



RAY EDWARDS

LIVE WITH JOY LEAD WITH PASSION PROSPER WITH PURPOSE

Interview with Cliff Ravenscraft; the Podcast Answer Man

Hey this is Cliff Ravenscraft from PodcastAnswerMan.com and you are listening to the Ray Edwards Show.

Welcome my friends to episode 131 this is a special edition of the podcast. I'm going to have the content, tip of the week and spiritual foundations are all wrapped up in the interview I did with my good friend, Cliff Ravenscraft. I know you're going to enjoy it so I'd like to jump right into it.

INTERVIEW

Ray: Cliff, we have a point of past history in common that I don't think you know about.

Cliff: I'm intrigued.

Ray: I sold insurance for two years.

Cliff: I didn't know this.

Ray: I was out of work in the radio business and desperately needed a job, so I got a job selling life insurance for Prudential Insurance Co. I didn't like it.

Cliff: There are a couple people who know my story and how I was involved with selling insurance for 11 years in my family-run insurance agency that I was supposed to take over. A lot of people say Cliff I'm so excited I'm going into insurance and I sigh. They want advice and you can tell they're so excited about this new opportunity that's presented to them and they want motivation and encouragement from me on how to succeed in that career.

I write back to them and say, I can tell you're so excited for this and I'm excited about your excitement but if you would like to be inspired, motivated and encouraged to pursue that career with all gusto then you do not want to seek my advice.

Ray: I'm going to remember those words, because if anyone ever asks me I will say that instead of what I would normally say. In the past I would have said, do not get into that business.

Cliff: I had the question come up so much that I actually recorded a podcast episode of pursuing a balanced life, which I just looked up. It's episode #480 entitled: Why You Should Not Ask Me About a Career in Insurance. If anyone out there is thinking about selling insurance as a career, and you want to know my not so positive review than head to GSPN.TV and simply type in 480 in the search box for that episode.

Ray: There are some people that I know who are in that business who love it. Our own personal insurance agent, I love this guy and he seems to take so much joy from what he does. All the unpleasant parts of the insurance business apparently aren't a part of his practice, so I know it's possible but my experience was not positive, although I was pretty good at it.

Cliff: I was great at it too.

Ray: I finally decided if I keep doing this I'll be stuck and making so much money I won't be able to get out.

Cliff: I was almost there. To your point yes, I know people who are in insurance and actually do love it and have the heart of serving people, and also, there was a point where I did love my job. It wasn't until after I discovered my true calling in life that I actually got to the place of despising it. I didn't necessarily despise it because of some of the horrible practices that are taught and I think you were probably more into the life and health industry, right?

Ray: Yes.

Cliff: When I finally got my life insurance, because I did life, home, auto and health and when I started selling life insurance I discovered the difference between term life and permanent life. I know all about how I could have made tons of money selling permanent life insurance and having continual ongoing commissions, but at the same time I was learning about Dave Ramsey, becoming debt-free and I became obsessed with educating people on how they could be debt free and no longer need life insurance after 20-30 years.

I actually made it a goal to work with people to educate them and I only sold term life. I felt really great about that and unfortunately, I know many people who were served well as a result of being educated by me due to the tragic loss of a loved one and their family remaining financially sound as a result of that education. Also, I have had the privilege of knowing some people who said, you introduced me to Dave Ramsey and now I'm \$87k out of debt and today I have a net worth of more than the insurance policy you sold me, and I still have the policy but I don't need it.

Ray: Wow! That is an amazing story. That Dave Ramsey guy is onto something.

Cliff: He is.

Ray: There's another mutual point in our histories that I was thinking about before the call and that is that I used to watch this TV show called 'Call for Help'. I loved that show. Of course, the star of the show was a guy named Leo Laporte. The show was pulled but eventually I discovered that Leo had a podcast, right about the same time I discovered you had a podcast. I know you're a big Leo fan and aside from yours, I listen to Leo's show regularly.

Cliff: Here's the deal, I remember back then it was ZDTV and later became Tech TV and I watched Leo everyday on a show called The Screensavers. I loved that and I would watch the call-in show occasionally. I was a fan of all the people on that network and Leo being the head guy was amazing. His charisma and the way he communicates, I really liked it. Same deal, when the show was cancelled and he was no longer on the network I

still followed his blog at the time and it was through his blog that I learned about a podcast, which radically changed my world.

Oddly enough it was Leo Laporte, who is responsible for me leaving my career in insurance and pursuing podcasting as a full-time career.

Ray: One of my first episodes of podcast envy was when I heard Leo introduce your show. I thought that was so cool.

Cliff: I'll never forget the first day I met Leo. I was like a little kid at one of those concerts where they see all their favorite Hollywood stars. I was embarrassed. I actually have video that I will probably never share ever, of when I met Leo for the first time. It's not pretty. I'm not too excited about that, but since then what's amazing is that Leo has become a good friend.

