

And they do it with such precision and such professionalism that it takes people by surprise

1721

02:08:06,960 --> 02:08:09,200

when they see it firsthand.

1722

02:08:09,200 --> 02:08:16,000

So when this nurse saw what Anaheim Fire was doing on my behalf, she had nothing but, I

1723

02:08:16,000 --> 02:08:21,080

don't know who you are, but you must be very loved because I don't see this from family

1724

02:08:21,080 --> 02:08:25,640

members who live just in the neighborhood.

1725

02:08:25,640 --> 02:08:29,120

But that caused me to go into a very deep depression now, because now at the end of

1726

02:08:29,120 --> 02:08:31,640

my 50s, I'm sitting back now, I've got a broken neck.

1727

02:08:31,640 --> 02:08:35,320

I can't feel anything from the chest down.

1728

02:08:35,320 --> 02:08:38,400

My hands don't work.

1729

02:08:38,400 --> 02:08:42,520

And from a guy who was a truck captain, a contractor who swung a hammer most of his

1730

02:08:42,520 --> 02:08:51,240

life and made a living with his hands to not be able to do that, it not only did a mind

1731

02:08:51,240 --> 02:08:57,560

game on my physical stature, but it brought me all the way back to when Michael was murdered.

1732

02:08:57,560 --> 02:09:04,160

And I thought to myself, man, my 50s have sucked.

1733

02:09:04,160 --> 02:09:07,280

I start my 50s with burying my son.

1734

02:09:07,280 --> 02:09:13,480

I end my 50s with breaking my neck and not being able to walk.

1735

02:09:13,480 --> 02:09:21,120

And there was a side of me that just said, man, maybe everybody in religion was right.

1736

02:09:21,120 --> 02:09:25,220

Maybe I'm just suffering because I'm being punished.

1737

02:09:25,220 --> 02:09:29,520

And I knew that couldn't be true because I'd had way too many experiences that proved that

1738

02:09:29,520 --> 02:09:30,520

otherwise.

1739

02:09:30,520 --> 02:09:33,440

But nonetheless, those were the things that I was fighting against.

1740

02:09:33,440 --> 02:09:37,840

And so I found myself becoming a victim again.

1741

02:09:37,840 --> 02:09:41,720

But this time I became a victim and I couldn't find my way out.

1742

02:09:41,720 --> 02:09:46,200

So it's been May 1st to be three years.

1743

02:09:46,200 --> 02:09:54,120

And the last two years have been a living nightmare of me trying to crawl out of this

1744

02:09:54,120 --> 02:10:00,000

devastating mindset that I'm a victim of my circumstances.

1745

02:10:00,000 --> 02:10:01,160

I'm useless.

1746

02:10:01,160 --> 02:10:02,920

I'm worthless.

1747

02:10:02,920 --> 02:10:09,560

I have no value to offer anymore because I'm not the man I used to be.

1748

02:10:09,560 --> 02:10:15,840

And I ended up getting affiliated with a group here in Nashville.

1749

02:10:15,840 --> 02:10:18,960

It's a real estate investment group.

1750

02:10:18,960 --> 02:10:23,560

And I was getting plugged in with them because I wanted to get back into real estate.

1751

02:10:23,560 --> 02:10:25,360

I wanted to get back into building stuff.

1752

02:10:25,360 --> 02:10:29,000

I wanted to get back into investing in properties and try to get my money.

1753

02:10:29,000 --> 02:10:38,120

But I could not get my head out of my own victim mentality until I went to this group

1754

02:10:38,120 --> 02:10:43,040

of folks and they had a real big segment on mindset.

1755

02:10:43,040 --> 02:10:45,440

And there was a guy that spoke.

1756

02:10:45,440 --> 02:10:46,720

His name was Anthony Trucks.

1757

02:10:46,720 --> 02:10:50,120

He was a former NFL football player.

1758

02:10:50,120 --> 02:10:55,120

And he talked about his life and his journey and what he struggled with.

1759

02:10:55,120 --> 02:10:58,440

And he wrote a book called Make Shift Happen.

1760

02:10:58,440 --> 02:11:04,480

And it's all about taking whatever has happened to you and shift it.

1761

02:11:04,480 --> 02:11:14,120

Shift it to the place that you become the instrument of success and not be the victim

1762

02:11:14,120 --> 02:11:16,560

of your circumstance.

