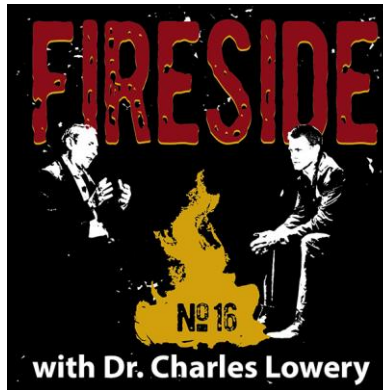


FIRESIDE No. 16 with Dr. Charles Lowery

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"THE ADAM SUIT,
DIFFICULTY CHANGING,
INSTANT GRATIFICATION,
BLESSING OTHERS,
THANK YOU,
POSITION VS. PERSONALITY,
Q-TIP, BURNOUT,
THE EMOTIONAL TANK,
TRUTH-TELLERS,
THE MISSION IN MINIATURE,
CHURCH LADY,
THE PROBLEM WITH LAYERS,
THE POWER OF PERSONAL,
VALLEYS & PEAKS,
THE POWER OF BELIEF,
PSYCHO-LOGICAL,
SELIGMAN'S 3 P'S,
PRACTICAL VS. PLATITUDES,
PURSUING YOUR DREAM,
LOOKING BACK &
LOOKING AHEAD"

I'm an organizational sociologist, strategist, writer, and teacher. In my 2007 book, *Cultivating the Strategic Mind*, I explored the transition from leader to visionary, creator, and architect of strategy. Today, I continue studying strategists and leaders but am increasingly haunted by what I see as a dying discipline: professional *management*. Leadership gets the glory, but management gets it done. *Fireside*—a series of ruminative conversations with seasoned management executives reflecting on their life's work—*strives to* distill one's entire career into a few salient responses. I'm sure you'll agree that *work* and *the discipline of management* are great teachers, offering lessons to us all. Together, we shall learn a great deal from our guests, I promise, but perhaps even more about ourselves and our own lives.

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Blake Leath: I'm Blake Leath, and my guest today is Dr. Charles Lowery. Welcome, Charles.



Charles Lowery: Hey, good to be here.

Blake: For those who have not heard one of these before or participated, let me do a brief little primer here so that folks can come up to speed. I really started to do *Fireside* for four reasons, Charles. You know, the first thing was I had some clients ask some provocative questions, if you will, about struggling to make the leap from manager to leader. The second thing that I heard a lot was: *If I could go back and talk to my younger self, oh the things that I would tell that person.* And then, unfortunately, I had a couple

of clients die. So, a lot of transition. In light of those things, I started these interviews, and you are number 16 for this season. You and I go way back, and we've had a lot of different ways to weave in and out of one another's lives. It's been a while since I've seen you, but why don't you just take a minute to introduce yourself and tell us who you are, and what you are about, and then we'll start to unpack it together.

Charles: Well, I've had an interesting life. Hopefully it's going to continue to be interesting. I grew up as a preacher's kid and was around church people a lot. I actually lived at the church—that's in the days where we had parsonages, so I actually lived at the church—which is probably the reason I became a psychologist. [laughter] Living at the church, I sometimes saw that as somewhat dysfunctional, the way they treated my dad...and the whole church life. I said, "I don't want anything to do with that," so I kind of went my separate way and got a PhD in psychology.

Along the way, I started looking at the lives of these people. This is the early 70s, so these people got out of college probably in the 60s with a PhD, and here they were smoking weed, with [listening to] Willie Nelson at night, and I looked at their lives, and it was a mess. Here are the people who were supposedly the psychologists who were going to *help* people with their lives. The guy who taught me marriage counseling was on his third marriage, and he was in his 40s. I thought, "Wait a minute." Then I'd go to addictions classes, and they'd say, "Not much we can do for addictions."

Then I remember growing up with my dad, and seeing that he never graduated from college—he was just a country preacher. But I saw him kneel down with people who were alcoholics, and they got back up after praying, and they didn't drink again, and I thought "Now wait a minute, psychology says we can't do much about this. My dad doesn't know anything, and evidently life change happens in a different way maybe than just psychology." I saw people with trouble in marriages, and they'd kneel down and pray with him and talk to him, and they'd end up staying married, and it looked like it went pretty well.

I started to question then: *How does life really change? What really happens? Is there something to a higher power?*—which I now know is Jesus Christ. I then started to integrate my life into not only psychology. A guy named Larry Crabb, who's a Christian psychologist, secularly trained like me, had a summer course at Columbia International University in Columbia, South Carolina. I studied under him for about six weeks, just to get some idea of how you can integrate theology and psychology—which, at the time, were very opposed to each other—and I decided "I can do this." So, that was my philosophy then.

Then I was in private practice, and my brother, who was pastor at the church, asked, "Why don't you start a Christian counseling center?" So I did that, and then I ended up at Gardner-Webb University as a professor of psychology, and I started a counseling center there.

Then, what really changed my life was in the early 80s. Dr. [W.A.] Criswell, who was at First Baptist Church of Dallas—which at the time was probably the largest church in the world, the first megachurch—wanted to start a Christian counseling center. He had a committee that looked all over the country, and lo and behold, they came to Gardner-Webb University and picked me. We had three kids and all of our relatives back there, and Gardner-Webb University was in Boiling Springs, North Carolina, with one traffic light. So we picked up and moved three kids to start a practice in downtown Dallas, Texas. It was a huge adjustment, never being around as much money and around people with influence as that. It was scary, but it's one of those things that changed our lives. If we hadn't been willing to take that risk and to fight the fear to do that, we would never live the life that God gave us to live.

What was interesting is that Dr. Criswell just liked me, and so after a couple of years, I became the Sunday night preacher at First Baptist Church Dallas. I had never really preached that much and had never been to seminary, but he told me one time, “You have a gift, so just share that gift.” So then we started the president's class at the Fairmont Hotel for presidents of corporations. Criswell was a visionary. He said, “These guys are not going to come to regular Sunday school class, where people are hitting them up for jobs or money. They're used to coming to a nice place, and they're used to a smart guy, a PhD like you. They need a teacher like you, so we're going to start a president's class.”

So we had six presidents and their wives. One was the president of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce; one was president of DBU. There was a guy named Marvin Watson, who I think was Postmaster General and was on the cabinet with Lyndon B Johnson—so guys of that caliber—they started the president's class in Dakota's Restaurant, which was downtown. I'll never forget when my dad, the Southern Baptist country preacher, came to my class, and of course liquor was everywhere in the restaurant, and he looked around and he said, “You teach a class here?” I said, “Well Dad, don't you think this is what Jesus would do?” He kind of smiled and said, “Yeah, he probably would,” but he still had a hard time adjusting. [laughter]

From there, we had a power lunch in downtown Dallas, and about 600 people on Tuesdays. We actually had too many people, so we had single people on Tuesdays, and married people on Thursdays. I was speaking four times a week then for Dr. Criswell. I met a man named Zig Ziglar, and Zig became my friend. As a matter of fact, Zig would call my house every Saturday morning. My kids would get so excited because he had such a unique voice. Zig was a lifelong learner. I don't know if he ever graduated from college. I know he went to the University of South Carolina for a couple of years. I don't think he probably ever graduated, but he was a lifelong learner, and he taught a Sunday school class at Dallas. And I, of course, taught one with the president's class. So we coordinated. He would call and ask me about psychological questions such as “*What do you think would happen about this?*”, or “*What do you think he'd say about that?*” We became good buddies, and he was a big-time golfer, so we became golfing buddies. As a matter of fact, even when I went to Albuquerque, Zig would come in the summer and play golf. And then after I left Albuquerque, we would go to Utah every summer and play golf with Zig. He was a great guy. He walked his talk and had a big influence on my life.

I'm around some people who say that golf is just as stressful as their work; they go play golf to get away from stress, but they'd make it just as stressful. Zig just remained positive. The last time we played, his health was starting to fail him a little bit, and he said, "Charles, you know I'm *Mr. Positive*. I'm going to stay positive no matter what. Golf is tough, so today I'm just going to tee off anywhere I want." We laughed and said, "Zig, you deserve it, man. Tee off anywhere you want to!" So he'd just walk down, tee it up, and hit it. We'll never forget that last summer there that we played golf with Zig, and he was positive, because he would tee off anywhere he wanted. [laughter] So, that was a big influence on our life in Dallas.

Then we had a church call us, and I didn't want to be a pastor. My dad was that. I was a psychologist. But the church called from Albuquerque and wanted me to be their pastor, and I just realized, *I couldn't not do it*. I didn't know if I'd do that forever, but I knew that the opportunity was there, so we moved to Albuquerque, which was another big move in our lives. I took over the church, and it was very traditional; I tried to change the church...tried to change a culture, and in many ways, I failed. You know, I tried. We reached a lot of people. We went from 2,000 to 5,000; we baptized over 3,000 people while I was there. But the leadership pretty much fought me the whole way...

As a matter of fact, your father-in-law became a friend of mine. One day, I said, "Terry, you're one of my leaders, and you don't want to change, and that's your job—going around changing companies—yet when it comes to you personally, you don't want to change." And he said, "You're exactly right. I've visited other churches, because I was so mad at you because of what you're doing to my church." [laughter] But he said, "I realized when I went to those other churches, they don't have what we have; they can't communicate the good news the way you can. So I'm back, and I'll help you try to change," and that's when he became a good friend of mine.

In a way, however, it was too late. I knew it wasn't going to happen, and I knew eventually I was going to leave, so I planted another church from scratch. I took my student pastor, who was a great guy. I said, "We're going to plant a church." He said, "Who's going to pastor?" I said, "You are!" He said he didn't know if he was ready, and I told him, "You're ready." I told him, "I'll give you a year to meet with people who would be on your team...that will be *your people* who have your vision, so that we would have a core group of people." I think they had 500 the first day they met at a school, and now that church on Easter Sunday had 24,000. So it's my legacy, in the sense that it's what I couldn't do.