He isn't just a mentor and someone I looked up to as a hero in the space of communication and creating content online, but to know that my own journey has led to the place where I can actually pick up the phone and call him, it's an amazing world we live in.

Ray: That is truly amazing and really impresses me.

Cliff: The thing is that it's amazing to me that I'm able to send a text message to my friend, Ray Edwards, and say here's the deal, I'm struggling with believing in myself about this thing I want to pursue, can you give me a pep talk? It still blows my mind that someone like you, Michael Hyatt or Dan Miller would pick up the phone and say hey Cliff let's talk, what's going on here?

Ray: Thank you for saying that. We're all on a journey. I remember when I first heard about you through Michael Hyatt, because he began doing a podcast as well. I was out of radio and had started my online copywriting and marketing consulting business and I had dabbled a little in podcasting because I first caught wind of it through Adam Curry and Dave Winer in the early days when it was like, we have this thing where we can send an mp3 file through an RSS feed. We think we're going to call it podcasting.

I pursued it for a bit but not for long and dropped it. After that I heard Michael had started a podcast and he mentioned you, so I checked out your podcast and listened to your show and then I heard you talk about Dan Miller, whom I had heard about on Dave Ramsey's show, so I listened to Dan's podcast and he mentioned you, so I figured this Cliff guy was the podcasting guy.

I initially was interested in joining your podcast mastermind and that didn't work out, because I was looking for a certain level of mastermind and I sent you an application, because you had a process to go through. I had questions for you and you've since revealed to me that you were trying to formulate a way to say, I don't think this is the group for you Ray.

Cliff: That's exactly what happened. I opened up this mastermind organization and it was the first time I was attempting something like that and at the time I had an app for everyone, but it was more along the lines of... do you understand that these are the expectations of what you're going to get as a member. It wasn't necessarily anything qualifying you as to

whether or not you were appropriate for the group, other than the final question... do you understand this is \$97 a month.

If they answered yes then they were qualified. It wasn't a great idea and I've learned my lesson since then. And it's not that it was a bad experience, but what happened was, I knew the price I wanted to charge down the road wasn't going to be \$97 so I allowed a lot of people at a lot of different levels and places in their journey into these groups. I was smart enough to keep it to around 10 members per group, but I had people who were hobbyists and literally had a business where they were creating websites for the top 100 companies in America.

It was not a well thought out process and when you applied I was dealing with the, how do I actually start to massage these groups in such a way that it becomes beneficial to everyone involved. That was stressful and took lots of time. I actually got really great at managing a lot of that over the two years I ran the organization, but even after two years I decided there's one way to fix everything I see as a pain point and that was to shut it down and then restart it.

When I said that to my wife, asking her what she thought about me shutting it down and restarting it, Stephanie said, what if you were to shut it down and not start it, what would you do?

Ray: I didn't know that was her idea.

Cliff: I asked her the question and she came back with that response. We were talking about the things that needed to be cut out that we could say no to in order to say yes to bigger things that I felt called to do. That was an idea. I was thinking she would give me reasons why I shouldn't shut it down to restart it and she was like, duh, shutting it down is the thing to do but the question is... do you want to re-launch it?

Ray: A wife is a great source of wisdom.

Cliff: Yes they are and I am very blessed to have one that has given me all sorts of wonderful gems like that.

Ray: She's a remarkable woman. We met physically at the Platform Conference. I attended the first one, purchased the VIP tickets so I could sit at the same table with Michael and other VIPs who had invested at that level. It was so funny because I didn't realize I had a special seat and I was sitting in the back with some friends who were there and I think it was Lauren Brady, who came over and said we have a seat for you up front. I was surprised.

She told me it was right beside Michael. I looked at my friends and said, I love you guys but I'm going up front.

Cliff: Until you just said those words I didn't realize... I was sitting at the table you moved from.

Ray: That's right.

Cliff: After you listen to this, go listen to Podcast Answer Man episode 373, because what Ray just said even further plays into my sense of inadequacy in the presence of almighty Ray.

Ray: I was so excited to sit up front, but I was also embarrassed but it was a great experience and then you gave this most wonderful talk about podcasting. You had this cool thing you did where people stood up and sang a song.

Cliff: I remember and I'm embarrassed by it too. I'm so thankful that the video of that conference never got out anywhere.

Ray: I thought it was great because it was attention-getting, different and spectacular.

Cliff: Do you know the story behind that? Can I share that story?

Ray: Certainly.

Cliff: I don't know that you know this but here's the deal. Back then I had done quite a bit of public speaking, in my church I had done several sermons and I was nervous to no end each time. I would do sermons and speak at little conferences called 'pod camp' where anybody can talk, you don't have to have any qualifications you just sign up and talk. So I had done quite a bit of that and I made a decision one year in my business, 2011, that my 2012 goal would be that I would become known as a keynote speaker.

I would start getting paid to speak at events, not only asked to come speak for free but to actually get paid. Michael says Cliff we'd like to have you speak at Platform and it wasn't a keynote but the year I set that goal I did have my first keynote address. I believe that I have a powerful story that will entertain, educate, encourage and inspire people to no end. I believe it's totally a story that God has given me, the journey I have been on and the one I continue on today.