1763

02:11:16,560 --> 02:11:18,040

And he was speaking to me.

1764

02:11:18,040 --> 02:11:19,880

And so I started that journey back.

1765

02:11:19,880 --> 02:11:23,240

And it took me two years to crawl out of it.

1766

02:11:23,240 --> 02:11:29,560

And that's probably a little more than two years, but in the last six months, it was

1767

02:11:29,560 --> 02:11:37,320

like I finally penetrated through that veil and got back to where I was after Mike died,

1768

02:11:37,320 --> 02:11:41,320

got back to where I was after my addiction, got back to where I was as I was trying to

1769

02:11:41,320 --> 02:11:42,320

become a fireman.

1770

02:11:42,320 --> 02:11:46,080

I was starting to use those same tools.

1771

02:11:46,080 --> 02:11:54,720

But it helped me build on what I had already been able to develop.

1772

02:11:54,720 --> 02:12:00,720

And this one, I felt as if this was it.

1773

02:12:00,720 --> 02:12:04,720

Either I was going to get out of this or I was ever going to forever be a victim and

1774

02:12:04,720 --> 02:12:12,800

I would just be off into the lala land somewhere, never to come back and be my normal self again.

1775

02:12:12,800 --> 02:12:18,400

And I just couldn't see going through everything that we've been through to have that be my

1776

02:12:18,400 --> 02:12:20,080

end of the story.

1777

02:12:20,080 --> 02:12:22,560

And so here I am.

1778

02:12:22,560 --> 02:12:26,600

I'm on that journey, overcoming that mindset once again for the third time.

1779

02:12:26,600 --> 02:12:32,680

And this time, knowing that it's a lot easier this time than it was the first time and the

1780

02:12:32,680 --> 02:12:36,020

second time and the third time.

1781

02:12:36,020 --> 02:12:38,560

But the injury was different.

1782

02:12:38,560 --> 02:12:41,360

Before I had my physical abilities.

1783

02:12:41,360 --> 02:12:47,960

But when you have all your physical abilities taken away and you are at the mercy of everyone,

1784

02:12:47,960 --> 02:12:51,920

that's a different mind to find yourself in.

1785

02:12:51,920 --> 02:12:55,480

And that's where the battle for me truly took place.

1786

02:12:55,480 --> 02:13:00,000

And when I look at all my brothers and sisters in the fire service, we all go through these

1787

02:13:00,000 --> 02:13:01,000

battles.

1788

02:13:01,000 --> 02:13:08,440

We all go through these crucibles in our life that push and pressure and cause us to revert

1789

02:13:08,440 --> 02:13:10,000

back.

1790

02:13:10,000 --> 02:13:18,680

And hence we got PTSD, we got PTSD, we've got all these mental health issues as a result

1791

02:13:18,680 --> 02:13:23,040

of the traumas that we're facing, not only in our own lives, but in the lives of those

1792

02:13:23,040 --> 02:13:26,060

we are called to serve.

1793

02:13:26,060 --> 02:13:32,480

And that when you start to develop the mindset of regardless of what happens, you will not

1794

02:13:32,480 --> 02:13:36,880

be a victim, but you will be victorious.

1795

02:13:36,880 --> 02:13:38,680

Then the game changes.

1796

02:13:38,680 --> 02:13:42,240

Then the shift happens.

1797

02:13:42,240 --> 02:13:47,360

And so I just followed kind of what Anthony Trucks was saying and make shift happen.

1798

02:13:47,360 --> 02:13:52,400

And so I've been trying to make shift happen for the last two and a half years.

1799

02:13:52,400 --> 02:13:54,640

And now I can walk, I can take care of myself.

1800

02:13:54,640 --> 02:13:57,040

I'm independent.

1801

02:13:57,040 --> 02:13:59,320

I got my license, I can drive.

1802

02:13:59,320 --> 02:14:01,660

I can even tinker around with my hands.

1803

02:14:01,660 --> 02:14:05,920

My hands are coming back, but they're very slow to move, but they're coming back.

1804

02:14:05,920 --> 02:14:11,200

I can feel myself coming back and I'm excited to come back.

1805

02:14:11,200 --> 02:14:17,040

And I know that there's a lot more to do out there in my story.