Companies, churches...they're hard to change, and once you realize it just isn't going to happen, then you ask yourself, "*Well, how are we going to do what we need to do?*" So you look for alternatives, and my alternative was to just start all over and plant a new church. It's been very incredibly successful. I've been back there to preach for him a couple of times. When I realized it wasn't going to happen at Hoffmantown, then I resigned.

When I met Zig Ziglar, I found out that you could actually talk for a living...that you don't have to listen. [laughter] Being a psychologist, I have heard every story that ever

existed. That's what I did the first part of my life. All I did was listen. As a matter of fact, I tell people my greatest fear is that when I die, someone else's life is going to flash before me instead of my own, because I spent all my time listening to their stories!

So I went out on my own, and I've been doing that now since 2001. I speak to businesses, companies, churches, and I do a lot of conferences. My gift is to get people to get healthy—to change their lives, to try to get churches to look at life maybe from a different point of view. We get so stuck in what we do. I tell people we have Sunday School—which is the only school that's ever been created since the history of civilization where you never graduate to do anything—but we just keep perpetuating that over and over again. You'll have an 84-year-old person come to church and ask what to do, and so you send them down to room 203 to study about Jeremiah, because this is Sunday School and “you've gotta go.” It just becomes an area where people don't grow; they don't change. So they bring me in, and I get them laughing a little bit. Then I teach them how to literally change their lives, because if you're not careful, you'll just go to church, and you won't change. You'll just be the same person you've always been, and you won't make an impact on your world. So that's what I do now.

Blake: I remember hearing Zig speak about the value of humor. He said if you can get someone to laugh, then their mind incidentally may just fling open, and if your mind flings open, you might be able to put something else in there. Isn't that great?! [laughter]

Charles: I tell people humor moistens the needle. You can say things with humor that you can't otherwise say, so that's what I do a lot of. I do a lot of relationship conferences where I make fun of men, and I make fun of women. If you laugh with somebody, you connect, and then it becomes contagious: You think, “*They're like me,*” and we're all alike. *Sometimes with church, our goal is to look good rather than tell the truth.* I try to let people know it's okay to tell the truth; we're *all* defective. We've all been recalled by our Maker, so let's change some of these things that we *can* change, and give you some plan of how to do that.

Most churches don't really know how change happens, and a lot of Christians spiritualize their psychological problems and just say, “Well, I'm going to pray more; I'm going to go to church more...” but they're the same. If you're not careful, you can get *addicted to church*, and you go to church to feel better. Nowadays, boy, the music's good, and you start feeling good, but you don't make any changes in your life. So you go out in the world and it's a mess, which makes you feel worse, so then you want to go to church to feel better again. And those people want to go to church a lot, have more services: *Let's be down there every day if we can*, because that's the only place they feel good, because their life's a mess, and they're not making any changes at church. They're just going there to feel better. Well, *that's the definition of a drug*. That's an addiction, where you're just going to feel better and not make any changes in your life. So when I point that out to people, it doesn't go over really well, first, because the pastors want them to come to church more: That's their goal. But I try to teach pastors that it's not the goal to get people to come to church more; *the goal is changing people's lives*. That's

the goal, and if we're not careful, we lose track of that. As you know, you get what you reward. If you just reward church attendance, that's what you're going to get.

Blake: That's exactly right.

Charles: So everybody starts judging their church on how many people attend or not, and was it making a difference in their lives. So that's what we try to do: Give them a plan, and give them a way of changing their lives. The bottom line is that it's the same with everybody, even non-Christians. It's how you change your life.

I heard Bill Hybels say one time that he was at the peak of his career physically...he was working out all the time, not a pound overweight, and had a lot of physical energy. He was at the top of his game physically and spiritually. He said, "I was preaching great sermons. I was spending time with the Lord. I was reading the Bible. Many people were coming to Christ; it was unbelievable what was happening spiritually." He said at the height—physically and spiritually—he craved anything cheap and superficial, and he realized he was about to lose his ministry. And then he talked about getting involved in sailing—something totally different from church—something that's just fun. His *emotional tank* was totally empty, and that's what happens.

I work with a lot of megachurch pastors whose emotional tanks are totally empty. They don't ever do anything for fun. They don't ever do anything that feeds that emotional tank. When I talk about your body, I call it your *Adam suit*. I say, "We all came from the Adams family. You know, Uncle Adam. That Adam suit—my Adam suit and your Adam suit—always wants to *feel* better. It doesn't want to *act* better. That's the way my Adam suit is; that's the way yours is. It doesn't want a plan; it wants a pill. It doesn't want education; it wants medication." That's all of us. The success you're going to have in your life will be determined by how you control that Adam suit, although you'll never totally control it.

The apostle Paul was the greatest Christian who ever lived. Here's what he said about his Adam suit: "The things I want to do, I don't do, and the things I don't want to do, I end up doing." Now that's not a teenager. That's the greatest Christian who ever lived. So you'd better understand, you're the same way. That's your Adam suit, and that's my Adam suit, and that affects your relationships. It affects your leadership ability. It affects everything.

I'm a Cowboys fan, and Tom Landry said it this way: "My job as a coach is to make guys do what they do not want to do in order to accomplish what they've dreamed of doing all their lives." Well, that's the job of a leader, the job of a parent, and as matter of fact, that's my job. *My job is to get my Adam suit to do what it does not want to do in order to accomplish what I've dreamed of doing all my life.* Once you start to understand that concept, you start to understand how to change behaviors.

I've worked with megachurch pastors who've fallen, and they've lost their ministries. They still love Jesus, they're still praying, they're still preaching great sermons, and people are still coming to Christ. But it was their Adam suit they didn't control. They got

into some sin, something that brought everything down. Everything spiritually I'll ever do, I'm going to do it through my Adam suit. I won't totally redeem it; God's got to kill it to get us into heaven. He's not ever going to totally redeem it on this side of heaven. But the more you can, I promise you, the more spiritual things you'll be able to do down here. And the more you think about that, probably the more spiritual you're going to be. We discount that, and we just say we've got to pray more...we've got to do this or that...and so that's why you see a lot of people never make any changes in their lives. We try to really *work* at how to control that, so you can do the spiritual things that God is calling you to do.

Now, because I'm a Christian and I understand grace, that has *nothing* to do with your getting into heaven. A lot of churches get that confused, and they become very *legalistic* and not a very fun place to be, because they want to *control* their Adam suit, thinking that that's how we're going to get the approval of God. *You're never going to get the approval of God by what you're able to do with your Adam suit.* That's why Jesus came: to live the life you could never live and die the death you could never die to get you into God's heaven. That's called grace, and that really relaxes you, so you actually can do better with your Adam suit. People think they can do better...you know, the legalistic, "You gotta do this, you gotta do that." *No, you don't!* It puts so much pressure on you, and then you put pressure on everybody else, and then *nobody* wants to be around you, and it becomes a miserable place (which a lot of churches are by the way).

I tell people their halos are on way too tight. I mean, you know, they get this self-righteous attitude and *it's so hard to be upright without being uptight.* All of these people are so angry with certain people and what they do, and they don't realize it's God's problem anyway. So once you relax, you realize that "the more I can get this Adam suit to do what I want it to do, the better life I'm going to have down here." It has *nothing* to do with your life in heaven—but the better life you're going to have down *here* will be how do you redeem it, and how do you control that?

Change is extremely hard; you've lived your life trying to get people to change. It's hard, because most of what we do is subconscious, and *change happens on the conscious level.* We have to bring those things which need change to a conscious level, because most of it we stick it in the subconscious.

Blake: A lot of people resist change, but they don't know why.

Charles: Oh yeah. Part of it is, change is so exhausting. For example, I drove over here from Frisco. It took me about 50 minutes, and I didn't think about it. I didn't think about putting on my seatbelt; I didn't think about any of that, because I'm the driver. I wasn't even tired when I got here, but I promise you, if you take that same trip 50 miles outside another place not Dallas—let's call it London—you'll be totally exhausted, and the only difference is you're driving on a different side of the road. What was unconscious becomes conscious the whole time, so you'll be totally exhausted. Why? Because you're thinking about it. It's conscious the whole time.

That's the way behavioral change is. It's pretty much like driving down the wrong side of the road. And when I explain that to people, they say, "Oh, no wonder it's so hard, because it is like driving down the wrong side of the road." Here's the sad part: What person would be able to change? If I had to bet on who's going to change, it would be this person: They're transferred to London, and they have to work to support their family, so they have to drive to work every day. That person would soon become a wrong-side-of-the-road driver for us again. Why? Because they *had no choice*. Here's the sad part...most people, most churches, most companies do not change *until they have no choice*. I've worked with people who could not quit drinking alcohol. They go to a doctor who says their liver is damaged, and if you take one more drink, you're going to die. Then the one who couldn't stop, stops.

Now, I have to be honest with you. There are some people who can't even stop then. But a lot of people *can* change at that point, because they have no choice. It's the same way with a smoking. A lot of smokers can't quit. They go to the doctor who says, "Man, your lungs...you have cancer," and they quit. With most people, companies, and churches, that's the way it happens. They will not change until they have no choice. *The real successful people in the world, the people who enjoy life, and the churches and companies that are successful, are those who change before they have to.* But that's a very small group of people.

If you ask what helps, well, a great thing would be if you have somebody else in the car with you. If you're alone, that's tough. But if you have somebody else in the car with you, saying, "You're doing so well; that truck came along and you stayed over here and not over there and we're alive...let's stop at 7-11 and get a Big Gulp and celebrate." That's huge in change, and that's why groups like AA, with a sponsor, work...or that gentle nudge from a friend, saying, "Hey, you're doing great," or in a company where you have those ways of encouraging people to change. That's huge just to have that *one person*. Most people cannot make change by themselves; it just can't happen. Fortunately, God knew that, so we're all connected in order to make those kinds of changes.

Blake: Let's go back to the Adam suit. I love that. That's a great analogy. Gosh, so here we are looking around the world, and I'm seeing so many people that are their own worst enemies. We see it in politics. We see it in entertainment. Any wisdom, any advice for people who want to try to be better and want to change, but maybe don't have the role models or the support structure or system around them? How do we encourage them?

