

# From Battlefield to Global Ministry

Featuring Edward Graham

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## TRANSCRIPT

**Gerson Moreno-Riaño:** Well, welcome everyone to the Wisdom and Influence podcast here at Cornerstone University. I have a very special guest with us today, a friend of the university, also a friend of mine, and he currently serves the chief operating officer for Samaritan's Purse. He has a distinguished military career, and a man who's just committed to Jesus Christ and the gospel, and he's also the inaugural recipient of Cornerstone's Christian Influencer Award, Mr. Edward Graham. Edward, thank you so much for being with us today.

**Edward Graham:** Hey, doctor, appreciate you having me on. I don't know about the Christian influencer part, but that award is in my office sitting behind my desk, so thank you for that.

**Gerson Moreno-Riaño:** Well, it, you know, this is... Thank you so much for being a part of what we're doing here. You came several years ago for our Wisdom Conversations event and spoke in such a beautiful way about the Lord and the gospel to our students and the audience, and then we had the honor of giving you the award. Thank you for all that you do, and again, thank you for being a part of what we're doing.

**Edward Graham:** You're involved with so many things, it's a great honor for us as well. No, I appreciate it. And I've been to your school twice now, and I've thoroughly enjoyed both visits, but my interaction with your students and your faculty, I think with your students is a true hunger, meaning for the gospel. But what I love about your staff, I don't find them... Often, I think professors, even in Christian education, are enamored by their own degrees. And that might be where their identity is, is in the education itself. But I found there that you have a faculty committed to sharing the gospel, but also raising the next generation to go out boldly. So I enjoyed my time there. Appreciate it.

**Gerson Moreno-Riaño:** Amen. Well, Edward, I wanna ask you, there's so much to talk about, but I wanted to, for you to really share with our listeners a little about your own story of how you came to faith in Jesus Christ and through the incredible family that you were raised in, and your career in the military, and now here at Samaritan's Purse. Just share with us a little bit about your own story of coming to faith in Christ and journeying and growing in the faith and what the Lord has taught you and where He's led you to.

**Edward Graham:** Yeah. Well, thank you. You know, surprisingly, Grahams aren't born Christians. I don't know if people know that's not how this works, just because Billy Graham's my grandfather. He's a very loving grandfather. He's very gracious. You're not supposed to have favorites, but if I had a favorite, it'd have been my grandmother, Ruth, his wife, who we call Tete. It means old lady in Chinese 'cause she was

born in China. But my grandmother and I were very close. Doesn't mean I wasn't close with my grandfather. He was just, he's pretty busy. He traveled a lot. But I was at a Billy Graham crusade when I was probably five years old, five or six. We were out in California. He was at Anaheim, and my mom and dad had taken us to Knott's Berry Farm, us boys. My sister wasn't born yet. And so us boys had gone to Knott's Berry Farm, and we'd bought, we'd gotten these little toy tanks. And we were back in the hotel room, and I was fighting with my older brothers. I have two older brothers, and I've got a little sister now. But my two older brothers and I were fighting, and they were teasing me. They kept saying, "Edward, you're going to hell because you're not a Christian." Well, I didn't know what that meant. I guess that's what grams tease about, is when they're kids, is that we go to hell. But I went to my mom's room. I walked in there, and I said, "Mom, you set them straight." Because I honestly thought it had something to do with my family, and, like, they were saying that I wasn't part of the family. And my mom looked at me. Now she says she doesn't think it was this direct. I was five years old, so I'm recounting what I can remember. But she goes, "No, son, you are going to hell." And so mother of the year telling her son that he's going to hell. But she would go on to lead me through the scriptures and I would give my life to Christ that night before I even went to the Billy Graham crusade and hear my grandfather speak. I gave my life to the Lord in that hotel room, but I was five years old. Later on in life, in high school... And I was raised in a strong Christian home. Dad believed in scripture memorization, would have us memorize the word. He would pray with us every morning when he was in town before we'd go to school. We'd go over scriptures, and we would pray together as a family, and then we'd go off to work, and Dad would travel. But really, when I was in high school, I started having my own quiet times and I was drawn closer to the Lord. But my dream was always to go to West Point, United States Military Academy, and an Army Ranger. I had two posters on my wall, and those were my two dreams. But when I graduated high school, I did not go to West Point. I realized West Point was an engineering school, and I hated math and science. So why would I go to an engineering school? I had a full ride to play soccer and with education at Liberty. And so I went to Liberty University for a year. But I went up to visit with my dad up at West Point. He was speaking up there my freshman year. And I realized I made a mistake, that I was in my comfort zone and that I needed to go to West Point. That's where God had called me and to go into the Army Rangers. When I was at West Point, though, I went from being an academic All-American to academic probation one semester. I had... I went to a 1.33 GPA that first semester. It's a long story, and most of it my fault. But it was during that time that I think I made that faith my own. You know, before, yes, I accepted Christ, but so often I think my identity was still wrapped up maybe in my family or the faith that my family had together. My parents did a great job raising me. They didn't force anything on me, but they led by example, they encouraged me, and they made me go. Like some people say, "Well, that's horrible." No. Like there's some things that when you live under their house, you went to church. And I got to the point where I went to Sunday school and youth groups on my own. I craved it. But it really wasn't until West Point. And I had strayed for a little bit in my walk while I was at West Point. I wouldn't say a little bit. I strayed. I was having a good time, and I was making bad decisions. And I had friends that saw me making bad decisions. And one of my friends, who's blind now, he lost his eyes in Iraq to an IED. He was on the wrestling team with me. He called me out and goes, "Edward, God told me to come talk to you, that you're not living for the Lord." And I wasn't mad, I wasn't angry, I wasn't ashamed. I was just sick and tired of being sick and tired. I was rock bottom. And he was absolutely what I needed to hear. And so him and a group of other friends, two other guys, one of them now my brother-in-law, started working with me, holding me accountable. Had me started teaching Sunday school to the professor's kids, and that was part of my accountability. But I think it was West Point where my faith became my own, and that's what shaped and prepared me for the trials of what would happen years later in combat, in leading men into combat, and now ultimately into ministry. It was at... So when people ask me about my testimony, I always mention West Point and the crucible that I

went there and my faith, and that God had never left me. I was just doing my own thing and not living for His glory until a friend of mine got ahold of me and reminded me and set me straight.

