



PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

Chris McCluskey & Kim Avery

*The podcast dedicated to Raising the Standard of Coaching...
and Changing the World*

Episode 007

Daring to Answer the Song of Your Heart with Christopher McCluskey, PCC, Part 2

KIM: Welcome back. I'm so excited to be cuing up the second part of our interview with Chris McCluskey, finding out more about him. We loved him. It was a bit of a cliffhanger for all of us, Chris. He talked about how he and Rachel had really discerned God's call on their life. He heard the call to go into coaching. It wasn't even maybe a call as much as a song of his heart resonating with him, pulling him forward into this new and emerging field of coaching. He talked about so wisely task marketing it and doing the research, and making sure he had a sound financial model before he jumped into it, only to get to the farm and to have incident after incident, many of them technology oriented, some otherwise, where the financial model didn't prove itself out necessarily that first year or two, Chris, but the value of having committed, saying having discerned this call, the question is not "If I do this" but "Because I'm doing this, what will happen?" It would have been nice to leave it on a "They lived happily ever after" note at that point, but life isn't always that way and you alluded to what you call the dark years. Before we even dive into that, Chris, I just want to thank you. I know that you have not shared much about this with hardly

PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

anyone up to this point, and so it's a privileged and honored space. Thank you for being willing to be vulnerable and letting us see a part of your world.

CHRIS: Well, it is actually, this is the first public time that I have ever shared aspects of the story that we're going to go into here. Frankly as you know Kim, I hadn't thought it through fully enough what all was going to be come tumbling out when I was sharing this story before. Because we've talked a lot about the move here and I teach on it and emphasize the importance of being creative and staying with your commitments and all that, but yeah, the dark years were largely also quiet years. they were years during which because I was in serious health crises that very nearly took my life, there was a sense in which we could only share very openly with a very limited number of persons in our lives because of course when you're running a large business, if people begin to think that the business owner is in a really poor health and maybe dying, that's kind of a cue to start looking for an exit plan, not because you don't care for the owner but just because everybody has to look out for themselves, and we did believe that I would get through that season so I guess we'll just pick up there, huh?

KIM: Yeah absolutely, so start chapter one of the dark years.

CHRIS: Looking at where we were in our transition out here, I transitioned to the field in 1998. We moved out here in January 1999. Gary Collins released his book that I had helped him with extensively, *The Christian Coaching*, which has since become a classic and is now on its second edition, in 2000. Gary and I having worked on that and then going to the world conference on Christian counseling in 2001, I was speaking at that conference on Christian counseling on coaching and this transition that we've had. I was into the third year of our transition out here but I can very clearly recall, Kim, speaking at that conference with a huge bandage on my forehead above my left eye. It was there because of a terrible outbreak of shingles that I had gotten on my face.

Now shingles for those of you who have it, shingles is a recurrence of the chicken pox virus. We always carry that on our bodies if we had chicken pox as a child, but typically, our immune system holds it at bay until and unless something really

PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

compromises our immune system, in which case, it will break out in shingles. It's usually a rash-like breakout that is extremely painful at the central nervous system level and we typically think of it as being an old person's illness or something with somebody who has already got a cancer that they are battling or something that has really hammered the immune system. I was 35, 36 years old. So there I was at the conference having made this launch and having had this huge shingles outbreak, we thought, "Wow, I know we've been running and gunning but really, shingles? I mean, can all these be explained just by me having bitten off more than I could really chew and my body not being able to handle it? Well, that's all we could chalk it up to at that time.