Charles: Well, it's hard, and that's why encouragement is important, and the person has to tell them in a positive way, "This is the best life possible for you. If you can make these changes in your life..." It's usually just one thing—I mean it's the one thing the Bible calls a *besetting sin*. But in psychology, it's the one thing that keeps you from going to that next level.

You know, when I talk, I give this illustration: If we were watching a game or a movie, and everybody's in a good mood, laughing, and we go to grill some steaks, and then a friend of ours comes in—let's just call him Bill—and Bill waves at us, and we wave at Bill,

and Bill puts his hand on the grill and burns himself. We'd say, "Did you see Bill do that? That was nuts! Why did he do that?" We'd take him to hospital and they'd bandage him up. About six weeks later, all the bandages and salves are off. We have another get-together. Everybody is in a good mood, laughing. The grill's getting good and hot, and Bill walks in. You can feel tension rise [laughter], because we know what he did last time, and we think, "Man, surely he won't do that again!" You can feel the tension. And again, you know, *because we're a Christian, we'd rather look good than tell the truth*, right?! So, we don't want to say anything to confront anybody, and before we know it, he puts his hand on the grill and burns himself again. Now, if you and I are just standing around talking, it'd go something like this: "That Bill, he's a nice guy isn't he? My kids play with his kids. He's pretty normal in just about every area, but when it comes to grills, he's nuts, isn't he?"

That's the way it is with most of us. We're normal in just about every area, but then it comes to *one thing*—and it's hard to predict. It may be your insecurity about this, or it may be that you get defensive about this; it may be your anger, or it may be any of that that keeps you from going to that level. And it's been with us throughout the history of mankind.

If you look in the Old Testament—I love the Old Testament because it's like the Jerry Springer Show—they have *dysfunction junction* everywhere. In the New Testament, they really don't go into family dynamics that much. You don't really know what's going on relationally as much, but with the Old Testament, you know it's bad. Throughout the Old Testament, they say "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Well, it was supposed to have been "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Esau," but Esau couldn't control his body. He couldn't control his Adam suit. He wanted something to make him feel good. He wanted that pleasure. So he says, "I gotta have this stew," and his brother says, "It's mine; you can't have it," and Esau said he had to have it. As a matter of fact, the original language almost says *to die for*, which is an expression we use [today] if your Adam suit likes something a lot. Jacob said, "Okay, you can have it, but I have to have your birthright," and in that day, that was huge. So Esau gave up his birthright in order to get a little bit of pleasure.

People sometimes ask me if people will do that...just give up their calling or what they could be in this life for a little pleasure? People do it every day, all the time. When I was in private practice, that's all I heard: stories of how you lost your calling, you lost your marriage, you lost whatever, for this little bit of pleasure.

It continues if you look at the leaders in the Old Testament. Moses had a temper, and that was his problem. He killed a guy, and he ended up with 40 years of consequences. You'd think he'd have figured that out. He became a great leader who did a lot of great things, but *if you don't deal with your dysfunction, your dysfunction will deal with you eventually*. So then one day God told him to talk to a rock, and he was so mad at his people, he hit it and he got mad and lost his temper and just started beating the rock. He got results, but God said, "You can't go into the Promised Land." And so his Adam suit kept him from the Promised Land.

I tell people all around the country, if you're not careful, your Adam suit will keep you from living in the promised land—the promises God has for you, the great life that He has for you, the longevity that He has for you...you're not going to get it.

Blake: It's the same as what you described with Tom Landry. You know, if I can help these fellas that want this other thing...to achieve it...

Charles: And that's what leaders do. That's what encouragement does. That's what motivates people, and that's looking at life in the long term. You see, we're a very instant-oriented society. I tell people, “Hey, if you're going to live just today, and you really love jelly beans, eat all the stinkin’ jelly beans you want. Just gorge yourself on jelly beans if you're going to die tonight. But if you plan to live a couple more years, you might want to have maybe green beans instead of jelly beans, because that has a much longer-term value for people.” But that's the way the world is.

I often give the example that late at night I'm in an airport—and I love those people-movers, because you're going, and it's going the same way, and man, you make a lot of good time—but it's usually late at night. It's usually some teen, you know, some adolescent boy, because their brain hasn't matured quite yet. They're still pretty much like plant-life in terms of IQ... They decide to go down the people-mover the wrong way, and the reason is *because they can do it*. They're quick, and they're young, and they go down the wrong way, and then it gets funny because they get to the end, and they start laughing about what they did. They begin talking, and they don't realize now they've stopped, and it's taking us all the way back to the end.

But that's the way so many people are. They think they can do it, and it looks like they're doing it for a while, because it works for a while. But then you see them 5-10 years later, and they lost their leadership position, or they lost their marriage or lost their kids. And you think, *how sad that they couldn't see this is life for the long term*. It's not for immediate pleasure. How do you want to live a great life for the rest of your life?

That takes some thinking, it takes some habit forming, and it takes some work, and unfortunately, a lot of people just want the quick results. It's sad, but that's what I try to do. It's what you try to do. It's what pastors try to do. We try to teach people: *This is the kind of life you can have*. And the bottom line is—if you look at the Bible, you look at Christianity—if I'm wrong, if Jesus didn't come, if that was just kind of an opiate of the people you know—I've lived long enough, and I've studied enough; I've watched people's lives. The Christian life is the very best life you could ever live down here; it's the very best life. If I'm wrong, I still had a great life living these principles, doing what I believe God wanted me to do. If I'm right, then I've got all of eternity to celebrate. But if somebody else is wrong, eternity is a lot longer than they are here now.

And so I believe that's the way you've got to decide to live life—that those principles work, and they've worked forever, and they will continue to work. The psalmist says there are principles at work in every generation, and those are the principles I try to teach people—the ones that work in every generation.

Blake: And you've written extensively. What are some of the book titles?

Charles: Two books that we sell thousands of are called *Comic Belief: Life's Lessons with Laughter* and *Comic Belief 2*. They're just short chapters of lessons that people learn, but they laugh at the same time, because humor is so important. It does moisten the needle. We have couples that read them every morning, and they get to laughing, and then they realize, "*Well hey, he's talking about us; this is what we do.*"

Then we wrote a book on the 12 steps called *Journey to Wholeness*, and then we did one on the Ten Commandments called *Divine Design*. We'd like to do a few more: *Comic Belief Christmas*, because Christmas is such a great time. It would have a lot of funny stories that you can weave into Christmas. And then I want to do one about your Adam suit—about life change, and how you can actually put living a great life into practice. I've talked to people so many years, I now think I'm at that age. You know, you write a book when you're young, because you think you know everything, and you don't know anything. But I think I'm at the age now where I can make it balanced, and I can actually help a lot of people by doing that. God's really blessed those books.

It's interesting. *I teach people that our purpose—the reason we're here—is to bless other people.* It started with Abraham, and God said to Abraham, "I'm going to bless you, and through you, I'm going to bless the entire world." He did that, and through Jesus, I'm in the covenant with Abraham. So, when people ask, "*What is my purpose?*", the purpose of a Christian is the same for everybody. I'll do it in different ways, but my purpose is to bless other people; that's what I do. 1 Peter 3:9 says it this way (paraphrased): "Even when people do evil against you, you don't do evil back." Even when they revile against you—it's kind of an Old Testament word that means that they tell bad things about you—you don't revile back. And there's a word in there called *likewise*, which means: the way Jesus did it. It's talking about Jesus in chapter 2. But then this verse says it this way: *contrary*. In other words, different to the way your Adam suit wants to do it. With your Adam suit, we want to get revenge. If you do evil against me, I need to do evil back, contrary to: "You are to bless them." Then, it says this: "That way, you will obtain a blessing from God." *That's the key.* Most of us in our Adam suit, think, "I'm going to bless you, because I'm a Christian. I'm going to bless you. Bless you, Blake. Bless you, bless, bless, bless. Man, I'm just blessing you every day...bless you, bless, bless, blessing." But after a while, my Adam suit starts thinking, "I've been blessing you a lot...what have you done for me?" Then I start telling someone, "After all I've done for Blake, he ain't done anything for me." That's the way we think.

I say that every family tree has a sap. You know, there's someone who will never bless you back. I try to give them an example of the physical. You can see the physical but can't see the emotional. I had an abscessed tooth one time, and I could hardly move. I hurt so badly that I couldn't move. Now, when I had that abscessed tooth, who was I thinking about? Me. I'm in so much pain, I have to get some medication, and I have to do something to feel better. Well, many people that you come across in your life—probably at least one in your family—will be *abscessed emotionally*. They're in so much pain; *they'll never bless you back*. And if you're blessing them to get them to bless you back, you'll end up being angry and resentful. You'll get mad. But you shouldn't be

blessing them so they'll bless you back. You should bless them, because that's your purpose in life. God says when you bless others, He'll bless you back.

I've seen that happen so many times in my own life. I speak mostly for churches, and most of them are what I'd call *cheap*. I told one deacon, "You're so cheap, you'd want separate checks at the Last Supper!" Now that's cheap. I told one guy, "You're so cheap, you'd want a prenatal agreement with your kids." [laughter] So I speak to a lot of churches, and sometimes it's pretty pitiful. They put me in like a Motel 3. So I'm in a lot of those situations. But when I speak to a business, or if I get a really good business gig, I'm really blessed, and I'm really thankful.

I got to do a national insurance convention, and they gave me one of the biggest checks I've ever gotten. So I was a happy boy, because my Adam suit wants money. [laughter] I've got a bunch of grandkids, so you know I've got to keep it going. I thought, "Man, how can I do this again? How can I get more of these gigs?" I asked the guy, who was the president, why he had selected me as speaker. He said, "Oh, I can tell you exactly why. Two years ago, you came to my little church in North Carolina..." When he said the name of the church, I thought, "Oh man...it was like a Motel 2-1/2, you know, like the restaurant took Blue Cross Blue Shield." It was a tough place, but I didn't flinch, because I'm a Christian, and I'd rather *look good than tell the truth*, so I just kind of smiled a little bit and said, "I remember being there." I didn't say how bad it was, but yeah, I remembered being there. It was one of those situations with a small crowd; nobody bought anything. I maybe sold two books the whole time. You know, just like it was a waste, and *in my Adam suit*, that was a waste. I went to bless those people, and nothing happened.

