

Keith McFarland Interview Part 2

Dr. Rick: [00:00:00] All right. Welcome again to the Think Orphan Podcast. I'm Rick Morton. Excited to have you joining us again today for Part Two of our interview with Keith McFarland. Keith is the co-author of *In Pursuit of Orphan Excellence*, with my co-host, Phil Darke. And we, we had a great opportunity to sit down and just a really rich interview.

If you haven't listened to Part One of the interview, I would invite you to go and make sure you catch that. Cause there's just, there's a lot that, that's there to unpack. And so we just had a great time with Keith and, and, and, and it was so rich we, we just wanted to keep going with the interview and, and felt like this would be, something that you would enjoy and something you would benefit from.

And so, without any further ado, join Phil and me as we continue our conversation with Keith McFarland,

Phil: [00:00:47] There's one thing that we, we have had people, not criticize necessarily, but ask questions about what we actually meant. With you, you talked about it with the fatherhood in the, you know, the fathers and mothers and when there's no father there's something missing.

And some people misinterpret that to say, well, single moms, what they can't, they can't raise kids. Like is, are they not good enough? What's what's going on there. Right. And people, as you, as we all know, people will misinterpret what we say and what we write especially, 'cause we see it with social media all the time.

People put in black and white different things and yeah, 20,000 or 20 million, or 20 however many billion people we have, we have that many different interpretations. But I just want to give you a chance to, I know you we've talked about it and I know you've talked about it on some different things, but, but what would you say to somebody who said, well, I'm a single mom and what are you saying to me that my kids don't have a chance?

What, what's going on here?

Keith: [00:01:47] Wow. That's a good, boy oh boy. Here's the reality, most of our churches, whether we're in Uganda or America, that, that fatherlessness is an issue across the board.

And so, most of our churches are being filled with mothers and their children. For the most part, I think that's a pretty steady trend around, right. So there's a pandemic of fatherlessness in a reality. And so, you know, just being real about that, can those mothers raise those children? Absolutely. Does God tell them to raise those children?

Absolutely. Do they have the double difficult job of having to be mother and father, mom and dad? Man, absolutely. And that's why there is an absolute need for support for the widow, and you can use that broadly in lots of different contexts, and the fatherless. And for his body, the church to come alongside of that.

Right. And for men to step up and be fathers to the fatherless in appropriate ways and appropriate context. So you know, that that's a reality in the local church. I would just transfer that over into an orphan care type of situation. Cause nobody's going to say, I think in the church, you're not saying all that it's ideal, right?

It's ideal. It's not ideal. That is a reality of the brokenness that we live in. But good news, Jesus redeems the broken right. Good news. He is the father and, and, and that doesn't change. Right. He's the perfect father. And so when we're talking about, about the fatherless, you know, especially in the book, what really, what we're challenging is the pretty common model of just saying, you know, and this is really what, what I found along my, you know, my trip, my journey, and you've seen it is okay, there's a great need.

Let's get 1,500 or a hundred kids and let's bring in mothers and, and we're good, right? Because we're caring for the children. We're giving them food and we're giving them shelter. and yet not, not being uncomfortable with the reality that man, but that's only half the answer. Like these kids, the boys, especially, but the girls, too. It's both, they need, they need a father.

They need to what God has uniquely designed that fathers input in on an identity level, on a, just a spoken level, you know, across the board. So, So, so what would you say, Hey, Keith, is it wrong for a single mom to adopt? Say, no, it's not wrong. I like some of my good friends in Uganda are single moms and they've adopted, God's called them to adopt. What we're saying is, but let's be real.

Let's be honest about the baggage. Let's not promote that as, as the ideal or as, as if that's going to be easy or easier, right. Any adoption, or no adoption is easy. but let's go into it honestly. You know, that there's going to be real challenges and issues that are going to be faced because there isn't a father in the home.

And that's just because that's God's design. And of course, let the church rise up and come alongside and support that. You know, and I've, I've had a couple of kids that I am like a father to. They're being raised, adopted by single moms and Uganda. So it's, it's, you know, and they'll tell you it's not ideal.

You know, but in those situations, God absolutely called them to that. so.

Dr. Rick: [00:05:06] So, so Keith obviously, that answer, like you're not afraid to talk about the hard stuff, right? You're not, you're, you're going to lay it straight and, and another one of those hard topics. but something that is, I think, you know, really near and dear to your heart based on, you know, what, what I, what I've read and, and the conversation we've had is this idea of national leadership and, you know, and the,

the, the fact that, I mean, part of what I love about your story is that is the fact that you, you know, part of your training and your preparation to do what it is God's called you to do is, is sitting under the, the leadership of Ugandan nationals and of, of others who, you know, really poor, pretty deeply in you.

