

Hi, everybody, welcome back, and if this is your first time joining us, we certainly hope it's not the last time. If you were with us last week, you know that today is the second part of the two-part interview with my dad, Dr. Charles Stanley. Dad recently stepped down as the senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta where he served for 50 years and he just celebrated his 88th birthday. So, it seemed like a good time to sit down and capture some of the stories and memories that, well, I've heard throughout my entire life, and I wanted to share some of those stories with you.

So today, we're headed back down to the In Touch Studio to wrap up this two-part conversation. Before we do that, though, I know that some of you are familiar with my dad's ministry. Many of you are familiar with his amazing voice. What you may not be familiar with is his goal in life. From the very beginning, his goal has been to get the gospel of Jesus Christ to as many people as possible, as quickly as possible, as simply as possible. And through the years, as we're about to discover, he has faced just about every kind of challenge you can imagine and he's gonna share

some of those stories today, but throughout all of that, he has never taken his eye off the one thing he's felt God has called him to do. It has been his North Star from the very beginning, and it continues to be his North Star to this very day. So, here's part two interview with my dad, Dr. Charles Stanley. This is maybe my favorite story about my dad, and it was such a early defining moment for me. So, you had been nominated to be the president of the Southern Baptist Convention. This was the first year, and there were some people who did not you to be the president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

– 49% didn't.

– Yeah 49% of about 40,000 delegates, I think, that showed up that year. And so, we were at a particular school and the president of that school was one of the people who really did not want my dad. He didn't think my dad was qualified to lead the Southern Baptist Convention. So, they had a press conference, and we were in a big boardroom, it was packed full of the press, I mean, this was like a big deal, we were in Fort Worth, and I snuck in the

back and stood against the wall, because I lived in Dallas and I had driven over and you were on one side of the table and this gentleman was on the other side of the table. And he lit into you, I mean, it was hard for me to not wanna come across the table, and wring his neck, he was so critical of you. It was cruel, and there's all these microphones and people leaning in. And I remember standing there thinking, I was a cross where I could see your face and your face was so passive, you were so calm. I remember thinking, "is he even listening?" because this guy was literally red in the face and you were just standing there or sitting there just, I mean, it was amazing. So, when he finished Peggy Wehmeyer, I still remember her name, Channel Eight News in Dallas, leaned across the table with a microphone, and she asked this question because the election was the next day, I believe. She said, "Dr. Stanley, do you think you will win tomorrow"? And you said, and it's still emotional, with this extraordinary peaceful look on your face. You said, "if I win, I win, and if I lose, I win, because my responsibility is to obey God and to trust him with the consequences". And you could've heard a pin drop. And of course, your opponent had no

response to that, because you had entrusted yourself as you have done your entire life into the hands of your heavenly father. If I win tomorrow, I win, but if I lose, I still win. Because the reason I'm running is because I feel like this is what God has called me to do. You wanna comment on that a little bit? 'Cause I know you remember that moment.

– Right, well, it was at tumultuous sermon convention and largest convention in history, and all the newspapers, the Baptist papers for writing and-

– And the secular press they were all into it back then, yeah.

– And they found that I had been a Pentecostal and always been a Southern Baptist and on and on and on they went, and I wouldn't answer anybody's criticism that I just kept quiet. And so, I took a four by six card and I folded it and I wrote on it, wait.

– You had it with you in that meeting? I never heard this.

– I just sat that right in front of me.

– On the table.

– Yeah, so that whatever they asked me, don't give them a quick answer, just wait. And so they were just giving me a hard time telling me why I couldn't be the president, well, the truth is, I didn't wanna be.

– Well, that's the other part of the story. He really didn't wanna be.

– No.

– I mean, this was just gonna be a big hassle. You had a big church, you had a lot going on and yeah, this wasn't something you had an ambition toward.

– So, I put on there wait so that whatever they asked me, don't give them a quick answer, just wait. And so, they asked me, suppose you lose? I said, I can't lose. Well, they laughed and shoved each other, you know? And so they asked, well, what do you mean you can't lose? I said, "Well, if I win, I win, and if I lose, I still win, because my goal is to obey God, not to be the president".

