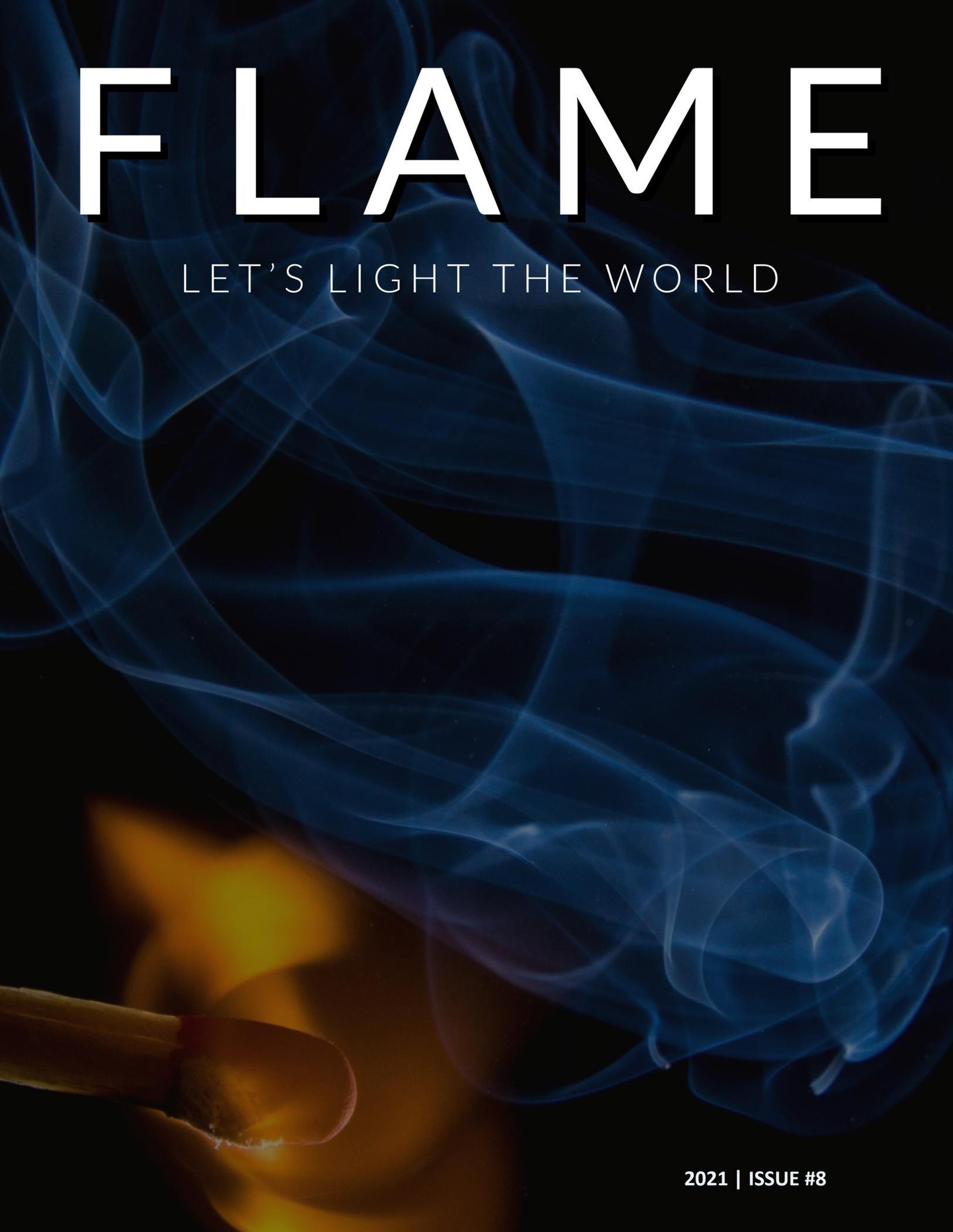


FLAME

LET'S LIGHT THE WORLD



2021 | ISSUE #8



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Message



Friends,

We cook our food and feed a family with a FLAME.

We light the way in the midst of darkness with a FLAME.

We honor fallen champions and heroes with a FLAME.