He said, "You came to my little church in North Carolina. About six months before you came, my mom had passed away, and my dad had come to live with us. He was mad, I think depressed. He quit going to church and said he never wanted to go to church anymore, and he just sat in his chair in the den beside me. So, you were coming to our church, and I told him we had a funny guy coming to our church that I think he'd like. I put a funny thing on YouTube and showed him, and he started laughing right there, and he said he did like that guy and that he'd go. He asked if this guy would be funny at church (which is a really good question, because in some churches you'd better not be!). I told him you would. He agreed and went Sunday morning and laughed out loud two or three times. Sunday night, there was a couples' banquet..." (Side note: a lot of times I go on Sunday morning and try to win the men over, especially, and teach them some things on Sunday night about relationships.) "Dad said, 'I'm not a couple, but I want to go hear the funny guy again.' I told him I'd call the pastor, and the pastor said that'd be great, because he knew that my dad never went to church. He said to let him sit at his table up front, and since he doesn't have a wife or anything, just to sit with him. So my dad sat right up front with the pastor, and I was in the back. I watched him, and he laughed almost the whole time." He continued, "I bought a book from you," (and in my mind I thought, *maybe the only one I sold*) and "you signed it for my dad. Every night from then on, he sat in that chair, and he'd read a chapter. I'd look over there, and he'd be smiling. Sometimes he'd laugh out loud or read parts to me. In my mind, I thought, *if I*

can ever bless the man that allowed my dad to smile and get back in church the last years of life..."

He then said that his dad passed away three months after that. He told himself that if he can ever bless that man, he was going to bless him. He said, "When I became president of this convention, I knew without a doubt you were going to be the speaker."

Blake: Gosh, that's powerful.

Charles: When he told me that story, *it changed my whole attitude*. I have the same Adam suit as you. I go to these churches, and I can't believe they put me in this hotel, or they're going to pay me this amount. Now, I know, all I have to do is sell one book, and God can bless me. *All I need to do is bless one person, and God can bless me*. And that frees you up when you start thinking that way. And that's why I try to teach that to people, because that's most of our Adam suit: We want to bless people so they'll bless us back, and many times that's just not going to happen. You've got to have enough faith to believe *God will bless you back*.

Blake: You hear about being nice to the people on your way up, because you may pass them on the way down. And I am blown away by just a tiny exchange that you might have with somebody, and then a year or two later, you get a call out of the blue. This just happened to me recently. They say, "Oh I saw you in Missoula, Montana. It was amazing; we need you to come talk to a thousand people."

Charles: I'll sometimes speak to churches that have lots of different services. They may have five in a weekend, including two on Saturday night. I used to really stress out about saying exactly the same thing the same way, because I don't speak with notes usually, and so I thought, "I'm just going to try to connect with that audience, and what comes out, comes out. They know that I'm there." I would go back to a lot of churches year after year, and occasionally a guy would come up with his Bible and say, "You said this three years ago, and it changed my life." And when he'd tell me what I said, I'd know I didn't say that. I don't talk like that. I wouldn't have said it that way. And I used to try to argue with them that it wasn't me, and they'd insist I'm the psychologist, and I said that... Now, I just say *thank you*, because I don't know what *they* heard. I have to understand that what I say may not be what they hear, and that God also is able to intervene and get them right to what they need that they heard me say. So it relaxes me even with my presentations anymore. I try to do it the same, but if another illustration came out that didn't come out at another service, I just hope God used that, because I don't know where that came from.

It's a way to live your life, because, as you know, speaking to large groups of people, you can get stressed out and try to "do the perfect"...and just not be you, and not connect with the audience. So if you start thinking that way, it just relaxes you so much more, because you're not in charge of the results.

I'm a golfer, so golfers are always asking me, "Why am I so good on the driving range? And then I walk to the first tee and can't hit it." [laughter] I say, "Well that's easy. You're enjoying the driving range; you're having fun. You're not concerned about the results; you're just having a ball, and you end up hitting it better. On the first tee, all of a sudden, you are concerned about the results. You're stressed out, and your performance goes downhill. You've gotta live golf the same way you live by faith, knowing that whatever happens, happens, and just enjoy it." That doesn't mean you don't acknowledge results, but you're not so attached to it that it has to happen a certain way for it to be good. The bottom line is, we don't know what's bad and what's good.

I've lived long enough to know that *the worst thing you thought could happen can become the best thing that ever happened*. I tell people the cross should be the biggest plus sign in your life. The cross says this: The worst thing anybody could do to somebody became the best thing for everybody. Now if that's the cross, and you have that in your life, that means no matter what people do *to* you, in the long-term God can take it and use *for* you.

The Bible says that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. If you're trying to do things God wants you to do, then people don't have power over you. You should pity people, because everything they do *to* you, God can take and use *for* you. The problem is that your Adam suit wants to give power to people, and then you pity yourself... How miserable you'll be if you give people power. If you give people power, you'll pity yourself. If you give God the power, you'll pity other people for what they're trying to do to you, but you know God can take it and use it for you. Once you start living that way, *you* get the power back. You get *you* back, and you get to be the person God created you to be.

I have a feeling personality, so when I went to pastor a church, it was tough, because I wanted everybody to like me. I have a very likeable personality; most people do. But I really got encouraged. My brother Fred is a megachurch pastor, just retired, but we're the only two brothers who remember what we call Mega Metro, a church, a group of leaders, like Charles Stanley and Ed Young. I'm a Baptist. I'm Baptist-born and Baptist-bred, so when I die, I'll be Baptist-dead. [laughter] So all the Baptist churches out there meet once a year, and we talk about church and what encourages and discourages us. One year, Fred said, "What really encouraged me this year was when I went to my brother Charles' church and found out there were lots of people there who didn't like him. That was a real encouragement to me." And I thought, "Well thank you brother, I appreciate it." But then he went on to explain that "Charles is a very extroverted, feeling personality. He loves people, he tells jokes, he slaps them on the back, he goes to play golf with them, and everybody likes Charles. But me, I'm an introvert. I'd rather be in my study than out there talking to those people and telling them jokes and laughing with them. So I retreat, and they see me as being a little aloof—a little bit distant from them—while everybody likes Charles. But I went to his church and realized, 'Wait a minute. Everybody doesn't like Charles.'"

And then I realized: *It's not the personality; it's your position, and if you're in a position of leadership, it doesn't matter what kind of personality you have. You're*

going to make certain decisions that people don't like, because their Adam suit wants what they want, whether they're in church or not. They still want what they want.

If you're the pastor, you have to decide what's best for people who are the non-Christians, and most of the time the Christians want the best for themselves. And the church is the only institution that's set up not for the people who are there. *It's to reach the people who aren't there.* So there can be a lot of conflict, a lot of rejection. And so those people didn't like me, and they said some bad things about me, but that was an encouragement to me, because I realized I can't take this personally. It's not my personality. I've got a very likeable personality. It's my position. I'd never been a leader over that many people. And so, it was getting to me that I was getting this rejection from people. As a matter of fact...I have a Q-tip (he pulls one out): It means *quit taking it personally*. So I tell every leader to carry around a Q-tip, because you're going to think 'it's my personality,' and many times, it's not. It's that you decided to be a leader, and you're going to get the criticism, because it's your position now that you're in.

It's the same way with a parent. If you decide to be a good parent and make some choices, you can't take it personally. Your kids will say some bad things about you. When my granddaughter was about five, she just looked me in the eye and said, "I hate you," and the reason is that she wasn't getting her way. I'm a Papa to ten grandkids... I realize, even as a Papa, you make certain rules they're not going to like. It's the same with leaders. They have to constantly wonder if they aren't liked because of personality (sometimes it is). Most of the time, though, it's your position as leader, because you've got to lead the way. I always tell people *if you lead the pack, you may get arrows in your back*.

Blake: More likely than not. Well, we talked a little about resistance to change, and I think that's spot on. You alluded a little bit earlier to burnout as well. And you know, I see a lot of folks, and in myself if we're busy, you know, we can really lean into work, but we can also get burned out. Any thoughts or observations?

Charles: That's why you've got to have somebody—and it's usually your wife—who can tell you when that emotional tank is low. You've got to find out what floats your boat, what gets that tank up, because it's going to be different for everybody. For me, it's golf. I have a lot of golf buddies. Now, my wife is actually more task oriented than I am, and since she essentially runs my business, she knows that for Charles (and which ends up being good for her), we have one day a week that's just for fun. We go to a movie, we don't do any work, and we just have fun. And that fills her emotional tank. She wouldn't do that otherwise, because her personality is very task oriented. So every pastor that I work with—most of them do not have a way of filling that emotional tank—just don't know what to do. You have to really work with them on what makes them feel good. Is there anything right now you're looking forward to? I also think it's very important that you do have somebody who's your partner who can tell you the truth, who you know is out for your good, and who you can trust...