I believe I can sit and tell people this story, they'd be inspired and they would take action as a result of some of the things they would hear. I know I have something valuable to share with an audience, but what I lacked were the technical skills of how to do it. How do I prepare my slides, my outline and when I get up on stage what do I do with my hands? When I used to speak, people would walk away from my talk thinking I'm so glad Cliff kept that podium from floating to the ceiling, because he held that thing down tight.

Then, every time I did a public talk I would always freak out the night before and usually I'd have either stomach cramps or some other digestive issues or physical Charlie horses in my legs. I would be so freaked out the night prior that I wouldn't even sleep and then I'd get up on the stage and I'd be nervous, stumbling over every word for 3-5 minutes and then 10 minutes into my talk none of that mattered. Within that timeframe I'd be in the zone and would feel like I belong on the stage, like I own the stage and like this is the place where I was created to be.

At the end of my talk I always felt like, let me just talk for another hour. I want to do this every day. So what I found is what I lacked in technical skill I always compensated with passion and that's what I did, I always compensated with doing something passionate, getting up there and just being me.

I knew that I had this issue where it's always the first 10 minutes that I'm freaked out about what everybody must think about me and how I'm doing on the stage or if I'm even qualified to be there or asking why they're listening to me. I knew that that would be the first 10 minutes and I only had 40 minutes to talk with quite a bit to say. So I decided to get rid of my nervousness completely and right up front.

So I figured the best way to do that would be to make a complete fool of myself within the first two minutes and if I could do that and have everyone laughing then I could move on. Next time I talked I started with the 10k hour rule, held up a picture of Malcolm Gladwell and asked how many thought it was Art Garfunkel and then I sang the Sound of Silence. Of course, I can't carry a tune in a bucket, so I begged 15 people in the audience to stand up with me on cue and literally start singing this song with me. I cued the music the play in the background and that's what I did.

By the way, none of that had anything to do with my talk but that was all about me and how I would actually get rid of the nervousness within the first 3-5 minutes to be in the groove and share my story.

Ray: What's interesting is what you did changed the atmosphere in the room, not only for you but for the entire audience and people loved what you had to say. I love the fact that you get in there with passion and share what you have to share. It is a powerful story and you and I have both been through the SCORE training since that time, another workshop with Michael Hyatt and Ken Davis, where they teach you the technology of how to construct a talk in a way that's compelling, concise and powerful.

It's the greatest speaker training I've ever been through and trust me I've been through a lot. I've seen your transformation. Your speaking is 10 times more powerful now than it was then, but even so, that first speech I saw you give I thought was extremely powerful and the less I take away from that is this... even if you think you're not good at something... like maybe you think I'm not a great podcaster or I don't have a great voice or jingles for my show, whatever. I firmly believe that imperfect action is superior to perfect contemplation.

Cliff: I agree.

Ray: You sit around and plan it out perfectly and it never happens because you're waiting until you get it perfect, but if you're passionate about it and you share from your heart, I think that comes through and people connect with that.

Cliff: That's it and here's the deal... when Michael asked me to speak at that conference, the first thought in my mind is that that's out of my league and in many ways on a professional scale it was a bit, but it was a league I knew I felt called to play in. I knew that it was an opportunity to get me to the place to take things in my life and my business to the next level. There was no way I would say no to this opportunity. I went in with a ton of preparation and time, effort and energy. I didn't know where to direct that time, effort and energy but I put a ton into it.

If I waited until I had the proper training and knew exactly how to do slides and how to outline a talk and all those other things, I would have never gotten to the place where I would have invested my time and effort to go to a conference to teach me how to take those things to the next level, but because the opportunity presented itself it put me under the fire of saying you have to deliver something and I delivered the best to my ability what I had to offer. That's what I did and I felt good about it.

I will tell you that I've learned some things looking back that I would never in a million years do again what I did at that time, but it's only because of the education I have now that I wouldn't do it. One of the things I learned about public speaking and Ray, one thing I just recently gave a talk at The Podcast Movement in Dallas and I got the closing

keynote. There were over 500 people in the audience. It was a huge stage and if you looked to the audience you could see the sea of people, but only barely through the two blinding lights coming from the different directions in the back of the room.

This event was an amazing experience and way beyond what anyone expected. It was awesome and I was the closing guy and let me tell you something, I wasn't nervous at all. It was the first time in my life I've ever spoken where I wasn't nervous. I actually spent the entire day that day sitting in the front row of sessions listening to others talk and learning about what they had to share. All day long, including up to the hour before my talk, I was sitting in another session listening.

Do you want to know how I was able to do that and wasn't nervous?

Ray: Yes.

Cliff: It's all because of the SCORE conference, specifically one thing that Ken Davis gave to me personally called, 'checking your guns at the door'.

Ray: I love that phrase.