When we spark a FLAME within our community, our businesses, relationships, and everyday communication, we see results that are profitable, enjoyable and victorious.

F.L.A.M.E. or Faith, Love, Appreciation, Motivation, and Empathy, change the course of the things that matter most in our lives both personally and professionally. We empower our own success and that of those around us when we go to business and life with F.L.A.M.E.

I encourage you to pour into others, and allow wisdom and value to pour into you through the lens of FLAME. Now, please enjoy this edition of FLAME, which is powered by Collaborative Solutions Group, our supervising editor Christina Bartolotta, and all of our amazing contributors!

About CSG

Personal and professional growth only happens after YOU start growing. Taking action is key when your expectations are to fully develop skills and enjoy meaningful results. There are six core elements that we focus on to help you grow in to the best version of yourself. These elements do not exist on their own. Each element influences the others and how you balance these interactions is vital to personal growth...

Opportunities For Growth

1. Growth Events:
2. CSG Private Coaching
3. Club CSG —Group Coaching
4. CSG Online
5. AIM
6. The Master Within
7. Solutions From the Huddle
8. Critical Strategy Guide

FAITH



A Lesson in Teamwork

Spring is in the air, the azaleas are in bloom and business is back! The storm, known as Covid-19, which enveloped our region and nation is giving way as the sun once again shines brightly on business and commerce. As I meet with business owners and managers who persevered through those difficult months, most, if not all, cite the strong team they have developed over time as the key to making it through the pandemic. Teamwork is essential to the success of any successful business or nonprofit organization.

A few years ago, at a Leadership Conference hosted in part by Collaborative Solutions Group (CSG), I shared how fortunate I have been in my career having mentors, coaches, and friends who have both inspired and counseled my professional development. At the conference, I relayed, “If you ever see a turtle sitting on a fence post - you know he had help getting there.” I recall looking at the faces of those in the audience as they reflected on that statement. You see, I am that turtle and any success I may have had is directly attributable to all the people who have helped me along the way. That – and I have always surrounded myself with a great team!

Titus Bartolotta from CSG, another speaker that day, loved the turtle story and we both spoke about the leaders who have motivated us to reach past the limitations we sometimes impose upon ourselves. As Titus and I spoke about the traits of effective leadership and creating that winning team, one very important quality of a leader on which we agreed was humility – checking that ego at the door.

Much like the turtle on the fence post, there once was a very prominent frog living at Lake Murray near Columbia. This particular frog owned a great many lily pads there. One day he heard about all the activity taking place at Lake Norman with the development, fishing tournaments, and the great quality of life. He knew he just had to be a part of North Carolina’s premier region. But how could he get up here?

He could not hop his way up I-77, even with the new Toll Lanes! It was simply too far. So, the frog struck up a conversation with Mr. Duck. The frog admired the way Mr. Duck could take to the air landing pretty much where he liked. The frog was a wise and shrewd little guy and asked Mr. Duck for a favor. “On your next trip up North, could you drop me off at Lake Norman,” asked the frog. “How could I,” inquired Mr. Duck.

“You could put a stick in your beak and I will hold onto it with my mouth,” explained the frog. “Together as a team we can sail through the sky and I can go to live at Lake Nor-

A Lesson in Teamwork

man!" So off they went, the duck and the frog, high above the ground.

Just then a flock of geese flew by. One of the geese saw the majestic duck and the little frog. He admired such teamwork and exclaimed, "Look at that! Who could have ever thought of such a plan? They must have been visionary and wise beyond their years...such creativity and imagination. I wonder who devised such a plan?"

The little frog beamed with pride. "It was me...it was me," he shouted as he opened his mouth and plunged to the ground below.

The essence of teamwork is to leave self-adulation and egos at the door. Everyone likes to be acknowledged for a job well done. We like others to recognize the talents and skills we bring to a project. However, the most successful ventures are when we all work together for a common goal, supporting each other's actions, without striving for personal acclaim. Past President Ronald Reagan used to have a paperweight on his desk in the Oval Office that read – *"There is no limit what can be accomplished, if it doesn't matter who gets the credit."*

It was a lesson the frog should have learned before he took to the air. It is a lesson each of us should try to practice in our daily lives.