– Yup.

– Dead silence.

– Yup, that was it, that was the moment. And again, as I was in graduate school and again, I'd heard you say those things, teach those things, but to watch you apply it with all of that pressure and with all the energy in the room, it really was a defining moment, I think for me in my faith, and just in terms of how I've chosen to lead, so that was me.

– And I did win.

– And you did win and they were not happy.

– No, they weren't happy. It didn't matter to me because I had one goal, obey God, leave all the consequences to him.

– Yeah. And that leads us to another topic. I wanna talk a little bit about your grandfather. So, your father died when you were nine months old, your grandfather lived in Siler City, North Carolina, and you had an opportunity to spend some time with him, he was also a pastor or a preacher and he had a tremendous influence on you. Can you talk a little bit about that time with him? Because again, it's one of those defining moments that we don't know is happening, but he sensed something in you and decided to invest in you. Those were some interesting conversations you had with him.

– I had only seen him twice before, I was getting ready to go to college. And I thought, man, I'm gonna go see my granddad has been a pastor all these years. So, he and I would sit on his back porch, screened in back porch in the swing. And I just wanted to hear him talk,

governed my life all these years on big decisions, and the sermons and on and on he went. And one of the things he said was we were talking about being obedient to God, and he said, if God tells you to run your head through a brick wall, when you get there, God will make a hole for it, which is his way of saying, he didn't interpret that, but the way I understood was, or God will assume responsibility, but whatever I do, that's obedience to him. So, I walked away and I remember riding on those old trailway buses home and thinking in my mind, obey God, and I had all kinds of thoughts then, obey God and leave all the consequences to him, I thought, well, you can't lose that way. Obey God, leave all the consequences to him. And so, I would have to say that is the statement that has governed my life, hadn't been perfect, of course, little decisions, obey him, leave the consequences to him. You can't lose.

– Right, that is the win. This is what you taught me, to be able to go to bed at night and look up at the ceiling with a clear conscience, and to know that things are good between me and my heavenly father, That's the win.

– That's right.

– That's the goal, because we can't control outcomes anyway, and every time we try to control outcomes, we just mess it up and make things more complicated. And again, here is the gentleman who in just a few days, I think, you were about 17 years old, you told me when this happened, you had four or five days with him and he left his fingerprints...

– Yes,

– All over your life. His name, you're gonna think I'm making this up, but I have a witness. His name was George Washington Stanley, right?

– That's right.

– So, your grandfather's George Washington Stanley and little did he know that that little bit of investment in his grandson's life, here we are all these years later telling these stories and quoting him. So again, we never know who God's gonna bring along, and when

there's that internal nudge to give this person a little extra attention, to give this person some of your time, again, we never know how God's gonna use that. So, switching gears a couple more times, I wanna talk about perseverance. This has been one of the themes in your life not because you chose it, but because you didn't have, well, you did have a choice, but you are oftentimes left with two options, give up or persevere. You've been through church splits, betrayal, you've had some health challenges, and as I've had a front row seat to all of this, going all the way back to Miami, to moving to Bartow, Florida, where we live for 18 months, the challenge of coming to Atlanta. When my dad came to the First Baptist Church of Atlanta, he came as the associate pastor not the pastor, and see if I get this right, and when they showed him his office, you sat down and you went to open the drawer to the desk and...

– All the drawers were locked and no key.

– All the drawers were locked, no key. and it's like, hey, welcome to the church. And so, there's so many stories related to that

difficult transition, but you've always persevered. You've always gotten back up. You've always leaned in and just kept putting one foot in front of the other through extraordinary challenges that we don't even have time to talk about, and in some cases, they're really nobody's business. But talk just a little bit about perseverance, because there are people watching, people listening, who, especially in this season are going through some really, really difficult times. And you just feel like, hey, I never get a break, it never goes my way, what's the point in praying, God's not listening, What's the point in remaining faithful, God's not responding to my faith. What do you say to that person? And where did you find the energy or the confidence to just keep getting back up and moving forward?