In 2005 and 2006 now moving through the years, my symptoms kept getting worse. We were still growing the business. The school was thriving. I was on contract with a secular institute at that time teaching a Christian track of their ICF approved material, but I was running that program and it was thriving. I was developing a large faculty. We were definitely having huge influence in shaping the church's understanding of this new profession and yet on the personal front, it just felt like my body was falling apart. By 2004, I was having gallbladder attacks and I was not particularly prone to just go and cut the gallbladder out without knowing why am I having all these things including now gallbladder attacks, passing gallstones and then kidney stones, and then shortness of breath and dropping blood pressure. Well, at least those were indicators that, "Okay you're not just like some hypochondriac, Chris. You're not making up symptoms." Something is badly systemically wrong. There was now chronic fatigue and we were doing our level best to get diagnostic tests run that could tell us what it was, but they weren't providing the kind of answers that were needed. So things were becoming increasingly difficult just to get through the normal workday and be a dad, a husband, and work the farm and all. There came a point, still without diagnosis where because of the central nervous system pain that I was having, again no longer from the shingles that I'd had back in 2000-2001, but just general central nervous system pain, I was not sleeping at night. In fact, I got to the point where I didn't put together more than 10-15 minutes at any shot.

PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

KIM: Oh wow.

CHRIS: Oh yeah, of sleep without being awakened, awakened enough that I had to turn because my body was going “new position, change position.” So we changed mattresses. We’ve got various kinds of foam things. We got like kind of an inflatable cushion seat that persons in wheelchairs use for my desk chair. We started saying, “Man, it’s a good thing that I’m working as a coach from home because I don’t know that I could even five days a week get up and get dressed, shave, shower, and put on the chicken soup, so to speak, get in the car and drive off and spend a whole day without having to nap in the middle of the day somewhere. Heaven forbid if I was working for somebody else instead of just running my old therapy practice like before, I don’t know that we could do this.

So we began to suspect well maybe it’s just a cancer or something, something that’s not been diagnosed. We learned of a specialist who sounded worth the trip and we took a three-day trip to New York, Rachel and I. My folks were here and of course took care of the kids. After three days of extensive testing and about \$20,000 out of pocket that was not covered in the insurance we had, we came away with nothing. No clear diagnosis. Ideas for how to improve nutrition over what we were already doing, prescription sleep aids to help me at least. I mean, I was going to go psychotic if I didn’t get some sleep here.

KIM: Oh certainly.

CHRIS: This was sleep deprivation exercises with kitty cats and puppy dogs like I studied in psychology time. it was awful, so prescription sleep aids were great. I mean, not exactly something I wanted but had to do them. Tried acupuncture, tried ionic foot baths to help my body detox of things, had my metal fillings removed from my mouth. I did all kinds of liver and kidney cleanses and used supplements of all different kinds.

KIM: Oh my goodness.

PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

CHRIS: Believe it or not, our veterinarian in having a conversation with Rachel about one of our pets that she had brought in for something, she shared with him some of what I was going through. I think it just came up in conversation but I have to believe the Lord was directing it. He said, “Oh my word. That sounds to me like Lyme disease.” Rachel said, “Lyme disease?” Basically, “What is that? I’ve heard of it but I don’t know anything about it. Why do you say that?” He said, “Oh, I see it all the time in animals. It’s a tick-borne illness. We get it in here in the veterinary clinic all the time and actually recently, my father got another strain of a similar kind of a tick-borne illness called ehrlichiosis,” and he said “Actually, because of my veterinary practice, I was able to pick up on what dad was showing here symptomatically. I prescribed antibiotics for him to blast in his body. I’m talking heavy duty antibiotics. At that time that dad’s diagnosis finally got known as Lyme, there were 13 other persons in this general two-county area that we’re living in here who also were diagnosed with it.” He said, “Nearly all of them have already died from the illness.”

KIM: Oh my goodness.

CHRIS: And that’s what we said, “What?” He said, “Yeah, you definitely want to look into that, but you need to get some good tests.” The veterinarian actually helped us in knowing where to look. We were able to find a specialist and was able to run proper tests and we got a firm diagnosis of Lyme disease. It was five different stages, kind of like cancers can have different stages. The stages are based the numbers on the number of your body systems in which the spirochete that is replicating, multiplying in colonies in various organ systems and tissues of your body. It was injected into you by another parasite, an external parasite, a tick. So depending on the number of body systems that it’s in, they graduate you up in terms of what stage you’re at. By the time it’s throughout your body and finally crosses the blood-brain barrier, our body is designed to try to keep the brain healthy, but once it gets into your central nervous system - your spinal column, your brain – then you’re in stage V. It’s not an automatic death sentence. It is very definitely a slow, torturous dying of your various functions until probably at some point, you will expire. I can recall very clearly thinking the

PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

points during these dark years, “Lord, there may be some things worse than me dying.” Me living in this kind of a state as I deteriorated further, it’s pretty bad, pretty brutal, but for us, finally having a diagnosis even a diagnosis of stage V Lyme disease, we felt this huge sense of relief because once you know what you’re fighting, you can start to consider your various weapons to fight that battle with and that’s what we felt like we had. Now there’s any number of different resources out there, but we felt like we can now, in an informed fashion, begin to narrow down a plan of attack because we know what we’re attacking.

KIM: Sure and I can see why that would be a huge, even though it’s a dark tunnel, a light at the end of the tunnel because I don’t know if there’s anything worse than uncertainty and not knowing how long something is going to go or to what extent. I appreciate your synopsis of all that, but I just have to ask, Chris, if you rewind just the tiniest little bit, week after week, month after month in pain, uncertainty, not knowing if you’d be there to provide for your family, how did you stay encouraged? This is not a small thing you’re talking about.

CHRIS: No and I would be kidding if I were to suggest that I did always stay encouraged. I became very discouraged. There’s a difference between discouragement, of course, and despair, and many times I bordered on the brink of despair. As Christians, we know we mustn’t ever despair but I actually took heart in looking at Job’s struggle. The truth the Scripture is communicating to us through it our myriad and one of them is that sometimes, life is so painfully difficult that aside from the Lord buoying us up, we’ve pulled on every other string we have to pull on and thank goodness my wife wasn’t coming to me and saying, “Why don’t you just curse God and die?” She wasn’t. She was encouraging me. She was trying to lift me up and hold me together. It just becomes a daily thing, sometimes an hour by hour thing quite frankly.

In the classic book by St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, he also talks about another thing called the *Dark Night of the Spirit*. The *Dark Night of the Soul* is something that tests us to do everything that we can to bring to bear on situations. The *Dark Night of the Spirit* brings us to a place where we’ve done now everything that we

PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

can. We're exercising the disciplines of the faith and following the tenets of our faith and all, and the moral code of our faith. We're not giving the enemy turf and all, and yet life fall on world, enemies attack, and whatever. So there is that season where actually even the mercy, the grace, the ability of the feel God's presence with you in the midst of trial is taken away. That's that Dark Night of the Spirit where He just has to carry us because I lost all sense emotionally of any awareness that God was with me in it. It was purely a cognitive based belief and I did always believe that He was, but if there was comfort, I could not feel it. I did not have any awareness. My symptoms got to the point, and Kim this isn't a poor me kind of a story and I'm not trying to just get people to commiserate with me, but I think it's important because I know a lot of our listeners are relating now because of their own struggles and some of them are going through things as bad and worse as what I am here with excruciating pain and/or loss of limbs, or paraplegic, quadriplegic just horrific kinds of things that we have to face as individuals and loss of children, children slowly dying of life-threatening illnesses and such. If others are resonating that just with Dark Night of the Soul, but Dark Night of the Spirit where that awareness that God is with you now has to just be something you claim because you can no longer feel any comfort from it. I continue to share more of the things that made up some of that season.

KIM: Profound points and so important. As you go back and weave the threads of the story, could you just expand just a little bit further on Lyme and what was going on with your body and this disease?

CHRIS: Yeah, you bet in fact that's probably important for understanding what came next because there's a line from the musical, The Man of La Mancha, it's from the classic Don Quixote. The line is, "Many the cure that be worse than the ill."

KIM: Yes.