Cliff: He says you have to check your guns at the door and he means those things you feel like you have to bring, your props, your anecdotes and opening lines. It's the things you hold onto that you think are so near and dear that are going to help people like you from that stage. The reality is, when you're paid professionally to speak in front of an audience you are not being paid to get people to like you, you're getting paid to deliver something of value that those people need.

They either need to be inspired to do something or to be taught how to do something and that's it. So what happened was that I was able to step on that stage first, because I was prepared and I had actually learned how to outline a talk and all these other things. When I got on stage I was completely convinced that I didn't care if any one person in the room liked me. I didn't care if they thought I was fat, if they liked my shoes and whether my pants were baggie. I didn't care what they thought about my slides or how my hair looked.

The only thing that mattered to me as I walked up in front of that crowd is...

1. Do these people believe they can change the world with their podcast? If not, I'll convince them within the first five minutes that they can.
2. Next, I'll give them four strategies they can use to do it.

Nothing else mattered to me. The close of my talk two slides disappeared completely. It was a complete technical breakdown just before I went on stage. I knew there was an issue, but wasn't aware I had deleted two of my slides, one being a 4 minute audio slide and one with a slide show with background music of testimonials of people's lives who have been changed and a video testimony of a girl who stated she decided not to commit suicide as a result of our podcast.

This would have brought the house down, and I spent hours on those slides, but when I got that point in the talk I went to grab a drink of water and hit the forward button by accident and it went to the slide that followed those two missing slides. I told them that the two most important slides for my talk were missing and there was a collecting gasp in the

room, but I said don't worry I know the stories. I told the story and as soon as I was done, finishing 7 minutes early, I said one phrase to end the story and I turned and walked off stage. I didn't say goodbye or thank you, I was done. I received the first ever standing ovation in my life.

Ray: I'm still kicking myself that I wasn't there for that.

Cliff: It blew me away and I will tell you this. One thing I've learned is to have a successful talk the talk can't be about me. I really felt great from beginning to end, but my next talk will be difficult because some part of me will want the entire room to stand up and give me another ovation. I'll have to squash that because it's not the place for it.

Ray: I don't know that it will be as difficult for you as you think, because what you do in your podcast is what you're talking about doing from stage. When you do your show I can tell you aren't thinking about whether or not people like you you're seeking to help and serve them, which is what you do every time you do a show.

How many shows are you doing?

Cliff: I do Podcast Answer Man every week. I do Family from the Heart with my wife every week. I still do Pursuing a Balanced Life when I feel led to. So far I've done 30 different podcasts since December 2005 and as of today I have 3260 episodes, nearly all about an hour long.

Ray: That's astonishing.

Cliff: I'm crazy.

Ray: You're crazy productive for sure.

Cliff: The thing is that I love what I do. That's what I said earlier. I thought I loved insurance I was helping people, but I never enjoyed it when I sold auto and home and commercial because that's stuff people had to have, but when I got my life insurance license it was the first time I was really selling something, because they weren't required by the state to have proof of insurance. They weren't required by a mortgage company to have a declarations page.

Life is something nobody has to have. Occasionally someone would go through a divorce and the court would order it but that's few and far between. For me to actually sell someone a life insurance policy I had to convince them of its need and that did bring something out of me that I didn't know existed, which was my desire to sell things. I love to sell. I don't feel guilty about it. I've been to a variety of sales trainings, which have taught me the manipulative way to sell and I don't like doing that, but I genuinely love to share my enthusiasm about things that I believe bring benefit and value to people's lives.

That's why I loved selling life insurance and I loved my career a lot, until I learned and discovered for myself that through podcasting I could do something that I loved even more, and that was taking any and every experience that I have in life, anything that I'm learning and sharing that in some way, mostly through communicating, by telling my story and my own journey and experiences with my voice. Telling people something so it will entertain them, educate them, encourage them or inspire them to take action.

That's what I knew I wanted to do with my life. I started doing it as a hobby on the side and found great fulfillment and purpose in doing the podcasts and by the way, there was a time when I was doing 7-15 podcast episodes a week, while doing insurance full-time. It finally got to the place where my day job was getting in the way of what I felt I should be doing with my life.

Ray: **What motivated you to put your learn to podcast tutorials up for free and not even require people to put in their email address to get those tutorials?**

Cliff: I had created webinars and turned them into very high quality digital training products for several years. They all came from the result of people saying hey Cliff I want to hire you to do this, etc., so I took the things people hired me to do the most and turned them into digital training products and sold them for \$100 apiece.

After a couple years I realized that I have all these 201/301 level college style courses but I don't have the beginnings, the intro to podcasting, so I decided to do a webinar and create a tutorial that I know will sell better than any other tutorial that I've ever created. I decided to call it Podcasting 101 or Learn How to Podcast 101. That would be the thing that would literally generate hundreds of thousands of dollars over the next few years. I knew that it would.