1806

02:14:17,040 --> 02:14:20,560

And I'm just plugging away and just trying to be useful in any way I can from here on

1807

02:14:20,560 --> 02:14:26,880

out telling my story, using my past, whatever it is, as an instrument to try to give hope

1808

02:14:26,880 --> 02:14:35,080

and inspiration to those around me that no matter how bleak it is, there's hope.

1809

02:14:35,080 --> 02:14:36,080

There's hope.

1810

02:14:36,080 --> 02:14:37,320

Hope's powerful, man.

1811

02:14:37,320 --> 02:14:39,720

It's a powerful, powerful feeling.

1812

02:14:39,720 --> 02:14:41,440

It's a powerful emotion.

1813

02:14:41,440 --> 02:14:45,600

So there you go.

1814

02:14:45,600 --> 02:14:46,600

Thank you.

1815

02:14:46,600 --> 02:14:47,600

I mean, such a powerful story.

1816

02:14:47,600 --> 02:14:53,160

I just want to pull one thing out of what you said because it's something that I've learned

1817

02:14:53,160 --> 02:14:56,480

over seven years of these conversations now, but it was very powerful.

1818

02:14:56,480 --> 02:15:02,040

I mean, you had all these tools in your toolbox already, but with this loss of physicality

1819

02:15:02,040 --> 02:15:06,840

and it can be a complete paralysis that you had, or it can literally be a back injury

1820

02:15:06,840 --> 02:15:14,360

or being fired or promoted even, but this loss of identity that a lot of people struggle

1821

02:15:14,360 --> 02:15:20,760

with, especially when they retire, but this creation of this feeling of burdensome, and

1822

02:15:20,760 --> 02:15:28,000

I think this is really under discussed element of the suicide conversation, is of course

1823

02:15:28,000 --> 02:15:32,720

there's that wanting suffering to end and that is obvious.

1824

02:15:32,720 --> 02:15:38,600

People are just going through hell in whatever shape or form and they want it to cease, but

1825

02:15:38,600 --> 02:15:44,520

the brain being miswired by trauma, whether it's physical trauma, loss of a child, whatever

1826

02:15:44,520 --> 02:15:51,080

it is, being miswired to the point where it actually convinces the individual that they

1827

02:15:51,080 --> 02:15:53,160

are a burden to their family.

1828

02:15:53,160 --> 02:15:57,080

And it could be, again, loss of physicality, like you talked about, is a really, really

1829

02:15:57,080 --> 02:15:58,080

dangerous place.

1830

02:15:58,080 --> 02:16:02,560

And I think those, we talk about, oh, if you're struggling, just give me a call, the whole

1831

02:16:02,560 --> 02:16:04,300

suicide conversation.

1832

02:16:04,300 --> 02:16:09,800

To me, if you are having conversations in your own mind that you are a burden to the

1833

02:16:09,800 --> 02:16:16,400

very people that love you, that is a huge red flag for you to pick up phone and start

1834

02:16:16,400 --> 02:16:19,000

finding the people that you want to be able to talk to.

1835

02:16:19,000 --> 02:16:25,680

Because once the brain has convinced an individual they are a burden, that is what I believe

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02:16:25,680 --> 02:16:27,760

is behind a lot of the suicides.

1837

02:16:27,760 --> 02:16:31,280

People are like, oh, selfish, so cowardly, how could they?

1838

02:16:31,280 --> 02:16:36,880

When you believe that you're the problem, in that mindset, I argue it's a selfless,

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02:16:36,880 --> 02:16:38,400

courageous act.

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02:16:38,400 --> 02:16:43,360

It's wrong to a healthy brain, 100%, but to that individual, it's probably terrifying,

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02:16:43,360 --> 02:16:47,080

but they're doing it because they think their family is suffering because of them.

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02:16:47,080 --> 02:16:48,720

So I just kind of want to pull that out.

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02:16:48,720 --> 02:16:55,160

That burdensome that you were exhibiting is the very kind of mindset shift I think a lot

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02:16:55,160 --> 02:16:58,800

of our first responders suffer with when they're in crisis.

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02:16:58,800 --> 02:16:59,800

Right.

1846

02:16:59,800 --> 02:17:02,720

I agree 100%.

1847

02:17:02,720 --> 02:17:07,640

Although I didn't feel, I mean, I felt like I was a burden, but I didn't feel like I was

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02:17:07,640 --> 02:17:14,180

a burden to the level that my wife is going to leave me or I was a burden to my family.