My wife and I grew up in very different backgrounds, but she's been a big help to me. For example, I'm a speaker. That's what I do. When I first started speaking (we got married in college, so we just grew up together), there's a video where I'm speaking to 10,000 pastors, and I have this one little routine I do, where I talk about the difference between my wife and I. Her name is Penny. She grew up wealthy, and I grew up poor... Her dad was a brilliant scientist/engineer. He pulled the first switch on the first nuclear reactor in this country. As a matter of fact, I baptized him at age 74. That's how long it took because he just couldn't handle some faith things. But he told me, "The way you've lived your life and treated my daughter and grandkids, I can see that what you have is real." He was from upstate New York, and a very precise guy. Everything in their house was perfect...no gravy or food touching...grammar was perfect. I grew up in LA (Lower Alabama), and then we moved to UCLA (Upper Central Lower Alabama). [laughter] My dad was a country preacher who married my mom at age 16. I don't think she finished high school, so my grammar was atrocious. I grew up in it; that's the way they talked. So we get married, and I'm speaking and throwing out these quick one-liners in my routine, and I have one one-liner where I say, "One year, the bathroom caught on fire." I was *supposed* to say we *were* excited it didn't reach the house. Well, Alabama talk is "We *was* excited it didn't reach the house." When I said that, she just gave me this look, like "Really?! You're a PhD and you're speaking to 10,000 people, and you're saying, 'We was excited?!'" I'm a smart guy. I scored high enough on the graduate exams that The National Institute of Mental Health paid for my studies, but I grew up in Alabama, and my mother didn't graduate high school, so it was just *me*, and it kept coming out. So we really worked on getting up a plan of changing that. So now, I can say it the right way. But...that's because she's my partner. She's able to tell me things that I'm not doing like I should, where I can grow from it. So many couples end up fighting, and instead of working it out, they have it out.

I think every pastor especially needs that in his life: someone to tell them the truth. And for a pastor, it seems not right for you to do things that aren't "spiritual." But that's exactly what you have to do, because your whole life is this, and you have to keep your Adam suit functioning to get the spiritual done.

Blake: But people really feel conditioned to feel guilty if they...

Charles: Unfortunately, we've taken churches and we've made them *too* spiritual, I think. The Bible says *the worst sinners were comfortable around Jesus*—the worst sinners! I tell people that's why He hung around sinners so much, because of the religious people. Religious people were a pain. But if you think about the life of Jesus, the first thing He did to start His ministry was go to party. He went to the wedding feast at Cana. He didn't share the "Four Spiritual Laws" with anybody. He just had fun and went to a party. When's the last time you started a ministry with...let's just have a party; let's connect. *And the church has spent so much time trying to convict people instead of connect with people.* And that's what Jesus was excellent at doing. He was out there connecting with people, where we stay in here and try to get them to come, so we can convict them.

Unfortunately, Christians in our world many times are trying to stand up for stuff, but we never stand out. So people look at our lives and they say *I don't want that*. But if you've got a guy at work that's able to have a great attitude and able to get a lot of things accomplished, and you see his interaction with his wife and his kids, and ask, "What do you have that's different about you?" If they start asking questions after you've *connected* with them, then they will actually listen. But we try to do that too early. Often before we connect, we try to stand up for all these issues, and we end up just creating animosity.

There's such a huge dichotomy now in our culture, which is sad. I'm sure you've seen it. Zig Ziglar could give his testimony back in the day, and they'd pay him \$50,000. Nowadays, if they see on my resume that I was at First Baptist Dallas, they're not even going to invite me to come, because there's such a huge dichotomy now that they don't trust Christians anymore. They think we have our own agenda or it's all political, and it's not. *It should be about grace and just loving people where they are*. So it's sad, in many ways, but that's where we've evolved, and I think too often we're trying to take over the government instead of just loving people and blessing them the way God wanted us to.

Blake: Let's talk a little about corporate change and church change. I had lunch with a young man last week in a thriving, growing church, and he said he was called to the ministry for connection and felt like he had these gifts and wanted to grow something, but now he feels like he can't stay there, because it's not changing enough. It's not reaching non-Christians; it's always staying the same. And you touched on that a little bit when we started, but that's not dissimilar from a successful company that has a great product. Then, all of a sudden they have to let go of it in order to embrace the next thing. But a lot of them hang on to it until they die.

Charles: Well, I tell people the only person who likes change is a wet baby, and they cry the whole time. Change is hard on all of us, and I realize that the older I get, the more I want to do it the way I want to do it. But we have to figure out what is the mission, and then we have to see the mission in miniature. What do we need to do to get there? If we're not reaching lost people anymore...if the good news is not good news...that's why I use humor so much. I tell people it doesn't matter what you say if nobody's listening; it really doesn't matter. So here's a hook. We have to figure out how do we get the church in here, out there. And we've developed this whole concept of, we go to church...and we even developed a concept when I was little that the church is the sanctuary. I mean that's a building; that's not a sanctuary. *We* are the church. The sanctuary is *here*, it's not *there*, but we develop all these rules. It's always man and our Adam suits to want to worship the external; we can *see* it. So we put all these things into place, which served well in the previous generation, but now we think that really is church, and we end up loving the things *of church* instead of the things *of God*. We have to understand *we* created all of this. It's what we did to try to reach people, and that's great, but now what can we create different to reach the next generation?

Blake: But you know, step-by-step, whether it's in a church or a company, we start to institutionalize, codify things. You know, things become marble. They're really movable.

Charles: As I look and I see what happens with companies, with school systems, with denominations, you just end up adding more and more layers...more and more people. This layer does great, and then they think, "Man I'm getting tired," so they get a layer under them to do what they don't want to do anymore. So then they have a layer, and then they do it for a while, and they hire another layer under them, and then it's layers and layers, and then they realize they can't make any money anymore. And then some company buys them out and lays off all the layers and starts all over.

I've seen it happen so many times, and what people can't understand is the church has done the same thing. If you look at our convention that I'm a member of, it's layers and layers and layers of denominational people. And if you told them, "Hey, we're like the government. We've got so many layers; it's got to be local, or it's not making any difference anymore." They think, "No, not us." We can't see it in our own lives, when it's our own friends who have the jobs.

But that's the way it is with the government too, the same way. Look at school systems. When we were in school, you had a principal. Now you've got an assistant principal, assistant to the assistant of the principal, and then the deputy superintendent over the deputy over the deputy under the secretary... You've got all these layers of people, and then you wonder why aren't the teachers doing any good down here. They're the last layer of all these other layers of people telling them what to do...and each layer comes out with their own bureaucracy of what you have to do. It happens in everything, even universities. There are probably ten times more administrators than there are teachers in any university. It's just the nature of man. It's what we do, and then you have a revolution, and it starts all over. And unfortunately, I hope that doesn't have to happen in America...for the revolution to happen.

Blake: Well, education is a big deal in and of itself. You have any thoughts or suggestions about how we improve education?

Charles: It's like anything else. You've got to get as local as you can get, and you've got to *personalize* everything. *There's not anything powerful until it's personal.* If you won the lottery, that'd be good news. If I won the lottery, that'd be great joy. Why? Because it's my money now. It becomes personal, and that's the way it is with people.

At businesses sometimes I tell a story about a kid named Billy who got leukemia. He was about 11, and he knew it was fatal, so he was just depressed. His aunt and his mother realized he was depressed, so they said, "Let's get some flowers," because that's what people got in the hospital to make them feel better. They called a florist and explained his situation. They explained that he's a teenage boy, so not to make it feminine. Make it big and bold. It wasn't two hours, and the flowers showed up. A couple of hours after that, the sister and the mother said he was like a different person with hope, not the same kid. What happened with all that depression? Flowers could not have done that,

they thought. They walked over to the flowers and saw a little note from his mom and his aunt, “Get well soon.” And then another card fell out, and it was from the flower shop. It said: “Dear Billy, I, too, was diagnosed with leukemia when I was 7, and now I’m 23, and I’m doing great, and so will you.” She signed her name. I think it was Janice Bradley. A newspaper guy wrote an article about it, and here was his powerful observation: “Here was a kid sick in a hospital it took millions of dollars to build, surrounded by equipment that took millions of dollars to operate, surrounded by personnel, nurses, doctors, that took millions and millions of dollars to pay. But what made the difference was a lady in the flower shop making minimum wage, *because it became personal.*”

And that's the way it is with change; it has to become personal. In order for it to happen, it has to be powerful. If I know you love me, and I can trust you, I'm going to do what you say, and that's also the way it is with God really. You're not going to turn your life over to anybody that you don't think has your best interests at heart. That's why the Bible says the prodigal son *came to his senses*, and here's when he came to his senses: when he figured it out and when he decided in his mind there's better food in the father's house. There's a better way to live life than what I'm living. But he had to live with the pigs for a while to figure that out.

I tell parents, “You can't force it. *They haven't lived with the pigs long enough.* They have more pig life before they come to their senses.” And that's the hardest thing for a parent to do: more pig life. I say your job is just what the prodigal father did. When the son came home, he ran to him. He didn't kill him; he kissed him. You know you are to welcome them back, but you can't do anything about it now, no matter what you do. And that's why they said in the recovery movement, “You’ve gotta have a breakdown before you can have a breakthrough.” They have to realize, “The way I'm doing it is never going to work. I've got to come to my senses. There's a better way to live. There's a better way to do it.”

Same way it is with companies. When the people at the church or the people in the company realize there's a better way to do it, they'll come to their senses, and they'll go for it. But they have to know that the person that's asking them to do something *has become personal with them*; they'll trust them, and they have their best interest. It's our Adam suit that's distrustful, thinking “You're doing this for you.” And as long as they think you're doing it for you, they're going to fight you tooth and nail.

Blake: They're suspicious.

Charles: Yes. Change doesn't have any kind of constituency; it's just difficult.

Blake: You talked a little bit about difficulty with a particular church you described earlier, and that will sort of go into the heading of a valley event. I find it fascinating to understand what refined a person's character. What in your life have been one or two other valley events and then peak events—the things that you're the most proud of and most encouraging in your life.

Charles: I think that the valley events are always usually family events. We lost a grandchild at age two. On a Sunday afternoon, I told my five-year-old grandson that his two-year-old brother was dead. That's about the deepest valley you can be in. As a matter of fact, my daughter Kasey has now written a book called *God Enough*, because it took years for her to work through that and what had to happen. But at that point, not only do you grieve for yourself, but you grieve for your kids. So we made sure they got counseling and made sure they got there, because they couldn't drive. Those kinds of events will either drive you farther away, or they will drive you closer together. And for that, our family, in a sense, got so much closer together, because all we had was each other at that point in time.

