*Newborn Promise Podcast*

*Episode 22- Carlos Whittaker “Being a Moment Maker Dad”*

Audra Haney: Thanks for tuning in to the Newborn Promise Podcast, a production of Graham Blanchard Incorporated. You are listening to an interview with Carlos Whittaker called Being a Moment Maker Dad. For today's show notes, transcript, and more information about our book, Your Newborn Promise Project, please visit grahamblanchard.com.

Well, welcome back to the Newborn Promise Podcast. I'm Audra Haney, and it may not seem like it in the long late-night hours of trying to soothe your newborn or calm your toddler's tantrum, it may not seem like that child's first day of kindergarten or even graduation for that matter is far away. But the cliché is true that with children the days drag on slowly, and the years pass so quickly. How do we make the most of the time we are given with our children? How do we engage in and embrace the short assignment of shepherding little souls in the day in, day out? How do we turn the mundane into memories? In this episode, Carlos Whittaker, a dynamic speaker, writer, and as he calls it, hope dealer, shares about his book Moment Maker, and how fathers can turn mere minutes into lasting moments. Here's our interview with Carlos.

Carlos, thank you so much for being with us today. We are so excited to have a Dad. So as we begin, would you mind just giving us a snapshot of what the Whittaker family looks like these days?

Carlos W.: Yep. I am the father of three and the husband of one. My wife Heather and I have been married. So easy to remember, because we got married in 2000 for this reason, so now every year it's just, oh, what year is it, 2017, so we've been married for 17 years. It makes it really easy. And I've got three wonderful kids. I've got a 15 year old daughter, a 13, almost 14 year old daughter, and an 11 year old son. And yeah, we live in Nashville, Tennessee. We homeschool our kids. Kind of, they kind of go to a homeschool school two days a week, so they kind of get the best of both worlds, and they can still travel with me, because I travel the country and speak. And yeah, gosh, we're just doing what we can to maintain order and chaos and all the lovely things that come with parenting. It's a blast.

Audra Haney: And you guys are adoptive parents, too, right?

Carlos W.: Yeah, we adopted our son, Josiah, when he was an infant, he was six, seven months old, when we got him from South Korea. And so that process was about a year and a half to two years long, and we flew to South Korea, gosh, 10 years ago, to go adopt him. And so he's the one child that we adopted, and he's so funny, because as adopted parents, after, to be able to go, oh, you're adopted parents, but we kind of forget we adopted him now. He's always been part of the family, but he just fits in so well, and he's such a gift to me. We had two daughters, and [inaudible 00:03:32], so I always wanted a son, and I knew that if we tried for a third, we'd make another daughter. And so I said, I'm going to get me my son. And so we adopted Josiah in South Korea, and he's such a blessing to us.

Audra Haney: That is so wonderful. And you're surrounded by a lot of love, I know. You are also blessed with a lot of creative talents. I know you guys are a busy family. For those in the audience who are just learning about you for the first time, tell us a bit about what you're involved in.

Carlos W.: Yeah, I am, professionally speaking it's such a hard question when someone sits next to me on a plane and asks me what I do, because it seems [inaudible 00:04:11] and change and shift as season come by, but as of right now, I am an author and a speaker. And so I travel full-time, speaking on stages around the world and proclaiming really a couple different messages that are kind of built on my family's ethos. The first message is, a message of being moment makers, and what does it mean to be moment makers. How can we model our lives after Christ and be moment makers. And then the second, which is a new platform I'm standing on, is a book called Kill The Spider. That's really helping people and families dig down, kind of test the symptom management that a lot of times we focus on. Like how do we stop spinning per se, and getting past these issues to the routes of the issue and helping people do that.

And so it's actually been really cool to see how we can incorporate both of these messages within families as well, because our kids, as they're growing up, we as parents are the one that can see these issues firsthand and can really step in and pray that our kids get past the medicating behaviors and to some of those core route issues. So that's what I do. I travel around. I guess I like to summarize myself as a hope dealer. Like I'm a hope dealer, I'm a hope swinger, it's what I hope to do. Every conversation I have with people, I hope to give them [a similance 00:05:40] of the hope that we've been gifted as well, so ... Yeah, I was a full-time worship leader for 10 years in a church in Riverside, California, called [inaudible 00:05:49] Church, and then I moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where I was a pastor at Northpoint Community Church with Andy Stanley, and I was there for three years. Kind of overseeing the creative process, and then moved from there to Nashville, signed a record deal and toured with Integrity Music for a few years, and then stopped singing and signed a book deal, and now I'm doing this. And who knows what I'll be doing in two years. It might be something completely different, and that's how the Lord has built me. And yeah, having a blast, bringing hope in whatever way I can.