CHRIS: Things got worse before they got better as we start to choose our plan of attack. So what we did choose to do in terms of treatment is something that was considered at that time, so called alternative medicine. By the standards of allopathic medicine 50

PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

years earlier, it was not. It was quite in vogue. It's called a Rife Treatment, named after the physician and MD who invented it, Dr. Royal Raymond Rife. It's a very simple machine. We bought one. We actually had one built for us and bought it. It's portable. You sit it in front of yourself. It's about the size of a microwave. It functions like a microwave except it is not sending out microwaves. It's not sending out radiation or anything dangerous to your body. It's sending out electromagnetic waves. If you think about wavelengths that you're bombarding your body with, it's kind of like when we're in a sound studio or something. Let's say that we're listening to a beautiful opera singer and she is just hitting those high notes. We know that the sound waves from those high notes can shatter glass. At a certain level, they are going to cause that glass to oscillate, to vibrate until it just shatters. That's what a Rife machine does. Everything in nature has its oscillation point. If you can get anything to vibrate enough, a bridge, it will eventually just crumble. You can watch a video footage of traffic on certain bridges that were built incorrectly. As the traffic load gets heavy, they start to rock back and forth, and all of a sudden, the bridge is falling down, or wind storm or anything, buildings, trees, anything in nature has oscillation point.

So what the Rife machine does is that it bombards the body with electromagnetic waves, again harmless to the body, but they've studied them to know at what hurt levels the waves will destroy various pathogens. So a mature spirochete, Lyme spirochete, it's fairly fragile. At about 15 different levels that you can set the Rife machine at, you can cause those little babies to vibrate like crazy until they explode or implode, kind of crumpling on in themselves. Under a microscope, you can watch at that level, whammo, I mean like within no time at all, they are dead. The books recommend that when you first use it, don't do the treatment for more than 30 seconds.

KIM: Oh wow.

CHRIS: Yeah, 30 seconds. I'm like, "Well, I'm going to get this thing. I'm going to do a couple of minutes. Oh heck I'll do three minutes. No, I'll do four minutes." Oh my goodness. I thought I had killed myself. I was as sick as I had ever been and in more pain than with shingles and everything else combined after my first Rife treatment.

PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

What in the world? It worked. The what in the world was I had had a massive kill off of the Lyme spirochete load in my body and now my body was trying to get rid of it, and it couldn't. All of my eliminatory systems, my lymphatic systems and everything were already gummed up and not working well, and it has got this now microscopically dying putrefying stuff in there and it's toxic. It has got to get rid of it. It can't quickly enough.

What I began to do was to rotate on an every two week basis. I believed the book. I went back to 30 seconds and I did 30-second treatments every two weeks. I would have a week of sheer torture for about five, six, by the seventh day, I was trying to feel like myself again and then I would have a week that was, I mean, I was still pretty impaired but a whole lot better like, "Okay, I can kind of think again. I can kind of catch up on emails and kind of clean up the loose ends, and then voluntarily sit down again in front of that stupid machine, set it to a different setting this time, blast it again for 30 seconds and buy another five, six, seven days worth of sheer torture and then get a good week.

I did that, Kim, for about seven years. That was a huge gift at a tremendously high cost. I became a ghost in my own home. My central nervous system could not stand light, touch, smell, sound, taste. I could not handle crossing my own legs. I couldn't handle, Rachel would lie down in bed at night and go to grasp my hand and I go, "Oh, ah, ah." I wasn't exaggerating. I could not handle tactile stimulation. I could coach. See, my clients couldn't see me. My mind was still intact. It was in a lot of pain. I had an ice pack around my head all the time. I'd take those ear plugs out and I'd put my headset on and I could do a coaching system. I could do a couple of coaching sessions. I could read the prep forms. I could be fully present with my client and then I could take a nap. I slept 12-14 hours every 24-hour cycle. I could do medical treatments throughout the day not just the Lyme treatment but did other kinds of medical treatments, a kind of a blood dialysis to help the blood cleanse itself. I could attend to the other things that I needed to do in my very, very limited state and still work from home, and thank you Lord for that. He goes ahead of us to make the rough

PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

places smooth. I didn't know it was going to be that rough a place but there is no way now by this point. If I had wondered before if I could hold down a job, oh my goodness, I would have lost any job I'd had. I had lost 20-hour a week job. I could not work here more than about 25 hours a week over 5-6 days of the week, but I could do that. I could do three or four hours a day, sometimes five hours a day broken up and still run the program. I had faculty teaching wonderful curriculum and I could do the marketing for the program. It was thriving. I could serve a smaller case load of private clients. I put a number of my clients into group. I guess back to the business side of some of this, some of the challenges required that in going through something that is this life limiting, you have to begin to think really creatively, really outside the box, not just for your marketing but for your service delivery, what can I do that is still saleable that will provide for our income? Well man to my delight, not only was the school going and blowing by that point but I found that in putting people into private groups, at this time my private fee for one-on-one coaching three sessions a month, half an hour each session was \$600. If I was making \$600 for a private client, you think, "Well, that's just three half-hour sessions. That's pretty good." Yeah, but a caseload of 25 or 30 of those in a week wasn't going to happen. If I reduced my fee down to less than half of that \$600, just \$250, but I put those people who had similar issues into groups and we did group coaching, then I actually found that I made more money in less time. So I had four groups running with persons, I had as few as six people in a group and as many as 10. Well, do the math on that - 10 people at \$250/person is \$2,500 for one group every month. That's two 90-minute sessions a month. That was it. Two 90-minute sessions for \$2,500 from home when all you're doing is sitting in your chair and taking your oxygen mask off and putting your headset on for the 90 minutes, it's amazing - the portability and flexibility of coaching and entrepreneur for that matter, and working from home that the Lord again called us to and blessed us with to sustain us through such a dark session.

KIM: Yeah. I have so many questions I don't know which one to ask first.

CHRIS: Fire away.

PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

KIM: You talked a lot about what you're doing especially this second half, maybe after the five years once you've diagnosed, but return to your being. How has this suffering changing you as a person?

CHRIS: It did change me tremendously as a person, Kim, and thanks for asking. It also changed us as a family and it changed Rachel and I as a couple. It's a furnace and a furnace is going to either burn off all the draws and it's going to purify the gold, or it's simply going to destroy everything. In this case, I do believe because we allowed the Lord to have his way and to trust that His ways were better than ours, it did burn of a lot of draws in me personally, in the two of us as a couple, in Rachel as an individual and her walk with the Lord, and in us as a family. It has strengthened us as a family though all the family all felt the trial. Being a ghost in your own home dad, not being able to be present like that, having to watch the noise level, Rachel still home schooling, being stretched trying to keep me alive and all, it really put us through the ringer, not "but" but "and." It put us through the ringer and what came out the other side was such a different walk with the Lord, trust in Him, faith, joy, peace that passes understanding. I kid you not, things that I know I would not have in the core of my being. They are just there. Nobody can take Him away. I don't know how I would have gotten to them otherwise. I'm sure God had other ways. He knows me. Maybe He knew He had to break me that hard, I don't know, but He did remain faithful to His word. He accomplishes what He sets out to when we cooperate and allow.

KIM: If you could talk to yourself in the middle of that trial as you are now, what would you say to you to encourage yourself?

CHRIS: The only word that comes to my mind is persevere, have faith. Persevere. Most nights, there was about an 18-month period when this would take us into the tail end of 2006, all of 2007, and the beginning of 2008, Rachel and I would go to bed and we'd go to kiss each other goodnight. Sometimes we would say it, many times we just looked in each other's eyes and knew it. She was saying, "I hope I see you in the morning and if I do, we'll rejoice in that and we have another day. If I don't, I know where you are. You know we'll be okay." she and I of course had taken care of all the

PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

finances and my life insurance would cover everything to pay off the property and the house, the kids will be set for college and all that kind of stuff. The most important things as far as their futures were provided except I wouldn't be here, but that's a rough way to go to sleep every single night for months on end. All you can do is say, "Hang on, persevere."

KIM: Yeah, somehow in those dark years, it sounds like as long as one foot is in front of the other and you just don't sit down and give up, just as long as metaphorically speaking you're still willing to get up and do it one more day, that that was enough.