So, as a result, I created a webinar and told me, you can sign up for the webinar and it'll be completely free but if you want the recording of the webinar or digital product that it'll become afterwards you can buy it, and I was selling it for \$49. So that would be my intro product that people could buy. I had a few hundred people sign up for the free webinar and a group of people that asked, why are you charging for this? I told them this was my business and what I do. I had good reasons for charging and I still don't feel bad for charging.

I probably had around 70-80 people from that group of a few hundred to sign up at the end of the webinar and prepaid me for the product that was to be made available a few days later. I had a mastermind call with my personal group that I meet with every week, as I've done since 2010, and they said Cliff why don't you just give it away? Then I gave them all the reasons why I wasn't giving it away. Then they proceeded to tell me the reasons why I might want to think about giving it away for free.

I fought the thought all the way until the end of the call and finally someone said something, which I can't remember, but I said you're right, this should be free. They said but you can collect email addresses and I said no, I'm going all the way to the other end and I'm not even going to ask them for their email address. At the time I was using Event Bright and I refunded every person that had paid me for the tutorial and sent each one an email to say, if you paid me for this I want you to know that you should have already received a refund message. For everyone, I want you to know that you're all going to get this for free. If you go to LearnHowToPodcast.com it's available to everyone no strings attached and no email address required.

That's how I ended up doing that, but one of the reasons was that I can't serve everyone. The products I have I'm only scaled to a certain place in my business at this point, so I can only handle so many people and there are also a lot of people that I truly desire to help and it's not about the money for me. This business I'm in today is not about the money, but don't confuse the fact that I like money and I want to generate more of it, but it's not why I do what I do.

I have a passion for helping people get their message online, whatever that message may be. If they can positively impact the life of another person by creating audio content and putting it on the web I want to make that possible, even for free and as a result, if you go to LearnHowToPodcast.com and click on the first video, I did this in September 2011 (3 yrs ago) and it's been viewed 71195 times.

Ray: That's amazing!

Cliff: I can tell you that about seven out of ten people who go through my LearnHowToPodcast.com tutorial, have told me they created a podcast as a result of that tutorial and had no need to purchase any other product or service from me. Some people ask if I feel bad every time I get one of those and I say no, I love that because it did what I wanted it to do. I happen to be in a field that, if you're actually going to learn how to do something from me you're going to be creating a podcast.

So, if you're creating a podcast then you're building an audience and of those people who will find your podcast, eventually some of those people will ask how you learned how to podcast and those folks are going to share my information. A percentage of the people who go through my tutorial say sure I could probably figure out how to do this on my own, but I'd much rather buy Cliff's product or services or go through his course to learn it.

Ray: Right and I know I've sent tons of people to your Learn How to Podcast tutorials and at least one of those people contacted me and thanked me for sending them to you. They stated they had signed up for your A to Z course and it was the best thing they'd done. I'm sure that happens often where people go through those tutorials and say I want more direct help so I'll be part of A to Z.

Cliff: That's right. It's one of those things that I think by creating and making it available 100% free it...

- Shares my passion for the craft
- Shows my area of expertise
- Shows my teaching style
- Shows the level of quality I put into the tutorials when I create them, and
- Shares my heart

You can hear my voice as I'm explaining things and you can get a feel that it's not just about making money, but it's about someone who cares about making a positive impact in this world. A lot of people resonate with that, so this is basically like the best business card you could give to someone is this free tutorial that I put 50-60 hours of my life into.

Ray: Yes and of course the marketing guy in me immediately breaks down the mechanics of why this works. The biggest reason is because it's the most powerful device you can use in marketing things is an incontrovertible demonstration that your thing works, whatever the thing is that you're selling. Your tutorials are that very thing, they're an incontrovertible demonstration that your teaching works. People can follow those tutorials and get a podcast online, no question.

You make that demonstration and give them a taste of results before they ever buy anything from you and many end up buying things from you because you've demonstrated and have given value, so they already feel as though they've benefited from your wisdom, knowledge and experience. They love your teaching style and you

may have already gotten them results so why wouldn't they buy Podcasting A to Z or something else. I think the first thing I purchased from you was the tutorial on how to make my compressor limiter work.

Cliff: There was a time when people said gosh Cliff, why are you selling that because I could go to YouTube and get that for free? I said "Why don't you, I'm not forcing you to buy my product?" What I'm selling is how I've hooked it up, how it fits into my system and how it's incorporated into what I'm doing. The reason why I'm creating this tutorial is because people have paid me \$150 an hour to teach them what I do which I'm selling for \$39. In my mind I'm providing a great value and yes, those people who paid that \$150 they could have also gone to YouTube and gotten it for free.

Ray: Yes, but not from you in the time that you waste trying to pursue those kinds of things like figuring things out on YouTube and I don't know about everyone else, but I don't have time to do that. I ended up buying the mixer you recommend, the compressor limiter gate, mic and tutorials that show me how to plug it all up. That's what I wanted.

Cliff: I know he will get a kick that I'm mentioning his name, but Ernie Lansford says hello. I just had breakfast with him; he came in earlier this week. Ernie is the national sales director for Mackey Mixer. He told me to make sure I said hi to you.