Audra Haney: Well, that's sounds so amazing and like a lot of fun at the same time. I do want to talk about both books, because they're both excellent topics for parents. Our audience is mainly parents who are still in that early fog of parenting. But in that I love the idea of being intentional moment makers. Talk to me about how this can really play out even in the early years of parenting.

Carlos W.: Absolutely. I think you have to parent on purpose. It's lot easier to do that these days. There's so many parenting books, even compared to 15 years ago when we had our first kid. I can't even imagine how overwhelming it is with the amount of information that people get. What I like to tell people is, listen, there's going to be a plethora of information of how you're supposed to raise a newborn, and what you're supposed to do. At the end of the day I think all that's fine, but really what you need to be doing is setting yourself up as a parent, even when they're infants, to be moment makers with your kids, to do three different types of moments that I break up into. To create moments with your kids, to receive moments, and to rescue moments. And those three types of moments are, there's just a plethora of opportunity for us to do that. And again, all that simply means is creating moments on purpose.

I'm talking to the Dads out there. And I'm talking about the Dads, but right now specifically to Dads. You live in a home where maybe you're working, you're traveling, whatever it may be. So a lot of Dads out there, at least for me, I just wasn't built for that newborn phase. I almost dreaded it, coming home, because I was like, I don't know how to handle this. I don't know how to handle this. And so, what I was doing, I would find myself making excuses to leave, and making excuses to ... And what is happening is, I was not on purpose creating moments with these infants, and spending time. And I saw a complete and total shift in change from my first daughter to my second daughter. When we had our second daughter I said, you know what, even though this is uncomfortable, even though I don't know how to do this, I just was raised with brothers, I don't know the daughter thing, I don't know the sister thing, I don't know how to do this. I'm going to just dive all in and get uncomfortable and do it. And the rapid acceleration of relationship I had with my second daughter absolutely dwarfed what I had with my first, because I was around more on purpose. And I was getting uncomfortable in that mess of creating moments on purpose.

And so for newborn Dads out there, even up until one and a half or two years old, dive in. Get into the grind, get into the mess, and you're going to see an acceleration in your relationship with your child that you won't get if you just kind of are hesitant with making, creating, and receiving moments with your kids.

Audra Haney: That's so great. And you know, so much is happening in that newborn brain and heart, even if it doesn't seem like it in the moment. I love that example, and that you're embracing that. Carlos, do you mind diving a little bit deeper into those receiving moments, and rescuing moments as well?

Carlos W.: Yeah, absolutely. Creating moments, those are just the moments that you're making on purpose with your newborn, and you're just there. You're just looking in their eyes, and there's all sorts of spiritual, emotional, and mental development happening there. But those received moments are, I like to talk about, we as parents receive moments from our kids when we slow down and when we pause. We live in such a culture of everything is coming so fast, and we move so fast that I think we're missing so many moments that our kids have to give to us, because we're not slowing down. I talked about a lot that 100 years ago, the average that a human being would travel is three miles an hour. That's how fast a human being walks, it's three miles an hour. Now we go so fast, that even with Instagram, and now our kids have Instagram accounts, and our babies have hashtags, and all these things. We're posting things, and sometimes I think we can look at our Instagram account and it looks so beautiful. But then we start thinking to ourselves, I don't know if I actually lived up to the part that my social media is making it look like I lived up to.

And so I think as parents, one thing we've got to do in order to receive moments form our kids and to show them how to receive moments, is to slow down, to pause, to rest, to put the technology down, to turn the TV off and just spend time together. In my family, even now what we do is, when we go out to dinner, we have 100% phone free, not only for my kids, but for me and Heather as well. And we have phone free date nights where we go to Chipotle as a family and we don't have our technology. And it's incredible, the depth of the conversation that we get into just because we don't have something to distracting us. And obviously that's a little bit different when you have a newborn, but again, it's the same thing. When you got out, leave the phone at home, you're going to find that you're going to start receiving moments and seeing more things that your newborn is doing when you're not reminded to [inaudible 00:12:03] with that latest ESPN [inaudible 00:12:03] football push notification that comes up.

So those are the received moments that I think we can step into. And then, the rescue moments, gosh, man, I'll tell you what. When we adopted Josiah at six months old, seven months old, I thought I was rescuing him. I thought I was rescuing this infant from, oh, [inaudible 00:12:23] parents who's going to come into my home, and gosh, and inevitably happened was that he just kept rescuing me over and over again on a daily basis, allowing me to be the father of a son, something that I was never able to do before him. And so the rescue moments I tell people all the time is, we have to get a little bit uncomfortable. And so really the only way to rescue in parenthood, and the only way to allow our kids to lean in and rescue with us is to risk in order to rescue. So, what does that mean? That means getting a little bit even more uncomfortable than you're getting on a daily basis. If you're living as a parent in complete and total comfort, then I tell parents all the time, then you're not living in a state of rescue. You're not able to rescue anything when you're comfortable.