CHRIS: It was enough and actually interestingly in the end, had I been in the hospital setting, I would have coded. I began to have a series of episodes where I completely stopped breathing in the night. It was always at night and I had a near-death experience. I had a couple of them that I felt like my spirit was leaving my body but I had one crystal clear. I moved up out of the bed, out of the home looking back on the bed. There was Rachel in bed with our seventh child who was still young at that time, and I was moving far away from the house and then totally knew that behind me was light, love, and everything that is my Lord. I felt His presence. I did not see him as some people talk of seeing the light. I simply knew I was given the privilege of seeing what I was being drawn away from and I simply said in this experience, it felt dreamlike but it was very definitely not a dream. I said, "No Lord, please not yet." That was it and was instantly blessedly awakened inside of my body again. Shot up out of the bed into a full upright position, burst into tears, gasping of course for breath. Rachel had gotten used to awakening me during these breathing cessation episodes even in spite of the oxygen, but there it was and we realized this was manifestation of the narcotics more than the Lyme. I still had it and it was messing up my lungs, but we realized actually that I was becoming intolerant of the level of narcotic that I was on and thank goodness we had not gone to the phentermine patch from the oxycontin. It probably would have been the undoing of me. It was just slowing down my cardiovascular functions enough that I was having these episodes. Mercifully, mercifully, the Lord gave me back my life. That was certainly the turning point. I think we were ahead of

PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

the illness already but we didn't know it yet because the narcotics, we titrated me off of the narcotics very rapidly. It was a difficult withdrawal but we did it and to our delight, we found that my body began to be able to handle the Rife treatments and to recover better. As 2008 wore on and we moved into 2009, we increasingly saw that the Lord began to restore the years the locust had eaten. We joked all the time, it was actually the years that the ticks had eaten, the spirochete had eaten, but the Lord began to restore. As I say then, you talk about our being, the fruit that has come out in terms of who we are as a family and who we are as individuals, and I believe therefore what the Lord is able to do because of that breaking, in connecting, with empathizing, with understanding, intuitively hearing where others are in their struggles. I believe He has been able to multiply far more greatly what He is doing through us than He would ever have been when I tended to get in the way so much more than I still do.

KIM: Wow, Chris, I can't help but reflect on the heavy cost, the cost of following our Lord of course, following your calling, being true to your values, of family, commitment, and perseverance, and it would be so nice as we kind of get to 2010 in your timeline to put a really big red bow on top of the package and say, "But you've arrived, it's all downhill from here." But I've known you since at least 2009, 2010, maybe before then and that's not quite how the next chapter unfolds, so catch us up.

CHRIS: Well, it doesn't but that's not even any longer about our story so much as it's just a statement about life, isn't it? I mean really, there's no happily ever after here this side of heaven. That's when we step to the other side and I mean, we move from one season of trials in this world to a different season of different trials in this world and yeah, some different ones hit there as we came out of this, but thank you, Lord, that all that refining happened because then we bring that self into the new trials. In a nutshell, 2009, the school that I had been contracted with to teach their material from a Christian perspective was sold in this fall of 2009 to a new parent company and that parent company began debating whether or not they wanted to have a Christian track of their material and I wasn't sure that I wanted to work with that new parent company. We went back and forth and by February 2010, we had decided indeed to

PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

part ways and so without animosity on either party's part, we just realized this would not be a good fit and so the school having sold, we were without the curriculum, the ICF approval, the Professional Christian Coaching Program was no more. What I did have was a faculty all of whom had also of course been released from that school. We had almost 10 years worth of teaching this material. We had great presence in the church internationally and so we had invitation that we kind of knew ahead of time in 2009 when the sale was first announced that we began working on a vision and Performa for a standalone school. We went back to the drawing board, retooled at the curriculum completely from the ground up, how would we teach it if we didn't have to integrate in somebody else's material but instead just created everything that we wanted from scratch because that's what we're doing, right? Kim, you were part of that.

KIM: I know.