**Gerson Moreno-Riaño:** You know, Edward, when I had a chance to see you just a couple months back, and thank you for the wonderful hospitality and opportunity to visit you and meet your father, the Reverend Franklin Graham. My wife shared something with him, and I wanna share his response, and as it relates to even the story you just told us. She said to him that she really appreciated and learned a lot from the prayers of his mom for him. And she said to the Reverend Graham, "You know, I'm praying for my children as well all the time." And he said to her, "Keep praying. Those prayers don't go away. They're there. Keep praying. Keep praying." So I just wanna share, ask you to share with our listeners who some of them could be wrestling with kids, sons or daughters who maybe have strayed or are straying. And what counsel would you give to them and encouragement would you give to them? This is a very real thing. The more in ministry I am, the more I realize that families wrestle with this all the time, and sometimes they're very quiet about it, and I understand. What kind of encouragement or exhortation could you provide to them?

**Edward Graham:** Well, Dad is, was... I don't know how bad Dad was. He was bad for Billy Graham's son, let's put it that way, and he didn't meet the expectations that maybe my grandfather's friends or the men that were in the ministry with him had for Billy Graham's son. But Dad, Dad was wild and was not living for the Lord. He would later come to Christ while in the Middle East. Dad has reeled two champions in his life, in his faith, that led him to the Lord. But my grandfather even confronted him in Switzerland on this one trip and said, you know, "There's a wrestle for your soul." And that... Dad wasn't angry with my grandfather at the time, but it really started working on him that summer, and his heart started opening up to the Lord, and he would ultimately give his life for Christ. But as you have people that are, you know, listeners, and there's so many that within the church, friends that you may have, and people that go to school there, but I've known so many that have a... And I have some in family that have run from the Lord, and we're praying for them. And we often wonder if, is God hear our prayers? And the answer is yes. We know He hears our prayers. It says so in scripture. But my encouragement maybe not so much for that mother or father or grandparent that's praying for a prodigal son, and many prayed for my father. I would say it was the investment of some of my grandfather's friends that saw something in Dad, were not ashamed, didn't want anything out of him. A lot of people wanted something out of Franklin so they'd get access to Billy Graham, or some people intentionally wanted to see my father fail. But he did have some friends that invested in my dad. One, a lady that grew up with my grandmother and went to school with my grandmother in Pyongyang, that's where the missionary school was in North Korea at the time, the Korea then, 'cause my grandmother grew up in China. That's where my dad would go in the Middle East in Jordan, work at her sanatorium there, along with another missionary doctor or nurse named Aileen Coleman. Aileen would be Dad's, like, older sister almost in a way, spiritual mentor. But those ladies, they wanted nothing other than Dad, than him to love and serve the Lord, and they didn't put up with his mess, and they weren't afraid to discipline him. There was another guy by the name of Roy Gustafson, a famous teacher and missionary throughout the Middle East, and then another man by name Sammy Dagher, a pastor at a church in Beirut, Lebanon my dad's known since the '80s. Those individuals poured into my dad spiritually. And so for those that know a friend that maybe have a kid that has gone to be or is a prodigal, yes, pray for them, but you invest in them. You may have access to a relationship that the parent can't. There may be hurt or pain or Satan sows lies and seeds of dissent that don't exist, but they're there because Satan has allowed those to seep in. Well, you as a friend step in and take the time to pray with and mentor and encourage and speak truth into that individual, and that's what people did for my dad. I don't think he was turned off from his parents, and he loved his mother. He would listen. But God used others to minister to him and to speak truth. And my dad's never necessarily shared that with me. I just observed it in things that he's told me and how I see him look at

individuals. And when Dad looks at someone with affection, you know, true love and respect, it's because those individuals sacrificed and poured into him, and that meant a lot to him. And that's really what changed and opened up his heart. God was speaking to it. And end of the day, his father had to confront him. His dad loved him enough, and my grandfather, Daddy Bill we called him, confronted him with what the Bible says. You don't necessarily have to speak your opinion. Speak... There's power in the word, so just let the word do the talking. But then pray to have your kid surrounded by friends, your own friends and loved ones that will pour into them. They may listen to them. And I think that made the big difference in my dad's life. I do it, too, with some friends that I know maybe are struggling to have kids, but I have access to their kid will look at me, like, as their uncle, and I have the ability to pour into him and speak truth to him. But talk to him in ways that a parent can't. And sometimes I'm gonna be even a lot more honest. And that would be my encouragement to those that are listening. And don't stop praying. There's power in prayer, and God answers prayers. We know that. We just said that before. But my grandmother taught me the power of prayer in my own life. You know, years in combat, I saw what a prayer warrior she was, and she never ceased praying for my father but also my aunts and uncles. Satan attacked, and still attacks the Grahams. There's no special barrier or protector that comes with that name. I'd actually say it's even quite the opposite. The flaming arrows even come at more of abundance. And we have made many failures in this family. So there, we're not perfect, and we're not immune to the trials of the world and the temptations of the world. I would just remind everybody we, everybody puts their pants on the same way in the morning. So don't put your hope and trust in man or putting someone else on a mantle and saying, "That's what my family should look like." Don't compare yourself to another family. If you're comparing yourself ever to the Grahams, you're actually gonna probably think, "Well, my family looks pretty stinking good." But for those prodigals out there, my grandmother talked about it and wrote about it. She has books that she wrote about my father. And look how God's used my father. And it, there has ultimately, there has to be surrender. So that's my hope and encouragement is there's surrender, and that maybe some members of your family or friends outside of the parents have poured in and invested in that kid.