Ray: Ernie is such a quality person, a loving, helpful and knowledgeable guy. He's so generous I just love him.

Cliff: He is very generous.

Ray: I love the way you have built a business, speaking of generosity, on generosity, because you started out giving so much in your podcast and tutorials and you still do. You haven't stopped doing that. You keep giving and it keeps coming back to you and you have this successful business, you've just built a lovely new house and you have a studio that makes me drool every time I see photos and video of it. It's a fantastic facility.

Cliff: Thank you so much. I hope folks over the next few years will have the opportunity to come and see this space I've moved into, especially those who already know my story about where I came from and how I got to where I am today. I look at it in awe and pinch myself to make sure I'm awake and think of all the blessings.

And you're right, something you said which reminds me of 2008, which by the way, if folks haven't heard my full story go to PodcastAnswerMan.com/about there's a video that's about an hour called Our Story. I talk of my story and in there I talk also about 2008, which was a very difficult year for me. My personal income was only \$11k that year, which is ridiculous. We were a single income family with three kids and there was one person who told me how irresponsible I was, but I had others who knew otherwise.

I share that to say this... if people knew my story and saw where I'm sitting today it would blow their minds about what's possible. I remember in 2008, one guy who was my closest dearest friend and is still close and dear to me today, Father Roderick Van Hogan, which is my number one podcast to listen to, and no matter what's in my queue I always listen to him first. Father Roderick got on Skype with me and I was struggling, thinking about how I would make this work because it's tough financially.

He said Cliff, let me tell you something. You have something in your heart that is unlike many people, in that you are genuinely doing this for the right reasons. God's given you a message and I truly believe you've made the right decision and because of your heart and desire to serve people, and that that's where you're starting from, I don't think there's any way you can't succeed. It was as if God was speaking those words to me that day. It gave me the shift in my mind that says stop worrying and keep doing what you're doing.

In spite of the fact that I never had anything other than sales training and still today I don't have a business plan, just for your information. I have in my mind but I've never filled out one of those silly things.

Ray: That's probably best. It would probably just mess you up.

Cliff: What I've learned from people like you, Dan Miller, Michael Hyatt and all these other mentors, is to start with the end in mind.

Where do I want to go?
Where have I been?
Where am I today?
How am I going to get there?

Surround yourself with people who are where you want to be and then emulate and model the things they do.

I listen to Dan Miller enough that some books I don't even have to read I just know what they say. He says if you want to experience life like a millionaire you have to learn to think and act like a millionaire, so that's what I do. I intentionally surround myself with millionaires and I learn how they think and act. I surround myself with those who have achieved that level of success in their life and also, have the heart that I desire to have as well. With that I don't believe I can go wrong.

Ray: I agree you can't go wrong if you approach it in that way, that is definitely the right way to do it. It's interesting, because you shared about your conversation with Father Roderick and how you felt God was speaking to you. God speaks to us in many ways and one way is through others. Often he speaks to me through my wife.

When I initially approached you about joining the podcast mastermind group and that didn't work out, I was impatient and looking into other groups. One of the things that happened in the intervening time after I'd first sent the application to you as you were considering it and trying to figure out how to let me down gently, I was talking to my wife and she said, what are some of the reasons you want to join Cliff's mastermind group? I said "Well, because he's the expert in this area of podcasting and I want to improve there, and he's also friends with people that I want to be friends with."

I said, "I feel like I want to change the circle of people I'm associating with", as you just mentioned, not that there was anything with those I was associating with at the time, but I felt God was leading me in a different direction. I had this list of people that included you, Michael Hyatt, Dan Miller and Dave Ramsey. My wife said, so you feel that God has highlighted these people to you? I said "Yes." She said it seems like you're working awfully hard to do something that God should be doing. I said, "That sounds like the truth and it stings a little", so I decided to go with this other group I had looked at and sent you the email telling you so.

Then, within a short bit I received an email from a mutual friend of ours, Stu McLaren. He and I have been friends for a long time; he's co-founder of a company called Wish List Products who make a membership software for WordPress websites. Stu emailed me and said we're having a mastermind meeting at the headquarters of Inc. Magazine in Manhattan and I'm wondering if you would like to come and present at this meeting with all these top entrepreneurs from around the world and I'd like you to be part of that group.

I was intimidated by that, which was a signal to me that I should definitely do it. I didn't even know who the other people were and I agreed and told him I would do it. I was nervous the whole time, and I had forgotten about my ambition to meet and become friends with these various people and I landed in New York at LaGuardia, popped on my iPhone, pulled up Twitter and there was a tweet from Michael Hyatt saying I just arrived in NYC for the big Inc. mastermind meeting tomorrow, I'm so excited.

I got tingles on the back of my neck and I'm like really God, did you arrange this meeting? I had no idea he was going to be here. We ended up sitting across from one another and we had a real connection at the event and became friends. I just knew I was like this isn't just where you meet a person and you won't talk to them again I know this is going to continue. When I returned from that meeting I had a message from Dan Miller saying hey Ray, I've been listening to your podcast for a while and reading your blog, I feel like we should get together and talk sometime, seems like we have a lot of friends in common and we should talk.