CHRIS: In the summer then of 2010, we launched the Professional Christian Coaching Institute. That is what has grown during these five years, but the cessation of that former school in February of 2010 was also timed directly with the loss of my closest colleague in this profession, Judy Santos. That's what these five years have been is growing out an institute now that has, Kim, as of our last faculty meeting last Friday, we have 22 faculty members here teaching a full range of ICF approved courses, meeting all criteria for their various certifications. We have a large staff now and we have two separate tracks, one teaching life coaching and one teaching leadership coaching. Things are just tearing it up there and we're in a new season as a couple, Rachel and I. We've begun empty nesting. That window of the season of the years of raising those kids passes and it begins to close. This summer, we married off our oldest daughter, Alyssa, 24 years old to a wonderful Christian man. They lived nearby and have dreams themselves of starting their own business and moving back here to another section of the farm five years down the road or so. We'll see if that happens. Our 21-year-old Collin is out at film school in San Diego looking at integrating his faith into the media world, filmography and videography and such. Our 18-year-old

PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

Grace is moving on from high school here after this year and heading off into her adventures of college and then career. So the kids move on, seasons move on, but I always tell the kids, “life is what happens when you’re making other plans.”

KIM: Absolutely.

CHRIS: I mean really, we make our plans, Scripture says many of the plans in man’s heart but it’s the Lord who guides the steps. So we make our plans and then life happens and that life for us as Christians thankfully is a life that God sovereign over, and if we seek Him and we discern His call, I guess that’s kind of where we start to bring this plan into land for today but no, there’s no happily ever after. There’s no big nice bow on this package but there are I think some key messages from what I have learned thus far in life. Here I am now in my 50s and looking back over the journey thus far and hope I have another 50 years maybe ahead of me, who knows. To kind of recap what I believe are some of the primary take aways for Rachel and I, for our kids, and hopefully, there’s something here of value to the listeners would be to take us back to the very first interview that you did with me. The importance of discerning your call not defaulting to some other borrowed vision for life – family, marriage, career, ministry – don’t borrow. Don’t just kind of float. Don’t apathetically go along with what everybody else is doing. Discern our calling. Scripture says the gifts and the call of the Lord are irrevocable. It doesn’t mean we’re necessarily going to discern them and follow them, it just says they are in there. God knit us together in our mother’s womb. He knew us before He knit us together in our mother’s wombs and He gave us gifting and calling which are irrevocable. Will we discern them? So that would be the first challenge is discern your call. Listen to the desires of your heart, the song of your heart, dare to sing that song. the second point I guess is count the cost. Again, like we talked about in that first interview, Kim, do your due diligence. Look at it financially. Look at it practically. Run the numbers. What would it take? How tight can you tighten the belt? What are you willing to do without because of your higher values with something you value more? Discern the call and then count the cost. Thirdly if you’re going to answer the call having counted the cost, commit. That was your key

PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

word I think really that you put to everything we discussed in that first interview, Kim, commit. No double mindedness for the Christian once we've responded to the call. No turning back. Jesus himself talked about that. We're not fit for the kingdom if we begin to walk the journey and then turn back. A double minded man is unstable in all of his ways, so we commit without wavering. That was what I was illustrating with the plan A and there is no plan B. There's A.2, A.3, A.5 or 15 or 25. You keep modifying but you're committed to plan A because you understand that's how God called you. That's what you will answer for before the throne. So persevere I think is the fourth key point and kind of one of the words that we've been weaving in here to this discussion, Kim. Discern the call, count the cost, do your due diligence, commit, and then persevere. Finally, I will put a fifth one in there, you've heard me talking about the dark years where I couldn't do much of anything and yet still had to provide and amazingly in all that darkness, the worst year we had in the business, 2007 there when it was so black, the business still grossed almost \$175,000. I'm not bragging and I'm not throwing out numbers. I'm saying that was our worst year. That's working from home in 20-25 hours a week as an entrepreneur, as a coach, running something from the house, in that rough state because of the perseverance and because of working creatively and collaboratively. Take those as the fifth key point. If you are listening to this and you are in a similar struggle, think creatively, outside the box what else could you do? How could you repackage something and think collaboratively? Who else can you bring in? How can you multiply yourself? Will groups work for you? Will teleclasses work for you? Can you publish? Can you create product, video downloads, podcast, downloaded ebooks, hard copy books, workshop kind of programs, interactive media things? Can you do some short term traveling but do intensives? Every person will have different things that they can do if they bring those before the Lord, following plan A, trying to stay committed and persevering and then just saying, "Lord, show me creatively something fresh here. Collaboratively, who else can help me here? I want to walk the path that you've called me on.