**Gerson Moreno-Riaño:** Edward, thank you. That's beautiful, and thank you for being so transparent and sharing that.

**Edward Graham:** Thank you so much.

**Gerson Moreno-Riaño:** You know, one of the criticisms that oftentimes is made toward universities, right, is that universities are in the world of theory, but not in the world of action, right? Not in the world of reality. And I've heard many people in the industry or out in the market say, you know, academics, that's not the real world, right? The real world is so different. You are on the other side. You're a man of action. You've been in the military. You've been now a chief operating officer. So in many ways, you're in the trenches, right? And have been a man of action, man of results. Talk with us, for our listeners, even our students, what are the lessons you have learned in a life really of action where you have been put, you know, in harm's way oftentimes. You've been in warfare. You've been now leading a global organization, very much involved both in spiritual warfare and humanitarian work, very much in action. What are the things that you can share with our students and listeners about lessons learned that are so important for universities to understand, right? So important for academics to understand. It's so easy to get caught up in books, in ideas. Very important, but the world of action and results, that's the world that we all live in ultimately. So what can you share with us about that?

**Edward Graham:** Well, let's put it this way. It's a good thing God never called me to be a professor or teacher, even worse, I think, a pastor. I look back at my time at the Military Academy, and I had professors there that often tried to tell me what to think. But for the most part, I had professors I think were trying to teach me how to think critically and to dive in, to look at several different aspects of a

problem. There, that's an engineering school, but I didn't... I minored in engineering. You at least have to minor in it. I did international relations and some international law classes. Technically I didn't have what they call a major. I did a field of study, which I don't think anyone to this day cares about whether I actually got a major in something, so technically I didn't major. But most of that time it viewed how many look at the world and solve problems. The other thing that West Point taught me though was to go through a crucible. I told you academically I didn't... That... You start off your first semester with a 1.33 GPA. You have a little bit of a hole to climb out of. And I did learn the power of prayer, but hard work. I also learned well-rested is well-tested. There, that is, I don't think, a theory. I think that for me, that was very much true. I was trying to do everything. I was pulling, like, two to three all-nighters a week my freshman first semester. That's not sustainable. But when I just started going to bed, like, at 10:00, 10:30, I watched my grades go up. Well-rested was well-tested. I was like, "I've gotten enough. It's good enough." I learned to prioritize, and so that helped me later on in combat in trials and doing counterterrorism. I learned to prioritize. I learned to problem solve. I also learned that there's problems I can't do myself. I gotta find a team. I gotta find someone smarter than me, and then I allow that person to go do their job, what they're good at, and report back in. To me, that's just basic leadership, finding people smarter and better than you and equipping them to do their job, and then they get all the credit when it goes well. But I got frustrated in the past when I would always have a professor trying to tell me, and this happens a lot in progressive universities or liberal thinking, where they're trying to tell you how they think, and they want you to think exactly the way they think. Well, that's not teaching our kid anything, I don't think. That's just building a robot. At West Point at the time, again, I can't speak on it now. I haven't been there or I've had some friends with their kids there, but most of my professors invested in me. They knew I was gonna go out and solve... Nine eleven happened my junior year at West Point, and so that was my birthday. September 11th is the day I was born, and so that happened on my birthday. And so we knew we were going to war and that we were gonna be solving this nation's problems and doing it in very difficult situations and always not with the right resources or the desired resources I want on hand. I can't think of a better school that prepared me for leadership. It is a leadership school. But as I look at schools and colleges and what your students are maybe going through, going through a Christian school, and I got this at Liberty because they, you know, I was required to take Old Testament, New Testament, some evangelism classes. Now, I did not know at the time when I was signing up for these classes that I was only gonna be at Liberty for a year, but I think of the foundation that God gave me at Liberty University before I went to West Point. And so for those kids that have chosen a great Bible-believing Christian education, higher education to go to, you have the lens and the worldview to look at problem-solving through the scriptures, and you don't always... There's not many schools out there that are doing that. There are some schools that claim to be Christian, but they don't believe every word of the gospel to be true. And so I find it very unique. We just welcomed some of our summer interns here. I got interns from Christian schools. I've got interns from public universities. I figured if you go to a public university and you go through an orientation program, hiring program, and you hit a home run, that means you're hitting a home run in front of professors that don't like you and are making fun of you in class. I'm interested in those kids, how they stand on and toe the line. But I also want kids that are coming in that have gone through the scriptures and understand how to and prepare to have a reason for the hope inside you and defend your faith. And so for kids at your school, uniquely gifted in an opportunity, to not only learn whether it be a liberal arts education or very specific to your job field, but through the lens of scripture and what the Bible says. That's something I didn't get at West Point, but I had to do that myself. It's not an excuse. Still have to... That's what a quiet time's for no matter where you go to school. It's what going to church is for. It's what a Bible study's for and accountability groups are for. But do your own homework and get in the Word and be always prepared to give a reason for the hope inside you. I don't have any regrets for the education path I picked, but I did not appreciate Liberty University until I went to West Point, and I look back and I wish I had paid