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LOVE

On Joy

What I've found through my work is that, often, the biggest thing standing in the way of our most joyful lives, is ourselves. In a world that is filled with so many terrible injustices, deciding to prioritize our own joy can sometimes feel a little bit selfish. We can convince ourselves that it's not that important in the grand scheme of things, or that we aren't worthy of living a joyful life. But the truth is, joy is powerful, and we all deserve more of it.

Why is it so important?

Studies show that joyful people have less chance of having a heart attack, maintain a healthier blood pressure, and tend to have lower cholesterol levels. There's research to prove that joy boosts our immune systems, fights stress and pain, and actually improves our chance of living a longer life. Being joyful could quite literally add years to life - don't you just think that's the most awesome thing ever?! If you have joy, I bet you do.

Add to that the fact that joyful people tend to be more patient, kind and creative than their peers. Studies have shown that they're also more likely to have healthy, meaningful relationships that last. Given the current state of affairs, more kindness, patience and joy all sounds pretty good, no?

Lots of people tell me that they know joy is important, but that right now, they're too busy focusing on their careers to prioritize it. I get that idea, I really do, but what if I told you that the research shows that joyful people are 40% more likely to receive a promotion at work? The science shows that our brains work significantly better when they are in a positive state, as opposed to a negative, neutral or stressed state, and so prioritizing your joy could be the magic ingredient for your career success.

All we have is right now

That's it. Right now is all we have; we get one short and precious life here on planet earth. None of us are guaranteed anything more than what we have right here and now. We aren't guaranteed better jobs or bigger houses or perfect health. And so if we can't have control over all of our external circumstances, aren't we better focusing on finding our joy, right now?

Regardless of what is going on around you, you can feel happier, be productive, attract success and enjoy yourself during the process. When you shift your focus and the way you think, your perspective changes. When shift happens, your life changes. So, get your shift together.



Over the next several months I will attempt to guide you through understanding how to put a great marketing strategy together. As always if you need help, contact me at laura@team-csg.com or pick up the phone and call at 704-699-4099.



enjoy
the
little
things

APPRECIATION

Faith Starts From Within

The textbook definition of faith is pretty straight forward:

1. *complete trust or confidence in someone or something.*

"this restores one's faith in politicians"

2. *strong belief in God or in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual apprehension rather than proof. (source: Oxford Dictionary)*

But in reality, faith is much more complex. Faith requires a relationship. Faith is about finding comfort in a relationship with someone or something other than yourself, comfort to a level where the relationship is stronger than the influences that may act upon the relationship.

Faith isn't a belief that there won't be obstacles or challenges. It is built on a foundational belief that the bond between the two parties strengthens the two parties to the point where they can weather the storms, face the challenges, and overcome the obstacles. The parties hold to the belief that these things don't just happen to one, they happen to both.

In a world full of people jaded by the experiences thrown at us, it's easy to see why people lose faith; Faith in God, faith in each other, even faith in themselves.

When we look at the definition, the word "complete" plays a starring role. It's also the most likely failure point in faith. Doubt is a cruel and parasitic organism. It burrows in and eats away at the foundations of a relationship. Sometimes it eats away at the foundation under one party. But it can just as easily eat away under your own foundation.

Doubt is like that little bit of grass growing up between two giant slabs of concrete. Over time, the roots grow and strengthen. It always starts out as nothing more than a tiny seed. A little rain, a little sun, things move and shift, and then one day... the concrete cracks. Not a big crack, just a little one. It is in that smallest of cracks that the grass sees an opportunity and starts to spread that way. As it grows, it slowly forces the crack to grow bigger and bigger, giving the grass more and more space to grow and spread, soon this causes more and more cracks. Before too long, the entire slab of concrete is broken up and overrun by the grass. Which just started out as a single, tiny seed that had a little rain and sun.

Doubt is a poison within a relationship. It colors the way you interact with the other party within the relationship. It can even spread to the other party if they see the change in you.

When doubt has worked its way into a relationship, the concept of complete trust or confidence is gone, nowhere to be found. Without "complete" the trust and confidence is really just "hope". Hope is not a bad thing. But it isn't faith.