I can remember coming home one night to my wife and adult kids...two out of three married...one had just graduated from college. All three girls were in their momma's bed just lying there, and they just needed to be together. We have a grandchild that had a stroke at age 18 months. It ended up fine. She had a rare brain disease called Moyamoya disease, and she had two brain surgeries at Stanford University. She's doing great now. I mean, it's always going to be a process, but it's like the family knew, "Hey we have another thing we're going to come together on. We gotta raise this kid; we gotta get it done." And that's what those kinds of events do for you. They either are going to make you or break you. They break some families, I'll just be honest with you, so you've got to be intentional when they happen. And like me, I'm kind of the patriarch of this group that I've got, because my parents are gone and Penny's parents are gone. It's us; we're the adults. We have to be the "adults in the room." So you grow up. Somebody said you don't become a man until you lose your father, and you've got to be the man; you're the one. So those kinds of events have made us as a family.

I think the peak event for me was when W.A. Criswell wanted me to preach for him, and at that time it was a big deal, because I'd never been to seminary. We had all the seminary presidents of most of the convention there. He had a college there, Criswell College, that taught homiletics. One time, we had a guy when I preached on Sunday night who would hold up his Bible and walk toward the pulpit and walk out in protest, because we laughed too much. I had too much fun when I preached, and he thought that could not be of God. I asked Dr. Criswell, because Dr. Criswell was just like the Pope, you know, and he was the patriarch of the whole Baptist Convention. I said, "Dr. Criswell, why do I preach on Sunday nights?" And he said, "Because I like you." And I said, "Well Dr. Criswell, you have a college over there that teaches homiletics, and they teach those preacher boys how to preach, and I don't do what they teach." He said, "I know that, Lad...those boys don't know anything; we have to teach them something." I asked if I should try to preach like they teach over there, and that's when he said, "No, Lad, you have a gift. No need to study it, just keep sharing it. You have what God's given you, and that's what you need to do." So from then on, he put the good stamp of approval on me, which, in a way, set my whole life, because I am a clinically-trained psychologist. I'm a secular-trained psychologist, and from conservative Christianity where I come from, you're *the other guy*. So for us to have you preach for us, you know there's a lot of barriers there, but once Dr. Criswell said, "He's okay," then I was okay, and I got to...

I have preached in probably the largest megachurches in the country. And so that event literally changed our lives. I tell people around the country that there's going to be something to come up in your life that scares you to death, that you are going to have to do if you're going to live the life that God created you to live. I always explain it with a bicycle. Growing up for kids, riding the bicycle was a big event that scared them to death. But the grin on their faces when they finally did it said it all. Many adults never get that grin back, because they never tackled anything as scary as riding a bike from then on. They played it safe from then on. I say you're never going to have a great life till you take that risk. So that was our big risk as a family, and that did change our lives.

Blake: What do you see as the common denominator between successful spirituality and successful psychology? You talked about starting as a psychologist and then seeing that people's lives really changed when they got to their knees. That's powerful; is there something in it?

Charles: Of course, I'm a true believer. I believe it's the power of God. You know if the cross is that big plus sign, then it has resurrection power. I mean if you can bring a guy back from the dead, that's pretty powerful. I've actually seen people, and I've seen God bring dead things back to life. I've seen people who say the emotion of love is dead, and God brought it back. I've seen the power of God work. But psychologically, it works for people who don't believe, in a sense, because if you believe in a Higher Power...as you know, the power of placebo is also pretty incredible. So again, if we're wrong, if there is no heaven, if there is no God...a placebo God is better than no god at all, so they're still better off. I happen to believe it *is* a true power, but it can even work not quite as a true power, even if it's a false power, if you believe. The power of belief is incredible. You know, it really doesn't matter what happened to you—it's what you think is happening, is how your body is going to react. If there's a snake right there, and it's a stick, but if I still *think* it's a snake, I'm going to have some emotional reaction...physiological reaction. And so that's the way you've got to look at life.

But if you take those principles, you can apply it to just about everything in your life. I apply it to marriage like communication. Take the word *psychological*: I'll break it up into two words: *psycho* and *logical*. Now, if you are married, and let's just say it's on a Tuesday. It's 10:00, and you go to the garage. It's just almost springtime, and you know Saturday is going to be a perfect day. And you go to the garage, and your golf clubs are there, and you haven't played golf all winter...you might think, I'd love to play. Saturday is going to be perfect. I'm going to play golf. I'm going to call my buddies. I'm going to play golf at 10:00. A few minutes later, your wife comes in the garage, and she says, "Man, this is a wreck. I mean all winter, I don't think we've done anything out here, but I know Saturday is going to be a beautiful day. We need to clean this garage. What a great time for a family project! Let's start about 10:00." Now, if they actually talked about that on Tuesday, the word would be *logical*, and they could work it out. The guy could say, "You know, I really was looking forward to playing golf." She says, "Why don't you play early?" "Oh yeah, we'll just tee off about 8:00 and be back, so we can do it by 1:30 or 2." They could work it out.

But if they wait till Saturday at 10:00, and he gets out those golf shoes, it's going to be *psycho*; it's not going to be *logical*. Why? Because the emotions got in there. As you know, you're going to fly or you're going to fight, and all that blood is going to the muscles. Physically, you can do some unbelievable things because of that. You can lift a car, and all kinds of stuff has been done. But because the blood is going to the muscles, it's not going to the brain, so you're going to say some stupid stuff. It's going to be *psycho*. So I tell so many people not to wait too late to communicate, because it's going to be *psycho* instead of *logical*, because the body gets out all that emotion and all that adrenaline, which is good for you for certain things, but it's not good for communication.

And so psychology overlaps. I kind of look at it this way, which I got from Larry Crabb: He called it *spoiling the Egyptians*. In other words, when God's people left Egypt, God said to take what you need; take whatever you need to survive. Well that's what I do from secular psychology. I spoil the Egyptians. All truth is God's truth. The Bible's all true, but all of God's truth isn't in the Bible. They discovered penicillin, and I'm going to take it whether it's in the Bible or not. I use glasses, and man discovered that. I used to have LASIK, and then it ran out, and I had to get glasses again, but all those things I'm going to use—because it was God's truth that we discovered. Well, there's some psychological truth we discover, and if we've discovered it, let's use it. Let's *spoil the Egyptians*, and take what we can use.

We have a standard. My standard is the Bible, and if it violates that, then there's something wrong here. We didn't discover truth. We discovered something else, and later on we'll figure out that wasn't it. So I have a standard to go by, but it doesn't have to be in the Bible for me to use it, because all truth isn't in the Bible. We also have to take the culture into consideration. God didn't give us certain laws to, say, drive your chariot 10 miles an hour, because he knew one day we would drive chariots that go 100 miles an hour. So he gave us the overriding principle of: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” If you love your neighbor, you won't put him in harm's way by going 100 miles an hour in a residential area. So those principles work, and a lot of times psychology finds out in what specific instances they do work.

I'll never regret the fact that I got a PhD in psychology. I learned a lot. I also saw how some guys who had that degree still couldn't live a great life. But it's also opened so many other doors for me that just going to seminary wouldn't have opened.

Blake: You know, you can speak about it just generally, but can you think of an example in your practice, or even today, of the most broken person that you've seen redeemed...?

Charles: If I look in the Bible, you know the book of Job is incredible; it's the oldest book ever written. I've had hundreds of Jobs who lost family, who've lost unbelievable things in their life, and we always think, “Well, you know, that person had the best of circumstances.” *It's almost like the best of circumstances aren't good for you*, because I've seen so many people out of so many great circumstances not become anything. And yet you see this person with unbelievable brokenness, and no mother, or rejected by

mother or whatever, and that gave them that wherewithal to find God, to do something. And I think that's the hardest thing for this generation of parents, because, in a sense—I know with my grandkids I have to really watch it—we worship them. All our time and all our energy goes to them, and they, in a sense, control our happiness. You know, if they're doing great, we're happy. Well, that's not good for them. They don't need to think they're god or that they control somebody else's happiness.

A lot of times, even with the megachurch pastors... I use the example of Martin Seligman, the great psychologist. He's written some good stuff. He gives the three P's, and I've given them to almost every megachurch pastor...because they call me a lot, because I won't tell anybody, and they can talk to me, and most times I start with three P's:

1) Don't take it *personally*. Your Adam suit is just like everybody else's Adam suit, and it's going to mess up; we live in a fallen world. God's not going to redeem the world either. He can't; it's not going to get better. He's going to create a new heaven and earth. This is done. You know it's a fallen world. Bad things happen down here and always will. He can't redeem the world. So don't take it personally. Bad things are going to happen to you down here.

2) Don't think it is *permanent*. You may be having trouble with teenage kids now, but it's going to be grandkids later. You had difficulty potty training; wait until they drive a car. It's going to be different, but this isn't going to be permanent. As a matter of fact, you're not going to be permanent. One day it's going to be a whole different issue. Now your issue is, can I get out of the bed.

3) But the key is *pervasive* and that is, you see, so many of these guys are having problems at the church, and they let it invade their marriage. I said you can't let it pervade other aspects of your life. They feel guilty having fun when their kids are all messed up, and that's the very thing you have to do to keep your marriage from messing up. So if they can just keep that pervasive, then that...they tell me that's the hardest one. Life is the way it is; there's always going to be a problem somewhere. That's just the way it is. Don't let it pervade into these other areas, or it will drain your emotional tank, and you'll do something stupid.

Blake: If you care about what you do and you're any good at it at all, you might be a little bit obsessive about it. I really want this to be the best it can be. And then when something goes wrong at work, then you carry that home, and you carry it over here.

Charles: And that's a discipline you just kind of really work at, and that's when you need your wife, your partner, or somebody who can hold you accountable. I really believe men need friends—especially men—because women are a little better at that. I always tell men: *You need a friend who will give you truth without fear*. A guy who can just look in your eye and say, “You don't want to hear this”...truth without fear...a sensitive tear.