better attention in some of those classes. So I don't know if that answers your question, but the biggest thing for me as you look at is those professors, please teach kids, you know, how to think. That's kind of a generic term, but I love good dialogue and back and forth. You should be able to do that. I think university and Christian ones should bring people in there that don't think the same way you do, and let the students hear that perspective. You gotta be careful when you do that and who you bring into your doors. You gotta be able to counter that with helpful conversation. But I like a good dialogue 'cause that's gonna happen in the workplace. You gotta be able to have a healthy, productive conversation with non-believers, and yet don't let it, you know... Too many people are, I think, scared or compromise the gospel because they don't wanna offend, or they hear something on a podcast somewhere and they have found Christianity to be divisive. Oh, yeah, Christianity is divisive. It says, "The Word of God are sharper than a two-edged sword. It splits the divided heart." Well, if you're just splitting a divided heart, that's pretty divisive. And that's what I love about the Word of God. It speaks truth.

**Gerson Moreno-Riaño:** Thank you, Edward. You know, one of the beautiful thing as we visited Samaritan's Purse a couple months back, and I've known, always known this, but it was clearly there, and I think I shared it with you in a letter, was the commitment to the gospel. It was just everywhere. It was beautiful. And so many had shared with me, you know, we do all these things, but the focus is the gospel. It's about sharing the gospel, sharing the gospel, sharing the gospel. And one of the things that has alarmed me so much in Christian higher education, and even in general in Christianity for now a couple of decades, it's so many moving away from the gospel and sharing the gospel to something very, very different. Share with us, talk with us about that, not just the centrality of the gospel, but what you're seeing in churches in America, churches abroad, about the importance of the gospel and sharing and proclaiming the gospel, not just a lifestyle that seems to fit within it, but also the proclamation of the power of God through His Son, Jesus.

**Edward Graham:** Yeah. And great question. Thank you for the opportunity. You know, for Samaritan's Purse, I knew this growing up about my father, but my dad, you know, he's not the founder of Samaritan's Purse. Bob Pierce was, and Bob Pierce first founded World Vision. And I met the leadership of World Vision, had a great conversation one time at the National Prayer Breakfast, and they told me, and I'm not... This isn't to pick on or beat up World Vision, but they said it themselves, so I get to share it. They go, "You know, we call you Bob Pierce's revenge." At World Vision. And I just kind of smiled. I was like, "Well, thanks for the compliment." But the reason what they're talking about, when Bob Pierce left, he wanted to start an organization with three pillars that really kind of... And to this day, I talk about them all the time, my dad does, and it is what keeps Samaritan's Purse up and moving forward with the Gospel. One is let your heart be pierced and broken by the things that break the heart of Jesus Christ. That's a certain tenderness. You have to be moved by compassion, just like the story of the Good Samaritan, to, in order to go to someone in the ditch that no one else will go to, you have to have compassion. And so that Samaritan went to their enemy, someone that hates them and they hated them, but it went because he was moved with compassion. Second, God room, playing so big and so bold it was surely fail. God gets all the credit and all the glory. I think the tendency in churches and sometimes Christian schools, small, large Christian schools, organizations, they try to tackle small projects, something they can accomplish or feasibly do based off the constrained resources they have, limited resources. A church has limited financial resources. A school like yourself would have limited financial resources. That's not what God called us to do. If you look in the example of the talents and the bags of gold, he gives each servant according to their own abilities what they can handle. And the one servant that got one bag of gold, remember they buried it and didn't return on investment, and God called him a wicked, you wicked, lazy servant. God wants us to take prudent risk and go out there and multiply, whether it be financially, but also his people and the other resources he's entrusted to us. And lastly, you know, we talked about the God room and being with compassion, but the other is the widow's mite. He