The only way that rescue happens is when you get a little bit uncomfortable. If you're not uncomfortable, it's probably not a rescue. So I think that plays out in various ways, as you're parenting, again, even your newborn, kind of going into that first story I was saying, with my first daughter I was so uncomfortable that I would stay in safety and let my wife be the most uncomfortable, and she was the one that would step in and rescue way more than me. But then what I realized that I wasn't doing that, when I got a little bit more uncomfortable, I was able to step into more moments of rescue, and also parts of me were being rescued, when I stepped into rescue as well. Parts of me as a Dad that I didn't even know existed, parts of me as a Dad that I didn't even know needed to be rescued.

Because I want to be the strong man that just provided for my family, and sure, that's great, and I think providing for our family financially is one thing. But I also think that stepping in and leading my family in prayer, and praying for my infant, and praying some things that I believe will produce fruit and benefits the older my child gets, because I risk in order to rescue, and prayed over them when they were infants, when they were so much younger, those are those moments of rescue that I'm talking about. And those are those moments where we've got to risk something just a little bit in order to step into rescue.

Audra Haney: That's powerful. And you've kind of touched on this, but as a Dad, you do have the role of a spiritual leader where you've got to step out and be intentional. But also as a child of God, you obviously have to surrender to His leading. Talk to Dads about what that looks like, and how this plays out in your parenting.

Carlos W.: I think this is something that I'm super passionate about with Dads, in particular as we are called to be spiritual leaders of our family, obviously that doesn't mean that we're called to, like, lord over our family. But what it does mean is that we are called to be the brightest example. And this is what I tell Dads all the time is that, in churches I travel to, in just all the ministries I go to, honestly in America at least, it is the women and the mothers that are stepping forward to lead spiritually their families. And a lot of the Dads are just sitting back and allowing that to happen and be like, my wife's praying a lot more than me, and she's doing the latest Beth Moore bible study, and she's got her women's bible study group that she does, and I just think that's irresponsible for father to just coast and relax in that.

And so I am absolutely vigilant in proclaiming out loud that no, we need to be visibly praying for your children, visibly praying for our spouses, visibly doing it, if there's one thing I remember about my Dad is, if I'd wake up at any time between five and seven in the morning when I was in high school, there was never a morning I didn't wake up and didn't see my Dad on his knees in his office praying for our family. And I believe that we reaped so many benefits because of that. And now, have I gotten to that point? No, I'm not a morning person like him. But what I do do is, I make sure that my kids see my praying, I've got a daily prayer that I pray every morning, and I make sure that my kids see me doing that, and that I invite them into that. And I just think it's vital and super important that from jump street, from the moments that you become a father, that you do that. You step into your baby's nursery, and before they go to bed, don't just let your wife put the kid to bed, while you're sitting on the sofa watching ESPN, no, step in there, step into the process, pray over your child.

I'm telling you, this isn't just like some Christian-y thing, like, oh, we should just pray. No. We're living in a absolute and true battle, and in war. And if you read scripture, the enemy is out to steal, kill, and destroy. And to steal, kill, and destroy families. And we, as fathers, it's our responsibility to pray over the kingdom that God has given us, to provide protection around the kingdom that God has given us, and it is an absolute vital part of being a father that we must step into this season of leading our family spiritually.

Audra Haney: Yes, I love that. And I know it's going to encourage so many Dads out there. I'd love to hear about your new book, Kill The Spider, which is such a cool and intriguing title. It actually came out this month. What was your heart and passion for writing that book?

Carlos W.: I had spent, after my kids had grown up a little bit, I have spent the majority of my Christian adult life just trying to defeat the same bad behaviors over and over again. Speaking of fathers and being a father, I was actually on my way to this therapy retreat counseling kind of place, to work a little bit on some these issues. And I called my father at the time, so this was about six years ago. And I called him, and I was like, hey Dad, I'm going to this retreat. I'm not going to have my son for a few days, but I want to let you know. Anyway.

So I don't really know why I'm going, I just keep seeing that behaviors, and my Dad stopped me and said, "Listen, I know you're in a rush, but let me tell you this quick story." And I'll give you just the caveat and quick nibs of what he told me. He said, "Carlos, when I was in my twenties, teaching my first revival in Panama, this woman came forward at the end of the first side of the revival during the [imitation 00:18:57]. And she walks forward, and she was about 80 years, her name was Miss Amidas, and she asked me, "Pastor, can you please pray that the Lord clean the cobwebs out of my life?" He said, "I thought that was very eloquent and poetic, so I prayed that." And he goes, "At the next time of the revival, she cam forward again, and she asked me, "Pastor, can you pray that the Lord cleans the cobwebs out of my life one more time?" And he said, "Well, I prayed that last time, but sure, I'll pray it again."