By this time I was stupefied and in awe of God's plan, it was almost too much and crazy. Then I bought a ticket to Platform and went to the event where you and I met. We eventually became members of a mastermind group together, we're in this semi-secret mastermind group called The Forge, with a few guys where we meet twice a year and edify one another and talk about our businesses and how we can grow and serve more people. It's a powerful group, powerful in the sense that it causes us each to stretch and grow.

The first meeting we had of that mastermind group was at Dan Miller's house. I was walking around in a continuous state of amazement at how God orchestrated this meeting of these various people that are now my friends and that are mentors speaking into my life. The last day, everyone else had gone and Dan was giving me a ride to the airport and he told me a story about how he and Dave Ramsey started at the same time together, how they were making their plans and setting goals for their businesses when they had both been through a bankruptcy and how they both achieved the things they had set out to achieve 20+ years ago.

I was listening to that story and thinking about how amazing it was for him to share that story. He says, "Hey, have you ever been to Dave's building?" I said "No". He said, "Let me take you by there would you like to see it?" I said, "Sure." We pulled up in the parking lot and he said, "Would you like to go in and meet Dave?" I was like, you've got to be kidding me and sure enough we went inside, Dave's in the studio doing his show and he sees Dan and he comes out and spends time, we meet and get to visit. It was like a total dream come true.

I flew back home, realizing that in just a few months God had orchestrated things in such a way that I had connected with all the people He had shown me He wanted me to be connected to. It has made an amazing difference in my life, not because you are all

famous and well known, but because I felt called in a particular direction and I responded to that call.

Cliff: Your wife is amazing.

Ray: She is amazing and she will be so grateful, as she is every time because I always make sure to give her credit, because if she hadn't spoken those words to me and been so direct, I would have been trying to do my thing to make things happen, whereas instead, I listened to her wisdom and saying what she did.

Cliff: Let me share something. One of the things that I have learned over these years and God continues to re-teach me this and it's coming fresh to my heart just now, and that is that there have been many times that I would get so much anxiety and worry just following some of the most successful things I've done, especially if I've just had the most successful month I've ever had financially or finished having the most successful year I've had financially or most successful speaking event...

If I really think about it, what do I do now to take things to the next level? There is so much and God sometimes speaks to my heart and says it's not all those things you did. Yes, you did a lot of those things, those were great and you can trace back, but don't forget to look at the fingerprints that are all over this. You probably could have rested a little more, you know that whole thing, come to me ye who are weary and I will give you rest. I have big plans for you Cliff and I'll accomplish those plans no matter how much you get in the way and try to do on your own or just sit back and let me take care of things.

They will happen one way or the other and I'll never forget the time I read a book called *Three Free Sins* that Steve Brown wrote, which spoke the words of something that God was teaching me for a long time. He said, Cliff you have to get to the place where one day you just trust God and only God with your reputation. Forget about what anybody and everybody else thinks about you.

One of the things I was struggling with was saying no to people. So many people wanted my time and attention and oftentimes, the thing I needed to say was no and sometimes I didn't even have time to say it in a way that would make people like me more. Often, before I learned how to do it with more finesse I would say I'm sorry I can't, end of story. There was one guy, David Foster, who purchased something from me and said this was great, I'd like to buy this equipment from you.

I sent him an invoice and this was before I decided to take credit cards and the guy wrote me back, he was blunt and said I don't want to pay via PayPal and I don't want to write you a check, can't I just give you my credit card? I said, you can give me your check information over the phone and I can enter it that way. He wrote me back and said forget it and this happened to have been a personal referral from Dan Miller. This guy was in the Eagle's Club for 11 years and I just ticked him off.

Ray: Yikes!

Cliff: I was devastated and God said to me, you did nothing wrong, trust me and I did. I wrote back and said I'm really sorry if there's anything I can do, but unfortunately right now I don't take credit cards. By the way, two weeks later I took credit cards. I learned the lesson.

Three months later I was on a cruise with Dan Miller, who had invited my wife and family to come on this cruise. I spoke and David Foster and his wife were there. I heard their talk, he heard my talk and we developed a friendship and relationship like I can't even explain here. This guy became like a father figure to me and helped me understand the grace and the love of God like nobody has ever spoken to in my life. For two years, David was the most influential man in my life before he passed away. I remember the day he died I asked God, who do I turn to now? This guy was my cheerleader.

I say that to say that God had prepared and planned for David to speak into my life to be a personal mentor to help me overcome baggage in my life and I totally screwed up the first opportunity to meet him and in spite of the fact that I screwed up, God still made it happen.