wanted to build a ministry based off that she gives all she can because she believes that you're gonna share the gospel, not because... We don't take grants. If you take grants from, say, a government program, they're gonna have rules on how you can spend that money. That first rule is you can't share the gospel. Well, my father would be like, "Well then we're not doing it." The widow gives us her \$20 a month gift because she expects us to share the gospel, and if we don't share the gospel, she's gonna take that somewhere else. In the story of the Good Samaritan, you know, there's the meeting of the immediate needs, you know, the compassion, but he went to him, dressed her wounds, medicine. We do that here. Matter of fact, we have a hospital in the DRC right now fighting Ebola that we just flew in. You know, transportation, put him on his own donkey. We do that. We do transportation here. Our DC-8 cargo plane was bringing Ukrainians out and taking them back to Canada because they were taking refugees. That's just an example of time we've done that. Water, we gave them water to drink. Food, have some of the largest feeding and water programs in the world, feeding millions of people at a time. We do that all over Africa. Housing, you know, take them to the inn. We do that here. For the uninsured and non-insured after a storm, after Hurricane Helene, we budgeted for 1,000 homes. But the most important part of that story and why Samaritan's Purse exists is there was a debt paid to the innkeeper. That debt is the blood of Jesus Christ. So Samaritan's Purse does not exist to be a good works or a charity organization. That is not what we are. We're not a charity. We're an organization that is no different than my grandfather's, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. My grandfather can preach in the stadiums of the world. My dad does it, too. He just got back from Spain. He lands here in about 10 minutes. He was just in Belarus the week before that preaching the gospel. My brother Will can do it. He goes and speaks all over the world. Samaritan's Purse, we speak the gospel. We preach the gospel, but it's to one individual that's in a ditch, and it was war, famine, pestilence. Something prevented them from getting to a stadium to hear the gospel, prevented them from hearing a radio message, a TV broadcast, the government wouldn't let it air. But we can go to them with a hospital and meet their immediate needs, and we're allowed 'cause they're gonna ask you, "Why are you here?" Well, we're here 'cause your love, but more importantly, God loved you so much he sent his only Son, and that's when we get to speak the truth. So Samaritan's Purse and why we exist is to share the gospel. There is no other reason. Our staff, I tell them all the time, "If you came here to do charity, you came to the wrong place. We're all evangelists." Now, I've got the last name Graham. I've got his nose and his chin. But if you ever see me in a pulpit, you'll see that I'm kind of out of place. I'm not my grandfather. But he did call me to preach the gospel, just in a different way, and with the resources that he's entrusted to Samaritan's Purse. So it goes back to risk-taking. I think we take prudent risk here at the ministry with the widow's mite to be put into the places and to be able to share the gospel in locations that other people may not be called to or have the ability to go. That's why Samaritan's Purse exists, I believe, is to share the gospel. But when you see churches watering down the gospel, or you see schools, Christian schools drifting and shifting, and you look at their bylaws and you find professors that are not held accountable or have no rules, and because they have tenure, they can't be fired. Or we see Christian universities hiring non-believing professors 'cause they don't have to sign a statement of faith. Well, those schools are no longer interested in truth. Those schools are interested in money, I would argue, and also higher education. Their god has become the idea of higher education in the world. I'm all about education, education in the scriptures, and I do think God can use an earthly education, a liberal arts degree, an engineering degree, to be used for his glory and to spread his-- and to do great things. I need smart engineers here. I need water engineers to build these water filtration systems, design some of these community programs that we do. I need gifted people that understand international relations. I need gifted IT operators to help us navigate some of our cyberattack. We need that all here. God can use that. Education's important, but what's the point of it? Is it to bring man glory or to bring God glory? And when you see schools shift, it's 'cause they're ashamed of the gospel, and there's a movement-- and I know I'm talking too much here. Sorry. But I think there's a movement in this country right now, within the church, and one of the biggest problems is

homosexuality, and the church didn't know how to deal with it, or the church was scared to touch it, or the church did not wanna offend. One of the biggest thing that's splitting Christian schools and that the government's used to come after Christian higher education, and what is splitting churches and what we call progressive churches, is the misuse of sex and the understanding of sex is only meant for marriage, inside the relationship of marriage of a man and a woman. And that is one of the sins that I think that Satan is using to split our church, his church, God's church. And so there's many out there that strictly are not preaching the gospel at all. And it's a false teaching. It's a false gospel. Yes, God is a God of love. Jesus is a God of love, but if you believe in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, if you're a church and you believe in those, or a school and you say you believe in the trinity, we have to realize Jesus was at Sodom and Gomorrah. And that's not the Jesus that some people understand, or appreciate, that God hates sin. He loves you. He loves you so much that... He hates sin so much that he has to separate himself from it. And we don't wanna preach that. We don't wanna teach that. And we teach it that God's just a God of love, and he loves everything, and he loves all, and that's just false teaching. And so that's where I think we have a hard time with the higher education right now. Christian schools, you're seeing them fall, but there's very few good Christian schools out there that I would waste my investment and money to send my kids to, and I'm at that age right now. My kids are looking for colleges, and yours was one of those that if my daughter or my sons wanna go there, I would invest in. I've seen it, and I trust you. But there's very few Christian education out there, and unfortunately, it's the same way with churches. I'm suspect. When I meet a church, unfortunately, nowadays you kinda have to, you really have to dive in before we partner as a ministry. You have to do the eighth degree investigation, right?

**Gerson Moreno-Riaño:** Yeah. Yeah. You really do. Look how Satan's been on the move. Yeah. Edward, thank you for that, and we'd love to have your family here, so...

**Edward Graham:** There'd be great.

**Gerson Moreno-Riaño:** Well, we get them out. Michigan's a little far north...

**Edward Graham:** North Carolina, but my daughter looked at it. She wanted to play soccer bad, and she's going to a school called Mars Hill. Not... It's not a Christian school. It was a long time ago, so praying for her. That's where she signed. I got three boys left, so we'll see where God takes them.

**Gerson Moreno-Riaño:** Yeah. But, you know, your comment about love, I just had a conversation literally an hour ago with an individual who's interested in working here at Cornerstone, and this individual talked a lot about love, love, love. And I asked this person, "You know, how do you discern between the love of God and the love of the world?" In the world, so many people speak about love, right? Love, love, love. And the homosexual, gay, transgender community talk about love all the time. And so how do you... how would you help students understand that the love of God is fundamentally different than this love of the world? Just because the word's the same doesn't mean they're the same thing. I think you're absolutely right to point that out, that it's become a corrupt way of thinking, and I think part of it has been the disdain or the move away on the part of universities and churches from the authority of the Word of God in what it says and what it teaches about God, who he is, his commands, and his truth.