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02:17:14,180 --> 02:17:17,480

I was a burden from the standpoint of my frustration.

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02:17:17,480 --> 02:17:23,840

I was so frustrated that I couldn't do what I was doing, that I was frustrated with myself.

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02:17:23,840 --> 02:17:30,600

And I put so much burden on myself that it affected my wife in a negative way.

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02:17:30,600 --> 02:17:35,760

But I never felt like that's it, I'm checking out.

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02:17:35,760 --> 02:17:48,120

However, when I was trying to overcome my sexual addiction, I was very easily persuaded

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02:17:48,120 --> 02:17:50,080

with that kind of talk.

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02:17:50,080 --> 02:17:53,840

I would just be much easier if my wife didn't have to deal with me right now.

1856

02:17:53,840 --> 02:17:56,520

I've screwed up my marriage so bad.

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02:17:56,520 --> 02:18:00,200

My kids are, I mean, how could I do this to them?

1858

02:18:00,200 --> 02:18:04,600

And I just didn't have the courage to do it.

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02:18:04,600 --> 02:18:10,360

So what I was hoping for is that as I would drive up the mountain to go home or I was

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02:18:10,360 --> 02:18:16,040

in a snow storm or something, maybe I could just have a flat tire, my tire come off, I

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02:18:16,040 --> 02:18:20,520

could slide off the road and I could die a tragic death in honor and just have it be

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02:18:20,520 --> 02:18:21,520

done.

1863

02:18:21,520 --> 02:18:26,000

That way they would never say, oh yeah, he just killed himself.

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02:18:26,000 --> 02:18:29,720

Those things did cross my mind at that time.

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02:18:29,720 --> 02:18:39,960

But after going through what I went through with my neck, I was more angry at me that

1866

02:18:39,960 --> 02:18:42,360

I should have done something different.

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02:18:42,360 --> 02:18:47,240

Like when I was in the bathroom and I started feeling like I was getting, my sinkable was

1868

02:18:47,240 --> 02:18:50,120

coming on, I should have called for my wife's assistance.

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02:18:50,120 --> 02:18:51,120

She could have helped me.

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02:18:51,120 --> 02:18:57,680

She's a nurse for God's sake, but no, I had to do it on my own and here's my consequence.

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02:18:57,680 --> 02:19:05,660

So the burden aspect is a definite element, 100% for those who are going down that road

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02:19:05,660 --> 02:19:06,840

of suicide.

1873

02:19:06,840 --> 02:19:15,000

I was just very fortunate that I didn't get to that point in this injury, which to me,

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02:19:15,000 --> 02:19:17,520

if I had gotten to there, James, I think you're right.

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02:19:17,520 --> 02:19:19,480

That would have been the easiest way out.

1876

02:19:19,480 --> 02:19:22,000

That would have been the easiest way out.

1877

02:19:22,000 --> 02:19:27,920

But when you got the love of all those brothers and sisters showing up to your freaking room

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02:19:27,920 --> 02:19:33,440

while you're in the hospital, cheering you on, pulling for you, doing fundraisers, raising

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02:19:33,440 --> 02:19:41,440

money, doing all the things that firefighters do for their own and for those that are just

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02:19:41,440 --> 02:19:45,120

citizens, we do it for them too.

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02:19:45,120 --> 02:19:52,840

That kind of camaraderie, that kind of fellowship is enough to pull anybody out of the dark

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02:19:52,840 --> 02:19:57,520

corners of the crucible of life.

1883

02:19:57,520 --> 02:19:58,520

And I thank them every day.

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02:19:58,520 --> 02:20:03,800

I mean, I tell you, I just cannot thank my brothers and sisters enough for what they

1885

02:20:03,800 --> 02:20:05,640

did for me.

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02:20:05,640 --> 02:20:11,440

And to this day, I don't even know that they know just how much they did for me.

1887

02:20:11,440 --> 02:20:17,640

I mean, I've told everybody, I've thanked them, but it's those dark times that when

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02:20:17,640 --> 02:20:23,280

the brotherhood comes together and there's nothing but love.

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02:20:23,280 --> 02:20:27,760

Like I said, man, when you're demonstrating love at that level, you are God, you are being

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02:20:27,760 --> 02:20:28,760

loved.