And I think it's something we all, you know, we all believe in. You write about it in the book. Man, I'd just love for you to unpack a little bit of, of that. Like your, your passion for that. Your, your thoughts about, you know, raising up national leadership and what you, what you personally have benefited from and where you think that fits for us in any orphan care community.

Keith: [00:06:18] Oh boy, that's a good question. And very relevant. I think there's a reality that no matter what culture we're a part of. one of the things that we you have to fight for as a people is the unity in the context of diversity and the beauty of the bride that Christ has purchased from every tongue, tribe and language, every nation.

And to recognize that in that there's just a great leveling that takes place. That it's not me, I'm a, we're up here. We're up here. We have it, you know, because Jesus is going to come right in and say to anybody who thinks they're up here, that actually you're in the wrong place. You're going to be on the bottom.

Right. It's the one down that's going to be up. And it's the first that are going to be last. And you know what? Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the poor. And that's gotta be all of us. Right. And I think, you know, as I look a bit internationally at missions, or especially in the context of orphan care, it's not uncommon to find Americans that we know better.

And we have the finances. We have the education, we have the special specialties. We have the, Just the plan, you know, whatever. And whether we're aware of it or not often to have a bit of a cultural superiority that can come into various contexts. And, the reality is, is that we desperately need to be able to see our poverty, and, and what we have to learn and to receive from

the global Church. From others. All right. And so, so if, if that's not our posture, then any discussion on national leadership is just going to be sort of an up here discussion, like an ideal. It's gotta be driven by something much deeper. This isn't even an option, right? Like we absolutely have to see people from

the nations that are being raised up or, or, empowered to lead . And for us to be able to give and receive. And I think, you know, in that context, we're, we're, we're givers and receivers, all of us, no matter where we come from, you know. And the little lady deepened the village, you'd think, what does this lady have to offer me?

She has so much to offer me. As I come with this posture. So, so commitment to national leadership is really just recognizing that, that this is God's calling. That as God's people, we have to see nationals empowered and raised up and, and that there's beauty there. Right? And so a genuine partnership is only possible where

where that's a reality. And, and I think, you know, one of the hard things Rick or Phil, you know, is that a lot of times we're not aware of the cultural baggage that we can bring. it's sort of like this hidden baggage and we've gotta be aware of it. And so in a Ugandan context, we've gotta be of the Ugandan cultural baggage of the big man mentality and the chief mentality and the power hold mentality are.

But guess what? That's in America, too. It's the human heart, you know. Even though it's, you're going to see it playing out there in different ways. You know, and for us to be able to, to, to also recognize that, that we have our same things. And, and so to be able to come into that context, to be aware of the baggage, whether it's colonialistic baggage, like in Uganda, and to be able to lay those at the feet of Jesus. It's Okay, Jesus, you know, you died from multiethnic bride, and we want to deal with, with these realities. And we don't want to stereotype because I think a lot of times I see a sort of a stereotype start come, well, we would raise up national leadership but you know, these ones can't be trusted or that money will always just bring corruption or, you know, those are real things.

But are they really being talked about? And I think one of the things that we love in genuine partnership is, is genuine relationship, genuine accountability. And seeing team raised up because that's what Jesus does. He's sending out twos. So you've got you, you've got the plurality of leadership. And I think that often we throw our eggs in, a Western CEO, big man, top down structure, which not that it can't work, it can with the right oversight and mechanisms.

But also be willing to move outside of some of those thoughts into building leadership teams and seeing what that looks like. So those are just some of my . . .

Dr. Rick: [00:10:53] And I'd love to press it and just, just even a little bit more there and, and think, you know, because I, because I do think as we struggle to, as we struggled to do this there's that there are those, you know, innate things that we like, we default to our, you know, to our norms. We default to our, you know, almost these instinctive reactions that come out of, of like how we've been, how we've grown up. How we've been inculturated, like what we've grown to expect to be. Right. and, and I just be like, yeah, practically. what's like, what's the Lord taught you about just holding that in check and, and, and how have, how have you learned to maybe think differently or conduct yourself differently in order to, in, in order to, to bring that kind of collaboration and that, that type of, you know, communal spirit with, you know, with, with folks from other, you know, they're coming from other cultures.

Keith: [00:11:52] One of the privileges I had really early on was just being able to sit under a Ugandan who, I wrote this in the book, he's probably the one that this man I've ever met. Just a joy to get, to be fathered by him as an older, mature, godly, man. Who's been in ministry to the fatherless for many years.

And really just to, to invite his input, say, you know, what do I do in this situation? This is how I want to react. For me, I'm I'm a, I'm a reactor. Okay. I'm going to, I'm going to respond. I'm going to re I'm going to say it really quickly. and I've got to catch that, check it right, hold it back and then submit it.