KIM: It's great five points, Chris, and it brings to mind the story from the Bible that you told earlier about the man who found a treasure in the field and in his joy, sold everything

PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

he owned to get that treasure. You have done that. You have sold materially, physically, everything you've owned and you've gotten the treasure much richer. You said wealth isn't measured just by dollars, and it's not, it's measured by people, by family, by relationships, and most of all of course by the Lord Jesus Christ. The cost has been high and the treasure far surpasses any cost you've paid, and I just appreciate you walking us on that journey with you today, Chris.

CHRIS: Well, thank you for allowing it and facilitating it, Kim. I know I've just rattled here on and on. It has come from my core but I love what you said there at the end, that the fruit that has come off this is so much greater than that cost. the cost doesn't really matter. This isn't, like I said earlier, a poor Chris thing or me chest pounding saying, "Check me out." This is testimony to the Lord being able to take our simple offering, our humble offerings of loaves and fishes. Such as we have, we bring and He just multiplies it. Look at the thousands now that are trained through the institute, Kim, and look at the hundreds of thousands that that means those trained Christian coaches are working with his clients. Look at the impact that can have in the church and then the business world, the marketplace, countries all over the world. We can't look at that. We can't see that, only God sees that and only God did that. We're just His tools. What great privilege to be such tools, every single one of us.

KIM: Absolutely, Chris. This has been an amazing episode and I so appreciate you sharing your story. For those who are listening today who may be feeling that tugging or that yearning from that God, to do the same kind of conscious examination of their lives and their priorities, as well as those of their family, we have a new tool that has just been uploaded to our website that's absolutely free. Why don't you share a little bit about that, Chris?

CHRIS: Well we do and it's really interesting that it dovetails with this conversation because it does allow a person to do a lot of that very intentional examination that we've been talking about here during these two interviews. The inventory is called Align Your Life and I, tongue in cheek, have as a subtitle there "A Quick Checkup with God." Now of course we can't go before God and have Him just tell us what we're supposed

PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY

to be doing, but it is a simple scaling kind of an inventory of yourself from 1-10 with regard to several different key areas of your life. As you prayerfully perhaps through journaling look at each one of those areas and rank yourself right now. If you were to take a snapshot, how closely do you feel that you're living in alignment with God's plan for that area of your life in this season of your life, then you rate that 1-10. Of course a numeric rating of 4 or 3, or 7 doesn't mean anything unless somewhere in our minds, somewhere in our being there is a sense of what that 10 might actually look like again, in God's economy, in God's time, in God's plan for this season of our lives. The tool really allows you to very quickly get a sense of where is the gap in certain areas of my life between how I'm living that out right now and what I sense what God is actually calling me to in that area right now for this season. The inventory as you know Kim is followed by several specific questions that invite that journaling and you can certainly use it with your coach. If you're a coach, you can use it with your clients, but it's an inventory that invites the client to select just one of those areas and drill down more deeply in identifying. "So let's look at that gap. Specifically, what is missing? What would be different? What would it take in order to close that gap? What resources do I need to access? They might be resources outside of myself or resources within myself, but it really examines at a deeper level than. "So what's next or "what are you going to do about that" kind of a thing. I encourage our listeners, go out to the website, ProfessionalChristianCoachingToday.com and right below the mast head, you'll see the download there for "Align Your Life Inventory." That will also actually get you on our mailing list for other information about the field and the podcast here as we keep adding in new topics. Hope to see lots of folks downloading that.

KIM: Yeah, a beautiful valuable tool and it's important work that we all need to do. Listen, I thank each and every one of you for joining us today. We would not be here if it were not for you. Until next time, keep raising the standard of coaching and changing the world. God's richest blessings to you.