– Well, because I believed with all my heart, if I obeyed God, he'd help me through whatever that was, and I won't get into all those stories, but time after time after time, I watched God answer my prayers, sometime I thought, Lord, you're late, you're getting late, but he always came through at the right

time, no matter what the situation was, and I've got lots of those illustrations, and one thing also that helped me was I was excited to see what God was gonna do next.

– Even In the down times.

– In the down times, I think, okay, Lord, I've come this far, I've done what you told me to do, it doesn't look very good, but I'm gonna trust you, and I will see what happens. And without fail, God always brought me through every difficult situation, some of them looked absolutely impossible, but I thought, God, you who you say you are, I'm gonna trust you to prove it.

– Wow, can you, or will you tell the story? And this is a little bit off subject about the Easter message that you didn't have the night before Easter. Now, for some of you, this isn't gonna be very relevant, but for those of us in ministry, this is a terrifying story. And the context was, I guess you had just begun a media ministry, In Touch, had just launched, and broadcast ministry is very expensive and there

were multiple people doing broadcast ministries and they spent a good portion of their time on the air asking for money. And so in touch, it began to grow, and you were at that place where, okay, we need resources if this is gonna work, and then it was Easter.

– Easter coming, well, usually by Thursday, I'll have an outline.

– For the following Sunday?

– Yeah, so the Thursday came and I didn't have anything. it's like, God shut up everything.

– And this was Easter Sunday.

– Easter Sunday.

– This is the super bowl for us, right?

– Yeah, and Friday, no sermon. Saturday morning, no sermon. Lord, now Heavenly Father,

I'm stumbling around, trying to figure out, what am I gonna do next? And Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, Saturday night, I'm on my face on the floor saying, God, I'm gonna be horribly embarrassed. And you know that I could fill up an old sermon, but you won't let me do that. So finally, I got on the floor and stretched out and said God, okay, I don't know what you're saying, but please say it.

– Quick.

– Quick. And I wasn't even thinking about this. It was like the Lord said to me, you must never ask, but one penny on the television or radio at all, you must never, never spend any time asking for money. You trust me, and I'll determine how far this ministry goes. So, I struggled with that a little bit and I thought, okay, God, you've always answered my prayers in some fashion. I commit myself right now never to ask for a penny and I'll just see what you do. Well, I've never asked for a penny and I don't have to tell anybody how far and wide its gone.

– Yeah, but the pastors who are watching this are thinking, yeah, but what happened Easter? So what happened after you made that decision?

– And the next morning I was all fired up.

– Wow. Okay, we're about to wrap this up. I wanna just talk about something fun for a moment. You have a hobby that you are so passionate about that I think at times it rivals your love for ministry. So, talk a little bit about the hobby that God has used to fuel you and to energize you, reenergize you and allow you to see the world.

– Well, it has allowed me to see the world photography is my hobby, and I think one of the primary reasons is I'm always looking through the camera lens and seeing what God's done. I've been places from the South fold, you name it, and I'm always looking through the lens and I'm always thinking, wow, God, whether it's fall leaves or snow covered mountains or beautiful creeks and rivers and all the places I've been, when it's done, it has given me the breaks that I needed, and when I go somewhere

to take a break, I don't look back. I don't think about, wonder what's happened here, there and so forth. So, I'm very, very grateful to God that he's made that a part of my life, and it's been like, nourishment to my soul. I see God and know, it isn't photography over here and preaching over here. I just see God in all of that. And so, I couldn't be more grateful for all of the places I've been, things I've seen.

– And you're really, really, good at it. And many people have seen some of your photography, but if you've ever visited Intouch where he has some of his favorite photographs displayed, they're spectacular. And of course, you've done the calendar year after year after year, and it really is intimidating. You're so good at it, and every once in a while, he'd say, "Hey, I wanna take you on a photography trip, we'll go on a short one, 10 days". I'm like, "Wait, you're the five week vacation dad, 10 days isn't short trip," but it's been amazing, and we have your pictures in hanging around in our home and so many other people do as well. So, it's just great that you've had that, and it really has not just been an outlet, but it

really has become part of the ministry as you've been able to share those pictures and talk about some of the stories behind some of those pictures.