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02:20:28,760 --> 02:20:30,680

And those guys were God for me.

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02:20:30,680 --> 02:20:32,040

I can tell you that.

1893

02:20:32,040 --> 02:20:34,760

So was my family, my wife, my kids.

1894

02:20:34,760 --> 02:20:37,680

They were here as much as they could be.

1895

02:20:37,680 --> 02:20:39,080

My wife was there every day.

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02:20:39,080 --> 02:20:40,760

She slept in the hospital with me.

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02:20:40,760 --> 02:20:44,600

I mean, she was my advocate in the hospital.

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02:20:44,600 --> 02:20:51,640

And when you've got that kind of support, you're a very blessed man.

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02:20:51,640 --> 02:20:56,080

And unfortunately, not everybody has that kind of support.

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02:20:56,080 --> 02:21:03,000

And maybe that's where we can change and turn the corner is finding those folks just by

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02:21:03,000 --> 02:21:07,520

looking at where they are, knowing that they're probably going to be feeling some stuff and

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02:21:07,520 --> 02:21:13,720

just be a voice and an instrument of compassion and love.

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02:21:13,720 --> 02:21:14,720

I couldn't agree more.

1904

02:21:14,720 --> 02:21:18,080

And that is the perfect place for us to round up this conversation.

1905

02:21:18,080 --> 02:21:23,240

So before I let you go, I'm sure there's people listening that would love to reach out to

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02:21:23,240 --> 02:21:27,880

you, where are the best places online, social media, et cetera, for anyone that kind of

1907

02:21:27,880 --> 02:21:29,840

contact you, if at all.

1908

02:21:29,840 --> 02:21:35,120

Well, I mean, I don't have anything other than my private stuff, but I mean, I'm on

1909

02:21:35,120 --> 02:21:37,720

Facebook, I'm on Instagram.

1910

02:21:37,720 --> 02:21:46,240

My email address is Ricky C, R-I-C-K-Y-C, AFD as in Anaheim Fire Department at yahoo.com.

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02:21:46,240 --> 02:21:49,360

Ricky C, AFD at yahoo.com.

1912

02:21:49,360 --> 02:21:50,360

Send me an email.

1913

02:21:50,360 --> 02:22:01,240

And man, I'd love to chat with anybody if anybody out there is struggling with addiction.

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02:22:01,240 --> 02:22:11,040

I got a pretty sympathetic ear or anything for that matter.

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02:22:11,040 --> 02:22:15,840

We have gone to some pretty deep and powerful places.

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02:22:15,840 --> 02:22:19,120

But as I've pointed out many, many times now, two things.

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02:22:19,120 --> 02:22:22,520

One, my admiration for your courageous vulnerability.

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02:22:22,520 --> 02:22:24,960

I mean, these are the voices that we need now.

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02:22:24,960 --> 02:22:30,240

We're debunking this, you know, boys don't cry, rub some dirt, and seeing the reality

1920

02:22:30,240 --> 02:22:36,920

of what it's like not only just to be a man or be a woman, but to be a human being.

1921

02:22:36,920 --> 02:22:41,680

But also I understand as well that when we revisit some of these stories, that it also

1922

02:22:41,680 --> 02:22:43,560

pulls at the scab a little bit.

1923

02:22:43,560 --> 02:22:50,360

So I also just want to let you know how grateful I am that you shared your story today.

1924

02:22:50,360 --> 02:22:54,420

So I want to thank you so, so much for being so generous with your time and coming on the

1925

02:22:54,420 --> 02:22:56,280

Behind the Shield podcast today.

1926

02:22:56,280 --> 02:22:58,240

I appreciate that so much, James.

1927

02:22:58,240 --> 02:23:01,120

And I appreciate what you're doing out there.

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02:23:01,120 --> 02:23:07,640

You got a love for the brotherhood and that love for the brotherhood is the purpose for

1929

02:23:07,640 --> 02:23:10,200

why you do what you do.

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02:23:10,200 --> 02:23:14,760

And you become an instrument of God in doing so because of that love.

1931

02:23:14,760 --> 02:23:16,620

So I commend you.

1932

02:23:16,620 --> 02:23:18,240

And I say keep it up, brother.

1933

02:23:18,240 --> 02:23:20,520

You're doing a great job and you're helping a lot of folk.

1934

02:23:20,520 --> 02:23:43,880

Thanks for having me.