**Edward Graham:** And I've seen now for 30 years in higher ed how many Christian universities begin to think that culture provides a better way than the scriptures. So maybe you can comment on that for our listeners, because it's one thing for me as a president of a Christian university to say that, but I've been seeing it for a very long time, the move away from scripture and the authority of scripture to some other source of authority. My grandfather, when I was probably about 12 years old, we were watching CNN and, you know, it was a long time ago 'cause they were actually reporting the news. So it was a while ago. But he held up his Bible like this, and he always kinda... I better be careful, I got all these papers on...

but he kinda held it up like this and he goes, "Edward, I don't understand every word of it." Now this is a man that had most of it memorized. He had a good portion of scriptures memorized. But he goes, "I don't understand every word of it, but accept by faith that every word of it's true." And I had a hard time understanding that or, you know, as a kid when I was 12 years old, I was like, "Thank you, Daddy Bill." It wasn't till later in life when I was trying to answer some of these questions or you hear these debates, and I think the world today looks at love and they've confused it and they've twisted it with affirmation. That if you love someone, you have to affirm the way I think to be true. You also hear the term and all the time it says, "My truth. My truth. My truth says this." If it is my truth and everyone is saying my truth, then there is no truth. It's whatever someone believes it to be. I believe there to be only one truth where it says, "I'm the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." It is the only way, it is the only truth. This right here, the word of God, my grandfather's taught me, and that was the best gift he could've given me. Not 'cause he couldn't give me his faith. We already talked about that. I wasn't born a Christian. I had to come to Christ on my own. But he did lead me to understanding that I had to accept by faith that it's all true or none of it is. If one piece of this is false, one part of the Old Testament, one part of the New Testament, if it's false, then it's all false. It all cracks, it all crumbles. That's how this foundation works. If there's one crack in a foundation, the whole kingdom comes down. And so that's what he taught me as a young man. So I look at this idea going back to love and affirmation. I believe that if you love someone, you're willing to speak truth to them. Not in pain, not in hurt, but you confront. I mean, you can do it in such a way, not with your opinion, but let the word of God speak for itself. Quote scriptures. I've seen it time and time again what there's power in the word of God. Not in your words, not in man's words and not opinions, and if you do something out of anger, it's just gonna push someone away. But if I love my neighbor so much, I want them to know the truth. And so they're gonna hate you for it, no matter. Some people will reject the word. I can't... That's between the Lord and them. I never wanna look at a friend and be like, "Well, you never told me, Edward." I have a girl here that I've known since high school. She works for us in Operation Christmas Child. She was just on my sister's podcast, and she came to Christ, was led to Christ after a pretty wild youth. And she went back to one of her Christian friends and goes, "Why did you never tell me?" You knew the truth, and yet you never... And she was like, "You know, I'm so sorry, Gracie. I'm sorry I never shared the truth with you," 'cause we didn't wanna hurt or we didn't want to offend. And yes, Scripture is offensive. Like I said, it's sharper than a two-edged sword. It's gonna split. But we are a world that is broken, and we are a world that has twisted the idea of love and what the definition of love is. When I say I love you, I love you so much that I want you to know the truth, no matter what that costs. I don't care what your opinions are or what the world has affirmed your sickness to be, I want you to know that you are loved so much, that God sent His only Son to die on a cross. I tell people I love them all the time, but I think about that. When I say I love you, do I love that person enough? I've got my... I talked about my daughter and my three boys. My adopted son, Levi, he's from China, I love him so much. I would give my life for Levi, for my other children. But those ISIS fighters that I used to hunt that did evil, that used to blow up children, and I watched them, what they did to little children, would I give up my son, Levi, for that ISIS fighter? The answer is no. I don't love that ISIS fighter that much that I would do that. And that went back to why my heart broke and pierced by the things that break the heart of Jesus Christ. Before I could come to Samaritan's Purse, I had to be able to answer that question. Would I treat that ISIS fighter with the same medicine and the same care that I gave the little child that had been blown up in shrapnel by the ISIS fighter? Until I could answer that truthfully with a yes, I couldn't come to Samaritan's Purse and work, and that was something I had to wrestle with for some time, after years of hunting evil. And so I look at love, and I look at the example that God gave us with His only begotten Son. That is the definition of love, but God rejects sin. He gave His only Son, but if you reject Him, there's a consequence to sin, and that's hell. That is the opposite of Christ, and that is something we've read about it in Scripture, but I don't think we can ever fathom, comprehend what the dark side of the moon, you know, what that's gonna be

like away from God. And so God is not affirming our sin. He's not affirming our lifestyle. He confronts it directly, head-on, with a choice. Either reject my Son or believe in him as Lord and Savior, and that's how he confronts. And so I think I have the same responsibility to share that message and that truth when I see sin. You can do it in such a way and such a tone of voice, not to push away or reject, I believe, but at the end of the day, as soon as you preach the gospel, there will be a decision, and that rejection's on them, not you. That's the rejection of the Holy Spirit. So I'll leave it at that. But it goes back to the, I think the abuse of love and affirmation. There's a confusion there and a perversion of that, that word affirmation meaning love, and that's a lie.

**Gerson Moreno-Riaño:** Ed, let's talk about transitions. I mean, you mentioned a little bit already, and I was thinking about, I wanted to ask you about how God prepared you and the kind of things that went on in your heart and your mind to prepare you for Samaritan's Purse leadership in the role that you're in now and the kind of transition that had to go on in your heart and changes and transformation over many years to prepare you for this role. You mentioned a little bit of that now, and I'm asking you because I think of our students, but I think of people in general. We are undergoing rapid transitions in society right now, and we'll be doing so over the next decade or more, and there is a lot of anxiety on the part of people, a lot of nervousness. What's gonna happen? Where are we headed? You know, given all the changes, whether it's economics or technology or politics or whatever it may be, transition, transition, transition. So share with us how God prepared you, the work that went on in your heart, what you've learned and how, what things we could learn and what we need to be thinking about as we think about transitions, whether it's from one organization to another one or from going into ministry or out of ministry, graduating from college. We just had 400 graduates walk across the stage a couple of weeks ago. Now they're into the workforce. What... If you'd be willing to share, what are some of the things you've learned in how God prepared you for this transition and this major transition from military service to Samaritan's Purse?