Ray: That's the way He operates. That's a beautiful story and I really appreciate you sharing that. There's power in that and you're right, we often work so hard at doing things that God's already doing. I'm momentarily speechless by your story. It's amazing how God works to bring us to the important people and places in our lives. I look at how He's helped forge our relationship and that of the other guys in our group. In fact, speaking of our group, in a few hours I'll be having coffee with another member of our group, Jeff Goins.

Cliff: That's excellent.

Ray: He's here speaking at Moody Bible College. I will tell him that I was chatting with a fellow mastermind member. I can't emphasize enough the power and importance of associating intentionally with people, who are doing the kinds of things that you want to do and more importantly, who are the kind of person you want to be. You referenced something earlier that Tony Robbins says, which he learned from his mentor, Jim Rohn, who said you become the average of the 5 people that you spend the most time with.

That's why you and I are in these mastermind groups and we keep referring to them, where we choose relationships intentionally so we can learn to model success and have people speak into our lives. The cats out already, because at the time this episode will air, you and I have already done an interview together for your show and we've already talked about the event we're doing together. The reason there's a week difference is because I had already committed to a show for the same week you did yours. I couldn't change the order of that.

With all that being said, I don't know if there are any seats left for this event, The Platform Conference, but we're speaking together at the event in Colorado Springs, Colorado, November 9-11 and the first thing I want to say is if you haven't already registered for this event you need to. Go to PlatformConference.TV and use the promo code **Cliff**, which will save you \$100 on your admission to the conference.

Cliff then came to me with this fabulous idea about doing an event in conjunction with the Platform Conference.

Cliff: The original concept was to do a one-day business mastermind for people who have already achieved a good deal of success in their business and they're well on their way. The Platform Conference is devoted to people who are looking to take their area of expertise, whether they're authors, coaches, consultants or anyone with a message who wants to build an online following or tribe or community or develop themselves as a go-to

authority out in the marketplace. That's what the conference is about is helping people get started.

Maybe they've experienced some great success with blogging, but what's next for them? Maybe creating a podcast is the next level, which is where I come in. Maybe it's where you have all this stuff going but now you want to learn how to create effective copy that sells your products and services, that's where Ray comes in. It's people who are along the spectrum of around the beginning or in the middle of building their online platform building journey.

We decided together that we would, instead of a one-day business mastermind with 40 minutes focused on each individual in the group, we would create a workshop for people who have just finished this two-day event, taking everything they've learned and say, now they're going home and asking how they apply it to where they are. It was great to network and interact and mingle, but I wish I had someone who has expertise in these arenas for a full day in a small group to find out how it will benefit me.

Find out here's where I am now and what I have going on, what advice do you have for me if I were to pursue this? We want to help them remove the learning curve or take what they've learned from the conference to the next level or even take their online pursuits to the next level. We're going to do a one-day business workshop.

Ray: This is for people who are just getting started in this process. Don't feel like you're out of your league you won't be. The Platform Conference is for those who are getting started in building their platform and we want to make ourselves available for this day. We'll have dinner the night before, so we'll have dinner the night the conference ends and then the following day we'll get together and go after it. We have specific content and material we want to share with you that we feel will ignite and get you started in a big way.

Hopefully, it will give you fresh momentum to take your platform building efforts to the next level and then we'll answer questions and no question is too small and there's no need for you to feel embarrassed, no one will laugh at you. Our goal is for you to leave with all the questions that are generated during the conference, answered, so you can get moving.

Cliff: Absolutely. We're looking forward to it. Again, if you want to register you can do that at NextLevelStudio.TV. We're limiting the group to 20 people, because Ray and I will be the main facilitators and leaders of this. At dinner we want to make sure we're split up evenly. If we have a smaller group we can network with each other and we want to make sure each participant of this workshop has the ability to ask those questions and get their needs met.

Ray: As I stated earlier, Cliff's episode will have already aired where we have talked about this, and if you're on my email list you will have gotten an email about this, so seats may be sold out. If they are I apologize but if they aren't we would love it if you could join us, so we can spend the day together. Cliff, I believe from this group of people there will be those who go from zero to hero and build big platforms in the coming months.

I also believe there will be people who will build influential, powerful or important platforms, because it's not all about numbers and having 100k followers, but about having the impact on the people that you are called to impact.

Cliff: Yes, and one of the other things I think is important in creating an in-person or any online environment is having the ability to connect with a small group of people who are moving towards a similar journey and certainly you will be networking with folks throughout the conference, but not only will you have the opportunity to network with people at dinner and during the workshop, but this 20 people group will also be in a private closed Facebook group before and after the event.

I know I will continue to monitor those. I have a couple of these groups that I monitor and facilitate among their communities.

Ray: It's so exciting. If this is for you, please check it out and get signed up.

Cliff, I just want to say thank you for being on the show. This is the longest interview I've done and I feel it wasn't long enough, so you'll have to come back sometime.

Cliff: I look forward to it Ray and I promise, next time I'll be a little bit shorter winded.

Ray: God bless you my friend and thank you again.

Cliff: Thank you, Ray.

What to Do Now

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Until next time, I pray that God blesses you with crazy good favor, simply because He loves you!