I've got a guy who's a pastor in a great church in Odessa who lost his wife last year. He'd been married since he was in college, and the church gave him four weeks off for vacation, and he calmly says, "I don't know what to do. I've never had a vacation without Donna." So Penny and I literally planned his vacation with him. I met him at Whistling Straits to play golf with him up in Wisconsin. During the first six months of that time, we couldn't play together. We just cried. You know we're two pastors who talk for a living, and we couldn't get any words out; we'd just cry. Now, he would probably tell you, "Charles did the best anybody could to help me." Why? "Because he cried with me." You know, he just cried. I'd tell him, "If you need to cry, just call me and cry on the phone." But men need that...sometimes I don't know what to do. It's just sad; just cry.

You need truth without fear, a sensitive tear. You need a kick in the rear. Sometimes somebody needs to tell you, "Okay, now it's time quit throwing a pity party." They need to tell you the truth. With my buddy Griff, my phrase to him was: "*Don't get off the train in a tunnel.*" He'd want to quit...("I don't want to pastor anymore. I don't want to preach this sermon.") No, you've got to get through a year; we've got to get through a year. Don't get off the train when you're in the tunnel, and he'd quote that back to me. But you have to tell the truth. You need a sensitive tear, kick in the rear, truth without fear, a listening ear...you need somebody just to be able to get it out. Not to say, "Well that's not true." Just listen for a while to let them get it all out. There is some benefit or catharsis just to get it out there, and then you can deal with it later.

Blake: You know, that's powerful. I interviewed someone earlier in this series who lost someone very near to her, and she spoke a lot about the power of other people being present with her. I don't need to fix it. I don't need to solve it. You can't replace it. We can't fill it. It is what it is...

Charles: And that's what people need to hear. I preach a lot at The Woodlands Church, Kerry Shook's—a huge church. And I've become friends with Greg and Janna Long, great musicians. They sing with Avalon. I preached that message on Job, and I talked about not wanting to, but that you have to show up. You think, "I'll cry. I don't know what to say," but that's okay. You have to show up. That will let people know you care enough, because they know they wouldn't want to show up either. You have to show up. And he wrote a song actually about that, because he said he had a friend who had a tragedy, and he didn't go, and he just kept putting off not going. And a year went by, and he never went, and then it was too late. Then you get to the point of knowing it is too late...because of the same thing...I won't know what to say. I won't be any help. And every time I preach that, I convince people to go. Job's friends showed up, but they said awful things. They even spoke truth, but it wasn't true in this situation. *They tried to speak for God instead of represent God, and just be kind and loving.* And so I say, if you don't say anything, do something practical. They don't need platitudes; they need something practical.

When we lost my grandson, the lady that helped the most said, "I'll come to your house for two weeks. I'll answer the phone from 9 to 5, and I'll repeat what happened. Everybody across the country has heard about it. They want to know what happened, and they want to pray. But I know you don't want to tell it over and over. So I'll bring my

own lunch,” and for two weeks, she came from 9 to 5 and took their names, a message from them, and then got their number to call them back or their address to send them a note or whatever. That was so helpful. It's just something practical like that.

I had a person who went through a difficult tragedy, and she went to help her sister. She called me, because she was helping her sister, but her sister just couldn't do anything. So she was doing all the things, and she asked what was going to happen. I said, “Well here's what you do now. You sit down, and you tell your sister how much you love her, and how much you've enjoyed being here, but you have to leave in a week, and now you're going to help her get back in the routine of doing the things she has to do, because she's a mother. And so I'm going to be there with you as we go through those routines,” because you don't want her not doing anything anymore, because she's just going to sit and be in her mind the whole time. And so she's got to get slowly back into it. But be there with her. You just don't leave and say, “Okay, it's yours.” Start that process with her, and let her know you're there with her. If she can't get it done today, you're there to finish it off. Then she learns how to start. This lady said that was so helpful to her. She said nobody had ever told her anything like that.

You know, I didn't know what to do. I had no idea what to do. And that's the way it is with so many people. They do not know what to do, so they don't do anything. So I think first thing is just making sure you *show up*, and then think, “*What practical thing can I do to help that person get through this?*”

Blake: What advice do you have for people who are in a career transition, someone who is wondering, “What's my calling? What was I designed to do?” And then, more pragmatically, “Should I just take this job because I need a job?”

Charles: When I was a pastor, I had a guy come to me who was a great music guy, and he'd done a weekend event where he got a lot of praise and positive feedback. He said he wanted to basically quit his day job, do retreats, and sing for people. I said, “Well, I love you enough to tell you the truth. You're not ready for that.” His hero at this time was Michael W. Smith, a great Christian singer. I said, “At your age, Michael W. Smith was not Michael W. Smith. He put in a lot of hard work before this.”

Now, I wanted to go my own when I was 21, but I couldn't. I had huge financial obligations with a family. I went on my own at 51. My last daughter graduated from college in May, and I went on my own that July. *You have to do what you have to do first in order to get to do what you want to do.* A lot of people do what they want to do first, and then they wonder why it didn't work out, because they thought this was their calling. Well, it probably was your calling—it was just *too early for your calling*. And so that's why I had to wait until I was in my 50s to do what I always wanted to do, because I had these other obligations. I had other people in my life that I had to make sure I took care of.

I had a private practice in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and then I was a professor at Gardner-Webb University, where I ran their counseling center. I realized at a very early

age, I hated counseling. I mean I hated it! I realized I'm a talker; I'm not a listener. Well, I pretty much worked myself out of it. I was teaching psych courses. I was directing the Counseling Center, but it was college students, so it wasn't really severe problems, because they were functioning. It was actually a great job. First Baptist Dallas called and wanted me to start a counseling center where they never had one before. They had a psychiatrist there, who I found out later went to sleep when people were talking, because my first patient said, "Man, you're so much better than the other guy. You're awake." Well, this is a pretty easy job if you just have to stay awake. [laughter] So in my mind, I thought, "They want me to do what I do not want to do. I do not want to do that." But then, I also knew I couldn't pass this up, as this may be where I get to do my calling one day. So I went there the first two years. All I did was see people. I hated it. My wife would tell you I was depressed too. I was seeing approximately 35 patients a week. But after about two years, they hired somebody else to come do all the work for me, and I started speaking for W.A. Criswell doing all the other speaking. And then, eventually, it did allow me for my calling. I'm a speaker; that's what I do.

Blake: But it taught you, and you learned, and you got these examples...

Charles: It was good for me. I just didn't want to do it, but it was really good for me, and it was what I had to do to get to First Dallas for W.A. Criswell to put that stamp on me. It had to happen, but I had to convince my Adam suit to go do it, because I didn't want to do that. I knew then that was not my calling, and I couldn't understand why I would have to go do this, because that's not my calling. But I did it, and then later I looked back and realized that was it—that's why it changed everything.

Blake: So I just turned 48 last month, and I find a lot more conversations are happening, in my life, where people approach me at two phases. They approach me when they're 22, 23, 24, and it's sort of this crisis of identity, right? What was I designed to be? How long do I chase my dream? And then, people come to me again when they're 42, 43, 44, and they're having a midlife crisis.

Charles: Yes. You have to decide if you want the second half of your life to look like the first half. It's a great time to make that choice, because actually during the second half, most people have more options than they had the first half. During the first half, you usually get married early, like I did, and you then have to get the kids raised. But the moment that last daughter graduated from college, that was a freedom for me. And I knew, okay, I did what I was supposed to do; now, what do I *want* to do.

Blake: I remember my parents coming to me a few years ago, and they said, "We think we have one chapter left, and we want to live it very intentionally. We're going to go live in this place, and do these things, and create this life that we've been talking about for 30 years." And you know, it was hard for us, because it wasn't where we were, but it meant the world to them. And I think they're happy with it.

Charles: Yeah. I work with a lot of guys who are very successful as a pastor, but their identity gets wrapped up with the church, and then they can't let it go when they're at the age where they should let it go. But they can't let it go, because it's their whole identity, and their wives are depressed and distant, and they resent the fact that we don't have a life, because you were married to the church. You see it so often—especially the megachurch pastor. Nowadays, it's a pretty great life in many ways. Everyone else does the work: You just show up and preach, everyone tells you how wonderful you are, and the perks work really well. But there are a lot of guys who need to turn it over to the next generation, but they can't.

Blake: They get seduced by the role, and it's hard to say no to it. And then, frankly, it might become an idol in their life. I see a lot of people who are successful, and it becomes something that they really place a lot of value in. You have to wonder, is this really a calling, or...?

Charles: That's our Adam suit. We end up doing what we get rewarded at doing, and the rewards are pretty good at that stage, so they just can't take the risk of not doing something.

Blake: Well, just a few more things, and I'll let you go here. Let's start with this. Now that you look back, and you're sort of in this pivotal place—we'll talk in a moment a little bit about your future—when you look back, do you have any regrets, or anything that you would like to have done differently, or maybe a road that you didn't pursue?

Charles: It's interesting. Because of the church work, I've been around it all my life. I had lunch with a guy who I planted the church with, and now it's huge. And he also asked what I would have done differently. I should have blown up all that *structure* that I just dealt with, and I was able to overcome it with my personality. But when I left, the structure took back over, and literally, in a sense, you know, it killed the church. A church that runs 5,000 now has empty buildings everywhere, but I didn't have enough in me to just blow it up, if you know what I mean. It would have been very tough personally to do that, and I just took the easy way out in some ways. I just said, "I'm going to go on my own; have a good life," and the structure did take back over. But that's why I planted the other one. That was a big regret, but again, that's in a way God's problem. It's His church, not mine. I don't think I had enough in me to do it at that point. I was just tired of the battle.

Blake: But gosh, if you think of an equivalent to that, I look at what's going on in the Middle East. Look at Afghanistan or Iraq, and we've had people over there for 18 years. It's cultural, it's religious, it's systemic, and it's thousands of years old. Churches, in some cases, are going to outlive their pastor, and say, "Well that person will move on eventually, and we'll get it back to where we want it." Companies do that too.

Charles: I'll be here after he's gone. We'll just wait him out, and then we'll go back to doing all we want. Churches may be harder to change than any other institution. A

friend of mine was either the number-one-or-two man in human resources for Walmart, so he's over 100,000+ people. He had a second calling in life ("Now I can do what I want to do"). He's an executive pastor for a church. He didn't last maybe four years. And I talked to him in the process, because I go to this church to speak, and he said, "It's like night and day." He said, "At church, there's no chain of command. You can't tell anybody what to do, because they're all volunteers, and then they tell you 'No, God told me to do it different.'" How do you argue with that?