**Edward Graham:** Yeah. Yeah, I've learned... That is a great question. I'm one of those ones that looks at transition and change as a good thing and opportunities, and often there's nothing wrong with it, and it's often very much needed. I look at, within the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, the transition between my grandfather's leadership to my dad, my grandfather, you know, was instrumental in technology of radio and TV at the time. He first became famous on radio, and then later was considered a pioneer on television, and some people at the time rebuked it and didn't like it. But look how God used that to reach the world for the first time with the gospel in mass broadcast. Well, my dad came along, and at the time it was the internet, and how will God... You know, a lot of people say, "Well, the internet is the place of the devil, and it's his playground." Well, the devil can use the internet for abuse and for his purpose, but so can God. And Dad took internet evangelism, and he took the gospel around the world, even to places that were often restricted or cut off. We were able to use the internet to answer questions when someone googled, "Does God love me?" And then actually take them, you know, be the first link they come to. Well, now we're transitioning to a different point, not so much the internet, but AI, and kids are getting on there and treating AI as a god or AI as a relationship and a friend and asking them questions, and they believe AI to be a source of truth. I believe there to be only one source of truth. So how do you safeguard that? And that's something Dad and I have been working on. Had a meeting today with some top CEOs of some... There are believing tech CEOs out there and people in this field, and I think you'd be amazed at what organizations they've represented or do represent. But how do you safeguard the source of truth? And so for the next generation, you just talked about your students that walked off the stage and where they're going. My generation, I understand AI. I used it in the military for targeting. I believe we're one of those ones that were behind the Chinese and the Russians when it comes to AI, especially on offensive capability. But I look at this next generation and how they've been raised to be able to problem solve. I'm actually encouraged when I meet with students on these campuses,

whether it be in a Christian school... I was just down at University of Central Florida recently, and I met with the FCA, spoke to about 100 kids. I would say about 60% of those kids that I talked to all came to Christ at the University of Florida. They didn't come there as Christians. Someone led them to Christ. A friend, a teammate, led them to Christ. That's awesome. That's not what I was expecting to hear of that FCA, that more than half of them were new believers, and it happened at a non, you know, what you wouldn't think is a Christian school. But it's this generation that is gonna solve the problems that either my generation started or we didn't solve because we didn't understand it. They're gonna come gifted and prepared and equipped through the education they got there at your school to go solve this AI problem that my father and I are... We know it's a problem, but we need the right workforce to go out there and to put the work glove on and to make it happen. But I also looked at transition my, you know... My time at West Point and my-- when I showed up at West Point to the time I got out of the Army, was I the same leader? No. I better have learned. I better have made changes. Now, at a certain point, you're kinda set in your leadership style, but I learned I was gonna make mistakes. Try not to repeat those mistakes. I learned about finding talent, equipping talent, recruiting talent, retaining talent, and letting that talent go out and do their job. But as I transitioned out of the military to Samaritan's Purse, I also realized they're not the same organization. I can't lead how I did in combat on target necessarily the same way I'm gonna lead a Christian organization. I had to learn to change and transition. But one thing about transition points, and it happens here in the ministry, and it happens in combat, we talk about this. When you transition from one phase of an operation to a next, so when you transition to whether it be in school to the career and workforce, transition is where friction points can happen. Transition is where the wheels can come off the rail, you know, and you derail the train. Why? Because we're either looking too far ahead that we've taken our eyes off the intermediate, you know, the where you're working, or that you haven't prepared at all for where that transition's gonna be, so when it hits you, it smacks you like a ton of bricks, and you don't know how to respond. It happens a lot in military. I'll give you an example. We just got done with operations on the objective. We captured a high-value target. Now it's time to exfil, to get on the helicopter, so you have to go out to a helicopter landing zone, find a secure place, and we're all high-fiving 'cause we just had a great, you know, a firefight. No one got hurt. Everyone lived, and we got the target, and we go out there, and no one's pulling security. No one's in the right head space and timing, and we get ambushed, and we lose a guy or guys because we weren't-- we didn't transition well into the exfil phase of the operation. You need to plan accordingly, work off that plan knowing that no plan survives the first contact. You gotta be flexible enough to make adjustments and to change some things, but at least have the plan and be prepared. Transition is great and is needed, and you have to transition to be successful. But if you haven't prepared for it or if you're not flexible enough during that, that's usually at those points in those transition phase in your ministry, in your career, your job, your education, that's where things derail. It could be temptations. It could be where do you go find your source of truth. You finally go through a crucible during one of these transitions. You don't know what to do, and you try to rely on your own understanding. I think that happens a lot in education. We rely on your own understanding. What does the scripture say? Don't rely on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. So during a transition phase, if you want the Lord to direct your path, that's the... don't huddle, you know, around yourself and bring your arms around the problem set, that's when you need to open up, and that's when you need to go to the Lord, go to your accountability group. So I learned that from transition phases. That's when you need help. It's when your head kind of needs to be up and looking around, and needs to think a few steps ahead. And then be prepared to change and adapt based off what you see going around you or you won't transition well. I don't know if that's what you're looking for.