Faith Starts From Within

Doubt in one's self is always the hardest to deal with. Often because you just don't see it until it is too late. It makes you question the decisions you make and the relationships you enter into. It makes you question whether you are even capable of making decisions or entering into relationships at all.

Walling yourself off to the outside world doesn't stop doubt any more than the mass of the slabs of concrete stops the grass. Amidst all of the turmoil of life, it is important to work on yourself. Recognize the seeds of doubt as they appear and remove them before they find fertile ground in which to grow.

In the absence of the seeds of doubt growing into weeds, faith in one's self can blossom and grow. Without starting from a foundation of faith in yourself and your own decisions and determinations, you cannot grow faith in others.

With faith in yourself intact, you are then in a stronger position to begin to build relationships that grow from faith in others.



Matt Swanson is the owner and founder of [MS Digital Solutions](#), a digital marketing agency that focuses on helping businesses make the most of their digital footprint. 15 years in the media industry and experience a variety of marketing roles has prepared Matt for helping businesses understand the possibilities and processes of a strong digital presence. Matt is married to Jen, his wife of 19, and together they have 1 son, Ryan, and live in Mooresville NC.



MOTIVATION

Overcome Limiting Beliefs So You Can Envision Your Future & Make It Happen!

Are you thinking big enough? Does your vision stretch you to accomplish what may first seem impossible? You hear people say all the time that you must see and believe it first. Okay but are you thinking big enough? To achieve extraordinary things in your life, you must be willing to think big. You should dream big and must envision your goals to make them happen. That means being able to see every aspect of your goal down to the smallest detail.

Some struggle with visualization because they are fearful of thinking “outside the box.” Do you have limiting beliefs that cause you to pause? That may make the joy of purchasing a new home more realistic if you just get an apartment because you feel you will never qualify for a loan anyway. Limiting beliefs can impede visualization and stop you from reaching your potential in life. If the above questions seem daunting, then you must answer some others first. Only then can you move forward to truly envisioning and mapping out your goals for the future.

Don't let limiting beliefs hold you back! Identify, eliminate, and replace your limiting beliefs with ones that support your success. Then can you move to envisioning the life of your dreams. Here are some questions that will help you overcome your limiting beliefs:

- What are your most difficult circumstances that you believe are holding you back from the life you desire?
- What positive beliefs would be better for helping you attain your goals?
- Now for each negative belief that's holding you back, come up with a positive belief that **would** support your desires.

When you have actively come to terms with your limiting beliefs, you can then start working toward bringing your goals to life. You also feel happier and more fulfilled in your journey. Carrying out these steps will help you bring your goals to fruition and make your visions a reality:

Close your eyes and imagine your future:

Where do you see yourself in the next 12 months, three, five or ten years? Try to think as far ahead as you comfortably can. What have you accomplished? Do you see yourself married with a family, do you have your own home, an amazing career, or a successful business? Try to have as vivid a visualization as you can. Down to the emotions you are experiencing opening the door to your new home or holding your first-born child for the first time.

Challenge yourself to **let go and imagine every detail**; you will find that the **details will inspire you**. Don't be afraid to really allow this life you see to play out in your mind. It's okay to let your core values influence your life story. Remember this is the vision for your life and how your future self will evolve. You have the magic wand or paint brush and only you can

Overcome Limiting Beliefs So You Can Envision Your Future & Make It Happen!

determine how you get to your destination.

Write down everything you envision:

Now comes a *crucial* step that will help to validate and solidify your vision. Write it down! Don't hesitate to use as much detail as you can when jotting down what you remember. Write down the most important achievements that you focused on, but also the details about each. What matters most to you?

Note the things that stood out in your visualization. Did you own your own home? Were you raising a family? Did you have a job that made you happy? Were you making a comfortable income? What other details stood out? How did you feel?

Create a list of bullet points:

Do this for each separate achievement that you wrote about, following your visualization. For example, if one of your achievements is "I will start my own company," then make sure you list things like how you came up with the concept for your business, how you felt when you moved into your new office space, and how great it was to have your family celebrating with you.

Break each of these bullet points down into goals:

For example, if one bullet point was to save for a down payment for the home you visualized, how can you get there? Create savings goals that will allow you to work toward having a down payment for your home.