And I think that's the hard part is being willing to submit my thoughts, my feelings, my perceptions, and just start asking others, how do you see this? how do you see, how am I being perceived? No, that's something that we almost don't like to go there. But we really have to go there cross culturally.

It's a hard question because I've got to, I've got to deal with those things. You know, how, how should I respond in this and dealing with conflict? I think there a lot of books, when you, if you, you know, if you, view, go on Amazon and look at cross cultural conflict, right? You're going to see lots of different books come up because how do we maneuver?

We're not, we're not speaking the same thing. We're not hearing what, what we, what we think that we're hearing or others aren't hearing us as we think they are. So just learning to communicate, it's like learning a different language. And a lot of ways. And, and then really my best Ugandan friend, Paul Kusuubira and my, one of my ministry partners and close brother, just being able to pour my guts out to him, you know, like, Oh, and then it's that question?

What do I do? You know, how, how should I, how should I respond here? So just being willing to, to actually submit.

Dr. Rick: [00:13:38] Yeah. And I don't want to miss, I don't want to miss in what you said as well, and just want to point out for folks to just kind of ponder. That takes time.

That takes intention. That takes the, it takes, it takes careful work to do. And, and I think in, in the, in the urgency of the tasks that we see in front of us, we become sometimes so need driven. And so, you know, so overwhelmed by the, the reality of the need around us, that we, that we, we perceive the urgency there, but we don't perceive the urgency in taking time and being careful, and, and, and in, in doing those deliberate things that you're talking about. And I think, you know, sometimes maybe even the enemy uses that illusion to, you know, to really, hamstring us at times because we, because we do become so captivated by, you know, by the urgency of things and, And I, I just, I appreciate the fact that, you know, you're, you're writing about and, and modeling and showing something in ministry that is, that is careful and considerate.

And, and, and, and that really does lead to, a community spirit in the body and, and to good healthy collaboration.

Keith: [00:15:02] And you're right. It definitely takes, it takes time. And that can be a hard one. Right. Because when there is so much need and we want to meet that need and we want to bring change, and we're the ones with the plan, especially if it's, if it's Americans that are involved right. It's boy, we're, we're running. We're going. And then, you know, come on board versus it does, it takes time to invest in people. And that was actually one of the things that drew me to New Hope was the first 10 years in the ministry.

It was just small. Very family oriented. Jay Dangers. Who's an American though he grew up in Congo, so he had a bit of an African lens, you know, with Jonnes Bakimi, and, and that's, that's what they did. I mean, they just, they lived it out together. There was mutual discipleship, mutual encouragement, and then starting to take in kids together and working through all those hardships together, but taking the time.

And the thing I love about Jay is he would consistently want to know Jonnes, what do you say? How do you see this? What do you think? And so even the model, how we structured what we do hasn't been a very traditional in Western sense. It's much more African in that

way. So it does. It just takes, it takes time and willingness to listen and learn and grow, but that's really what you need.

Right? Cause that's going to be the ownership on the ground. That's what's going to impact the community. That makes it our thing versus those peoples, you know, and even when we got to New Hope, you know, there were just no fences and we'd say, you know, where are the fences? And I would hear the, if the community isn't our fence, we shouldn't be here.

And not granted that can't work in certain areas of cities and crime and other things. And we did put up a barbed wire fence at some point, but that was to keep out cows from eating our gardens. But I love just that statement, the community as our security fence. Wow. You know, and that's not, that's going to come through a commitment to whatever country you're in. Ugandans, you know, Uganda in that context and, and seeing them raised up.

Phil: [00:17:08] Yeah, Keith, you know, it's, it's so there's so much there. I mean, as Rick's been talking about, you know, it's like, there's so much to mine in these answers, but, I do want to focus on a couple of, first of all, I just want to mention folks, if you haven't read the, the book. Again, it's In Pursuit of Orphan Excellence and the national leadership chapter Keith wrote with Jonnes and Jay and it was a team product of those men.

And I'll tell you what, there's so much wisdom in every chapter, but that, that National Leadership chapter is worth the price of the book. And I'm just gonna tell you right now to Keith and I don't make really any money on this thing. So, I'm not trying the whatever. It's, it's, we really believe it will help you and because of the people who wrote this book with us. So that was one thing. The other was, I will just tell you folks that so many of us go on these trips go on to different countries, go into different cultures. Even if it's inner city. Right. Like if I go to the Tenderloin district in San Francisco or Brooklyn, New York or South side of Chicago, it's gonna a very different experience for me.

Right. It's a totally different world. Different culture. Different everything. Right. We go into countries that we don't speak the language. We bring an interpreter. Or, we learn the language, which takes time too, right? Yet, we go into countries where we don't know the cultures and we go in and think we can just go in and do stuff.