**Gerson Moreno-Riaño:** That's great. Thank you. But those are the things I learned coming into the ministry. Thank you. And, you know, you made a comment earlier about limited resources, and I

remember that when I first began my administrative leadership career, I had a mentor called Vern Clark, he was the Chief Naval Officer in oversight of the US Navy and, and he was a distinguished professor at the university that I was serving in. And he came up to me, I'll never forget it. He said, "Young man, I want to mentor you. It's usually very expensive, but I'll do it for free for you." And for many years, Vern Clark would meet with me every semester. What a gift. And I just, I grew to love him and appreciate him. He spoke at my inauguration here at Cornerstone University. But I'll never forget something he said to me, and I wanna ask you to comment on this, Edward, and just give us sort of insight, leadership advice here, insight. He said to me, "When I first came to the Navy," he said, "we had the worst morale, the lowest morale in the entire US Navy in its history, and yet we had more resources than we had ever had in history." And I had to solve that problem. And he said it was amazing how many individuals never saw all that they had. They only saw what they didn't have. He said to me, "Remember that in your leadership. You always have a lot. Do a lot with it because you always have a lot. You have more than you think probably, and more than you probably need." And I've tried to keep that front and center because one of the temptations I think of leadership in leadership or in service is just to think about what you don't have, right? And to fall prey to that. You shared a little bit about that already about limited resources. Just give us your leadership thoughts on that, on limited resources, but the reality is that we have a lot of resources. How... and how do we do great things with the things God has given to us and change our perspective from limited to unlimited?

**Edward Graham:** Yeah. Well, I know... I don't know Vern and who you were talking about, but I think that was great advice, and it is a perspective that leaders will often find themselves in. Even though I came from an environment in special operations and the task force I had had a lot of resources compared to the conventional army, they are still limited. You're solving very complex problems in a dynamic, ever-changing environment, so even the resources that you may have been entrusted to when you started planning it, by the time execution comes along, they're no longer appropriate because it changed on the ground or the location changed and now they're further away. So you had to... It goes back to adapting. I believe at Samaritan's Purse, it goes back to our founder believing in God room, that we wanna be part of problems that are so big, and we wanna tackle big problems that we know we're not doing it. It's these problems like, oh, man, like, Lord, I don't know where to start, but all right, I trust you. And you think about when they walked around and marched around Jericho, there's only, like, one person that knew how that was gonna end. Everybody else was like, "What in the world are we doing? How do you... How are we gonna defeat this nation?" Well, God tackled those walls and brought them down. I learned a long time ago, if you look at Peter when he walked on water, that if you wanna be part of a miracle, you gotta get out of the boat, meaning you gotta get out of your comfort zone if you wanna walk on water. Everybody's comfortable inside the boat, especially if you're in the storm. Be with your friends, be dry, be safe sitting in that boat, but Jesus is on the water. The church is on the water, so if you wanna be going to where the church is, where the word of God's going, you better get out of that boat and get out of your comfort zone. But I think it's God room. So often people come to churches or ministry, or a business in your career, and you look at what is in front of you and what is, all right, what do I have? And that's what you try to solve your problem with. Well, that's not living in God room. All right, God, like, I'll do that. I'm gonna show them, I'll take this step of faith. And I think you have to plan prudent. There's careless mistakes. There's... In the military, we used to use these terms. They don't use them anymore, and I don't like it. I think they should go back to gross and simple negligence. I can deal with simple negligence here at this ministry because they were trying to take a risk and it didn't work. Gross negligence is something different. That's just carelessness, stupidity, lazy. Those, I have no tolerance or time for that in ministry, and we'll remove that person from position and find those people that aren't afraid to take risk. Often in ministry, I think we're surrounded by people that are afraid to take risk, and I don't think it's biblical. We just talked about the talents and the bags of gold. I believe it's

biblical to take prudent risk with the Lord's resources. He entrusts the widow's mite and his volunteers. We have an army of volunteers. The safe thing to do with those volunteers that go out and just like, "Here, just sit here and we'll be ready for you, you know, if we need you." No. The risky part is actually putting them out there, having them doing chainsaw work, tree removal. Now, we train them, we equip them, but the whole point is to invest them to go out and give them opportunities to do the work that God's called them to do. We put our staff in sometimes challenging, difficult locations. I have staff, like I said, working in the DRC fighting Ebola right now. There's a lot safer places than fighting Ebola. But going back to that idea of the limited resources and that's all you see, what I'd leave you to here last, and I don't know if your friend Vern prescribed to this, but in the military we learned something called mission command, and I like mission command. The idea of mission command is that my boss or me as a boss to my subordinates, I don't sit there and tell them, "This is how I want you to do it." That's like micromanaging may be another example of that. What I look at is like, here's the problem. Like, here's what I see. I need... Can you go solve this? Here is your resources. Go out, plan it, and come back and tell me if you need additional resources. And a lot of times in the ministry I can say, "Yeah, I can give you that," or, "You know what? I can't. We don't have that. Go solve it." And then I don't sit there and make them and direct them and take the reins and move them around. No. I give them broad left and right limits and a task and purpose and I let them go do their job. And then I trust but verify. I follow up if I need to. That's mission command kind of in a nutshell, and I think when you're in a limited resource environment, that's how you need to lead. Give them the resources, but give them the ability to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes. If you're in a zero defect type of organization and then you put them with very limited resources, you're not gonna be part of God room. You're not gonna accomplish miracles. You're gonna have people just doing little tiny projects. Now, God can multiply. He can multiply your little minnows, but let's go put some big massive salmon down on the plate and let them multiply that. So in order to go get those big massive salmon, you gotta have a team that understands mission command. So that's my idea of limited resources. I love the advice he gave you. If, I think if my dad was dealing with that idea that this is all I have at Samaritan's Purse, you know, when Dad took over it was just him, just one person. It would still be that way if Dad was looking at himself as the only resource. That's not the way God, or my dad looked at it. He lived in God room.

**Gerson Moreno-Riaño:** Amen. Edward, thank you so much for spending an hour with us and with me. Means so much to us. Thank you. May the Lord bless you and continue to bless you in your ministry and your dad and all that you're doing. It's just been great to speak with you, Edward. Thank you.

**Edward Graham:** Well, Doctor, always great seeing you. Tell your wife hello and your family and, uh, big fan of the school.

#### TRANSCRIPT NOTICE

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