– And see is really not separate, because here's a sermon over here that God's given, and here's a view of something that people would pass by, never see that I see. So, it's all part of the same story.

– All right, let's wrap up with this. One of the other statements I grew up with is this. Andy, the most important thing in the world, the most important thing in the world is your personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

– That's right.

– Andy, no matter what else happens, no matter what else is going on, good or bad, the most important thing in the world, the most important thing in your life is your personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Now, many people when they hear that, they think about a

moment in time that they put their faith in Christ and became a Christian, but that's not what you're talking about. You're talking about this on going intimacy with God that it is the most important thing in our lives, so as we wrap up, would you talk just a little bit about that? And I think your story, your story growing up gives us context for why that's always been important to you, but what do you say to the person who they don't think in terms of a relationship with God or intimacy with Christ? What do you mean when you say the most important thing in your life is your personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

– Well, I mean exactly what that says, that is we all have relationships with different people and having a personal relationship with God means I'm connected 24 hours a day to the creator, to the savior, to the Lord, the master, the one who walks with me, provides my needs, gives me joy. Gives me strength to deal with issues in life. In other words, a personal relationship with him isn't something that comes and goes when you go to church, you should wake up with him, you go to sleep with him talking to him, you wake up talking to him

all during the day, you see him in this, see him in that, you're interpreting life from the viewpoint that God has taught you to look at things. And that viewpoint's gonna be always scriptural. He'll never tell you to do something that's unscriptural. So, what that does, it makes it possible for you to be happy in difficult times, and feeling confident and bold in whatever's going on, you're gonna make it, you'll get through with it. So, it provides the foundation for my happiness, my joy, and as I am a happy man, I am a joyous person. And so, I just see all that as a part of God building something in me, teaching me how to understand him better, and I come home excited about something I'm gonna show you that God's made, that God has done, so I'm happy.

– Yup, it's the most important thing in your life is just your personal...

– Relationship with Jesus Christ.

– Well dad, as we close, I would love for you to pray for us. And I received so many things from you, one of the things I didn't get is

your voice. People love your voice and I love your voice. And so, I would love for you to close by using that fabulous voice to close us in prayer, would you do that? Well, thank you for giving me this time with you and thank you for growing up and being who you are. And I couldn't be more proud of you and Beck and how God has used both of y'all in the most wonderful way. And so, when I look back and think, well, Lord, I must have made a lot of mistakes, but you must've overlooked them, Lord, because look what you've done. So, I wanna say thank you for being Andy.

– Well, I appreciate that, it's my honor, I don't know who else to be. Could you pray for us?

– Father, how grateful we are that you never change, awesome God that you are, everything your word promises you are, you demonstrated day after day after day. Would you bless this time that we've had together? May it be an awesome encouragement to parents and people, Lord who are raising their kids in difficult situations and people who just trying to decide, Lord, what kind of God you are? I pray

that all that we've talked about will help him to be able to realize you're an awesome God, gracious, good loving God, willing to take us through difficulty, hardship and pain, willing to always bring us through, blessed by your graciousness and kindness to us. Thank you, father, for this time together in Jesus name, amen.

– So yeah, imagine going to bed every night and having that voice praying over you as you fell asleep. You know, growing up, it wasn't uncommon for people to ask me, "Hey, Andy, what was it like to have Charles Stanley as your dad"? And I would always say the same thing, I would say, "I don't know because he's the only dad I've ever had". But now that I am a dad, I have so much more perspective, and of course, I have so much gratitude. As he just illustrated, every challenge we face in life is eventually just a story that we tell, and one of the things I learned from my dad is to make sure that I'm writing a story worth telling. He certainly has. And the other thing he taught me by way of example is that our current chapter, or your current chapter, is not the final chapter. It's not the whole story, so don't

give up, keep going. God always has a plan. And as my dad would say, "His ways are best". So what was it like to grow up with my dad as my dad? It was amazing, and I hope someday my kids will say the same thing about me, and if you have kids, I hope your kids will say the same thing about you. That's it for this week. As always, thank you so much for joining us. We will see you right back here next time. And in the meantime, write a story that you'll be proud to tell.

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