Lay out your plan:

Once you have a list of long term, medium term, and short-term goals in mind, you are better equipped to create your plan accordingly. There are some basic questions that you may want to consider as you are creating your plan, such as: How will you achieve these goals? How will you bring the life that you visualized into existence? **Divide your large goals into achievable steps.** You must do this so you don't overwhelm yourself and abandon your goals all together.

Start achieving goals today:

Overcome Limiting Beliefs So You Can Envision Your Future & Make It Happen!

Put your future plans into action today! Vow to take a small step each day toward the future you have envisioned. **Move forward every day**, even if you are only taking a few small steps at a time. Every step is progress, no matter how small they are the victories are worthy of celebration.

Remember to revisit your plan regularly:

Visualizations, dreams, and hopes change over time. Revisit the plan that you laid out and the future goals that you dreamed up on a consistent basis to ensure their relevancy over time. It's okay to change your dreams and goals based on your needs and desires as they change. Remember a common phrase is "life happens" and ironically, you are in a better position when you accept early on that change is inevitable.

Visualizing "the dream" is an excellent way to bring your goals to the forefront when you're trying to determine what matters most to you. When you can picture what your desired life is like, you can better determine the goals you need to set and achieve to get there. **All it takes are small steps toward your desired future, and please hear me now, when I tell you that you can achieve the life you deserve and really MAKE IT HAPPEN!**



Tonia Blackwood is a confidence cultivator, motivational speaker, and seasoned professional with over 25 years of combined corporate and entrepreneurial experience. She is driven to help people tap into the power that lies within them. Her love for recruiting led to coaching employees by empowering and inspiring them to reach their goals. Certified as a Life Coach, specializing in confidence and mindset, she gets to do what she loves every day by training, coaching, and empowering those she encounters. Having a Triumph Story of her own to tell inspired the Arise & Shine: Stories of Triumph Podcast Show where guests share their journey and the God moments that brought them through it.

EMPATHY



Focal Point

Our focal point matters far more than we can even imagine.

Think about this, when we consider that the focus of our perspective informs the clarity of our perception and when we are able to see the details of what's before us, and around us we are able to impact our reality.

How often do you seek a better path by looking even harder in the same direction? I'm not saying that you should not look thoroughly at something, but I am saying that when we hope to shift our future and what's possible, we must be willing to look elsewhere or more over, we must commit to looking at the same space from a different angle.

Seeing through the trees to see the forest doesn't always seem to make sense to me. Imagine if you were in the middle of the forest and you were surrounded by trees. Now, lie down on your back! Yeah, completely flat. Go from standing upright looking forward to lying on the ground and just look straight up. What do you see? Are the trees in the way? Are you distracted by tree bark? Do you see the open sky? Do you see the calm of the blue and perhaps birds flying and showing you that there is an altitude greater than you currently enjoy and live in?

When was the last time you cleared the dust from your eyes?

When was the last time you looked in a new place to find your solutions?

When was the last time you looked not harder in the same place but looked from a different angle?

When was the last time you stopped looking ahead, stopped looking backwards and didn't allow yourself to be distracted by what's to your right or left but paused and looked UP?

Your clarity, your ability to have the kind of attention to detail that breaks strongholds, removes obstacles and allows you to love from where you are to the heights of what's possible within your potential.

Often we move the things that are in front of us when we feel they are "in the way". What if you realized that "YOU" are in the way and committed to MOVE yourself? You have greater influence over loving yourself than that which surrounds you and it would only require humility and an understanding that perhaps the place you're in, the position you've taken, the angle in which you're looking at things simply needs to be shifted.



Titus Bartolotta is the founder, president, and lead consultant for Collaborative Solutions Group, the founder of The Lotta Foundation, and Co-Founder and President of Business Leaders Unleashed. Originally from New York City, Titus has spent the majority of his life in North Carolina. Titus studied business management at York Technical College in SC, along with having completed both culinary arts, and semi-inary training. Having worked as a manager & executive for several companies ranging from small to large businesses. Titus has spent the better part of his life staying teachable and gathering knowledge at every stop of his career. It was in the city of Charlotte NC, that

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MINDSET



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