So he prayed it again. And he was sure that the last time of the revival, Miss Amida's come forward again, and I thought she was going to come forward and say, He cleaned the cobwebs out, but instead she asked me again, "Pastor, can you pray one last time that the Lord cleans the cobwebs out of my life?" And he said, "I looked her in the eye and said No. We're not praying that tonight. Tonight we pray that he kills the spider that's producing those cobwebs." And he's told me this as I'm driving into this retreat. And he says, "Carlos, I've watched you your entire life. Clean the cobwebs. You're fantastic at cleaning the cobwebs. Five steps to a better marriage. Three steps to budgeting your money. Four steps to how to stop this addictive behavior. And you become a master of cleaning the cobwebs, but you're there to find the root of the behavior and kill the spider." And I'll tell you, it changed everything for me. And so, at that moment, I knew that my journey wasn't to just fix my medicating behaviors, but to find the root behind it.

And so, that's really what the book is about. It's helping people stop [inaudible 00:20:20] and get to the root behind it. And so I'm basically sharing with people that a spider is an agreement with the life that you've made. And here's the thing that really can lean into being a parent is, a lot of these agreements that we make, a lot of these spiders, the birthplace happens when we're children. A lot of these agreements and these lies that we believe happen when we're children. And so we have to dig back to this lie, and what's happening is cobwebs are medicating behaviors that bring comfort to those lies. So cobwebs, again, that's I'm drinking too much, or I have an extra [inaudible 00:21:00], so those are the things that we try to fix. But those are just the cobwebs. Those are the root. And so that's what the book does. It helps people get to the root and really kill those spiders. And at that point, all of these medicating behaviors, all of these cobwebs, they go away, because the spider's dead.

And so, this is a book, it's a little heavier than my Moment Maker book. It's still written by me, so it's got some fun in it. But what it hopefully does for people is allow people to find the spiders, kill them, and then as you're raising your kids, what we found is that my kids now, they can identify lies that they're believing a lot sooner than having to do it than having to do it in therapy when they're 40 years old. Now they're 15, and they're able to say, you know what, I feel this, I feel like I'm the most irresponsible child in the home, because you're always yelling at me to pick up my room, and I always, do this and that. But they now know that those are not true, and those are lies. And they can defeat those lies a lot sooner in life than wait until they're in a double [inaudible 00:22:07] like I am.

Audra Haney: I'm so excited to read that book. And you know, before we wrap up our time, you've already shared so many great things, I'm just wondering if the Whittaker family has a favorite scripture that you apply to raising family and doing life together?

Carlos W.: I think for us, 1 Peter 5:7 has been something that we have leaned into as a family. Because again, we talk about a lot that we live in a broken world. And so, since the world is broken, we're going to need these promises that were promised in this scripture. And it says that the God of all grace [inaudible 00:22:45] restore, establish, strengthen, and support you. And then it adds a caveat at the end, which I wish it didn't, but it says, after you suffer a little. And so, what is verse is then for us is, allow us to know that suffering is going to happen. But the great part is that Peter writes, "a little." It doesn't say, "after you suffered a long time." It says, after you suffered a little. And so, these four promises that God is going to personally restore, establish, strengthen, and support you gives us so much breath as a family.

So whether we're going through a great season as a family, whether we're going through a rough season as a family, this promise of restoration, of supporting, is something that really keeps us breathing, it's like an inhaler to an asthmatic. And it's something that has given us a lot of support, and hopefully that scripture can give some other people some support as well.

Audra Haney: Carlos, thank you so much for your time today. Wow. Such an awesome insight and encouragement that you've shared. Would you mind just closing out our time together praying for these listeners that are new parents, and long to be moment makers and spider killers for their family.

Carlos W.: Absolutely. Dear Jesus, we invite your spirit right now. I specifically invite your spirit right now into every room or car or situation that any new parent is listening to right now, Jesus. And I believe, Jesus, that as I am even praying this right now, and as I'm even feeling a breath in my lungs, because we were inviting you into this conversation, Jesus, I pray that the new parents that are listening to this podcast, Lord, will feel that same breath. And so what I specifically ask for, Jesus, right now, is that they sit under the promise, Jesus, that you will and you will and have and promise to restore, establish, strengthen, and support them in this time of parenting when they may have no idea what tomorrow holds. Because we don't. And so I just pray that for today, whether it's sickness in their child and they're worried, whether it's maybe their marriage, it doesn't look or feel or taste the same as it did before a kid, Jesus, that you be the glue, may you be the tie that binds these families together, that holds these families together.

And so, Jesus, I thank you, and I pray for strength for these parents, not only strength, but joy, and may the joy of the Lord be their strength. For it is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Audra Haney: Thank you so much for joining us for this spectacular interview with Carlos. Remember, you can get today's show notes, transcript, and 20% off our book, Your Newborn Promise Project, with code nppodcast at grahamblanchard.com.