Blake: Yeah, it's not indignation; it's righteous indignation. [laughter]

Charles: He said he gave up. He couldn't handle the structure of it. At Walmart, you could fire people, or you could tell people you've got to do this, but he said church work is a totally different animal.

Blake: I remember Jim Collins, who wrote *Good to Great*, and he eventually wrote a little monograph on organizational change in the social sector. He talked about churches and the government and all these places in the public sphere, and he talked about how much harder it is to affect change in those places, because of the reasons you just described.

Charles: And the bottom line is, it's our Adam suit. We want what's best for *us*, and it happens in churches as well as anywhere else. And we have to be aware, as pastors and leaders and men, that we also use the Bible for what's best for us if we're not careful. I think actually we've done a *great disservice to women*, because men have been all the pastors, and they use the scripture for what's best *for them*. Raising three daughters in that, I started being aware of that—that "Hey, that kind of leadership is *not* Jesus leadership!"

Blake: It's a whole new level of empathy, and I am seeing that uprising in the church today. I think it's a lot more open to that. What question have you been asked perhaps the most in your life or career, and what question have you never been asked that you'd love to be asked?

Charles: Most people want to tell me why they are the exception to what I just said. Or they want to come back to the book table and tell me why it doesn't apply them, but that's our Adam suit. They don't want to be convicted with the fact that it could be their fault. I think that upset me the most about counseling. What got me discouraged the most is that most people who came to see me wanted me to change somebody who *wasn't* there. And I would literally look at them and say, "I don't talk to people who aren't here. I'm a psychologist, and they're not here. We can't talk about them."

But if you go all the way back with our Adam suit to Adam and Eve, they had everything you'd ever want. And the one thing they couldn't have is what they wanted, and as a rule, man's a fool. When he's hot, he wants it cool. When he's cool, he wants it hot. *Always want what's not—as a rule, man's a fool*. And once we realize that about us, we can deal with it. We want what we can't have.

The world is a Ponzi scheme. It's always telling us this fantasy out there is going to make you happy, and that you can have this without that. And I'll tell people it's like those people movers...*you can have this without that, but only for a short period of time*. And by the time the *that* shows up, you're addicted to the *this*. And so I think that the question I've always wanted people to ask me, is "What can I do differently? How can I change?" Because I promise you, most of the time, it's *blame*. It's somebody else who is causing their difficulty. I always tell them, "Think about it this way. If you take a 100% chance, 100% responsibility for your problem, you've got a 100% chance of solving your problem. If you take 0% responsibility, you've got 0% chance. That's your chance. You want me to work on a 0% chance or you want to work on a 100% chance?" So that's the question I try to put back to them...help me here. But it all goes back to the Adam suit. It's always our first inclination: Whether it's me, or whether it's you, it's *their* fault.

Blake: Well, that's the way it is in coaching appointments. Someone will come in, and if you think about the things that I can control and maybe influence, and then the stuff that's outside of that, it's always about this guy and that guy. Coulda, woulda, shoulda, and looking out the window for blame. What are *you* going to do?

Charles: That's unfortunately our nature, and it's always going to be that way. So I would like for them to ask me the question, "What can *I* do to change?", which never seems to come up.

Blake: It's the million-dollar question. Well, just a couple more things, then. The first one is going to be about legacy and looking back, and the last one will be about looking ahead. So, now that you're at this place in your life and you look back, I think maybe the answer was, "You know, I feel called to be a blessing to people." But, what would you say your life's purpose was?

Charles: Well my life's purpose, as I look back, was to help the church be healthy, and to help Christians live a healthy life. We've always worked on how to live a holy life. That isn't going to happen. That's why Jesus came. You know we get *His* righteousness; we're not going to be righteous. The better we can do it, the better off we are. But let's be healthy. Let's don't put all this stuff on us and on everybody else. I tell pastors, "You don't have to tell everybody how sorry and no good they are! They know it; they live with themselves. *Tell them how good God is and what can happen in their lives if they trusted him!* Don't beat them over the head with all the stuff that they've done wrong; they all know it." So I would hope that I've given, especially pastors, a little encouragement of making churches *healthy*, because especially the churches I was in years ago, they were pretty unhealthy. And I think they've made some progress in terms of doing that.

As far as my age, you never get over having to control your Adam suit. I reached a point where I realized I wasn't getting up in the morning. And you can rationalize—I call them rational-lies—there are lies that you tell yourself to get what you want to do. We all do that. So I would rationalize, "Well, I'm in a different time zone. I spoke here and there, so I need to sleep in." I was sleeping in a lot. So I asked myself what could get me up in

the morning. I really don't have to get up; I don't have a real job. At this point in my life, what motivates me? Well, I'm going to leave something in my grandkids, you know, to see something in me that they'd like to be like their Papa. So I had a grandson that went to Prestonwood Christian School but couldn't drive, and it was a long way from his house, and his mother had been through a divorce, so it was just difficult. So I said, "Okay, when I'm in town, I'll take him to school every morning. What time does he want to leave?" 6:30. I didn't know it would be that early, so now that got me up at 6:30 every morning. I'm home by 7:15. I felt more energized again, and realized, "Hey, I'm living a great life still. I still have things to do." So I use those kinds of things that are different than I would have used earlier in my life to motivate me to keep me going. I did that for a whole year, and he got his license. So she has another son who goes to a different school, and I said, "I'll take him in the morning," so all last year, I took him in the morning. Because that's the way you have to think—even when you get older—because you can rationalize all your life to not be the person God wants you to be. So there are different motivations: Spend time with my grandkids, get to know them better. So those are different ways now that I motivate myself in terms of my legacy and what I'll leave in them.

Blake: So I guess that brings us to the last question, which is, what is it that you want to leave in them?

Charles: First of all, I want to leave in them the fact that I believe Jesus is the answer. It's the best way to live. And I'll tell them that what we believe is pretty incredible. I mean, that God came as a baby all those years ago, when we didn't have CNN. I mean, surely He'd have done it differently. Could have gotten out really quick. So I say, "Hey look, you're going to go to college," because they're smart. I say, "You're going to have doubts, but I had to settle in my mind when I was young that this life is the best life to live, even if God doesn't exist. You've watched, and you've seen your Mimi and me. You know how we live. We live a good life, and we're happy. We're helping people; this is the best way to live. But I believe it's also true that this isn't it, that we have a whole eternity to be together, so I would want you to be there with me. So that's what I want you to believe in, and that's what I want you to trust in, because the world's going to give you all kinds of different opinions. But no matter what, the way your Papa lived and who he gave his life to was the best way to live, and you will see that all the way to the end."

That's why vision is so important to people. The Bible says without that vision, you perish. See if I'm in my 30s, and I've got some hot woman that's trying to get me to do something...if I can take that vision out there...and if I can see 20 years down the road that I'm still with Mimi...when I go buy a condo in the Smoky Mountains, and my grandkids are going to come, and I'm still taking my grandkids, and there's no other woman, and you can see that it's great all the way to the end... You see, if you follow those principles and keep your vision... But so many people can only see that little bowl of soup with the appetite, and that appetite unfortunately never gets satisfied. You go to a buffet and you stuff yourself, and you say you'll never eat again. And then six hours later, somebody gives you a cookie. *The Adam suit is never satisfied*. It's a Ponzi scheme, and once you learn to control it—and you control it primarily with the vision—the long term—that's the way you get through anything. That's how I got through my

PhD. It's studying for those exams at 2:00 in the morning. I wanted to quit at times, but then you can see it, see your vision, and you get a doctorate degree. I'm able to help these people; I'm able to do that. That's what any athlete does. Those guys miss that putt at the Masters. You know he's made that putt 30,000 times in his backyard; he was at the Masters. They were all there in his vision, in his mind.

That's why when I say vision, that means *a picture*; that means *a goal*. I always give an example of a baby shower. Have you ever gone to a “pain shower,” where they say, “This is how much pain you're going to be in when you have this baby?” No, we don't do that. Why? Because it'd be so discouraging. So we have baby showers—that's just a vision of *what's going to happen*. Yes, you're going to go through some pain. Yes, this is not going to be fun, but the vision of what's going to happen when you're through keeps them motivated and encouraged. So people need to have some baby showers along the way, to stay encouraged. That's what guys like you and I do. *We try to give glimpses of the vision of what you can be if you do what you don't want to do right now*. It's like Landry said, “Then your dreams can come true if you can do this.”

Blake: So what's your vision then, for the career that you've got and for the next few years. How do people find you? Are you still going to be practicing and doing some of these things?

Charles: I still want to speak. I get energized from speaking, and I get energized from helping people. That's what I do. I want to not do as many, because I want to write some. I want to get it down on paper, where people can see it. I've used it orally with so many thousands of people, and they're helped by it. They understand. They start to see how they can make it work. As you know, sometimes you're speaking so much, you don't have time to work on something that's in-depth. So, I won't speak as much, because I want to work some on that, but I still want to speak full-time. Our website is charleslowery.com. It's pretty easy. We still want to continue to help and encourage people. That's how I get my energy, from other people, so I still want to stay on the road, just not quite as much. And maybe, you know, not a Motel 3...maybe a Motel 6 or 7 or something. [laughter]

Blake: Well, that's what Fireside continues to be about. It's about meeting with seasoned leaders and trying to capture some wisdom for today's world. And you know I've been really ruminative, obviously, as you sort of began the conversation. But I want to try to put some virtuous content out there and meaningful thoughts to be encouraging. So I look forward to reading what you're writing when you start writing it. And I thank you for all the good that you do.

Charles: Hey, thanks for having me. Thank you for doing what you do. God bless you.

Blake: Thank you for joining me.



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To learn the impetus behind *Fireside*, [click here](#) or [here](#), and please join us again next fall for another chat.