Fact of the matter is we need an interpreter for that, too. And I'm just going to use a quick example. All of that. I, my, organization, we did some training over at New Hope Uganda with, with a team and we did some training together, Keith and I did some and, and my COO Dave Rudko did some DISC training on the leadership principles and, and I said a few times a word that I knew wasn't going to translate, but I had no idea what word it was going to be. And I said, silo, like, we need to get out of our silos. Right. And if you're a Jim Collins fan, you're gonna use it all the time. I knew it wasn't going to work, but I also knew Keith was there as my interpreter.

So he comes up to me. I think it was after the first one, he let me suffer through the first session, but then he goes, Phil, say gardens. And so I, instead of silos, I just changed it to gardens. And then it was like, the room lit up like, Oh, I actually understand this white man. This Mzungu isn't some weirdo using a word that I have no idea what he's talking about.

And it changed every, but that's such a simple little thing. That because Keith is fluent in not only, you know, languages and you know, of these different places, but the culture. And that does take time. That takes that take and we can't shortcut it. If you try to shortcut it, you're going to step on somebody's toes.

And the thing is, most people won't tell you. They won't tell us that, that you're stepping on the toes. So, with that, Keith, you know, you have over the last, what 18, 15, 18 years been at New Hope. But recently over the last few years, since we've written the book, there have been some leadership transitions.

You know, we don't get younger. We tend to tend to age in our lives and people tend to step away from positions and things happen. But, you know, what have you experienced over the last few years with those leadership transitions and what are some lessons you've learned since writing the book? Since you know, writing with Jonnes and Jay? Actually, what have you learned about the leadership, these things that you've been talking about through those transitions?

Keith: [00:20:38] Hmm. Oh boy. We've definitely been able to grow forward in just this reality of national leadership. And national leadership in relationship to good multicultural partnership. And, you know, you can read the book and you can read Jay and Jonnes's story. It's beautiful. Like they have been brothers. My relationship with those men I've loved it.

And, and with those that are there. But the reality is, is that as we walk the journey it is hard and we have to fight for relationship. And it's grounded in Christ. And even after walking 20 years, you can, still hurt each other. You can still bring mistrust, you know, as, as Westerners. You can still do dumb things. Or pay the price for other Westerners who do dumb things, you know. Or, or the gamut.

Right. You can fill it in. And so, you know, we've been in a very unique situation where we're moving from transitioning from founders, who are your directors really into the next generation of leaders. You know, you've got a 30 year old ministry, that that's needing to, to, to grow forward. And so how do you do that?

And I think some of the challenges that we faced and, you know, and I think it's pretty common, whether it's in founders' ministry or just in transitioning in leadership, would be the reality of what does it mean to raise up and empower right. And release others, to, to run in what they're gifted in or called to, or in the area of ministry that they're in. You know, openly accountably and in a relationship, but to be able to actually release others to fail.

I don't, we didn't mention that in the national leadership chapter. Maybe, maybe we said something small. But typically that's not common language. Release others to fail? It's like, but yes. And the reality is that for those of us who've been doing it for so long, it's like, no, you guys just keep doing it.

You do it so well. Or I've been doing it so long and I do it so well and you you'll take twice the time or make mistakes. I'll just keep doing it. And so I think just being aware of those realities in order to, to, to release and give others the space to make mistakes, to mentor them. To train them up. I mean, not mistakes where you're hurting people, right.

Not that level of, of mistake. But just that reality, I think, team, building team, you know, just how important that is in every context. That, that we're not trying to be those who are, isolated. We're the ones who know are the ones who act, but we're empowering others. We're raising up others. We're disciple makers.

Right? I think that should be our language. That's that's the body of Christ language. And that should be flowing right into, any organization that's caring for orphans as well. And so, those are hard, real issues that we have to face. and I think all that stuff gets exposed right, as we're raising up leaders as we're empowering leaders and growing forward.

Phil: [00:23:42] Absolutely. I think it's, that's so good. That's so good. I, I use the analogy sometimes with a free, you know, release them to fail that, you know, it's like, I think of the teaching our kids ride a bike.

Right? You let them go to fall off their bike, but you won't let them ride off a cliff. Right. Right. You won't let them ride in front of a car, but there's learning in the falling. There's learning in the failing. There's learning in the running into a wall 'cause you don't know how to brake, right? And so that's, it's so hard though.

It's so hard yet so good. So good. All right, Rick, you want

Dr. Rick: [00:24:19] to,

You know, there are a couple of questions that we always kind of seem to work our way to in these interviews. And so I'm going to channel my inner Phil for just a second. And I'm going to ask you, what is it that you have read or watched or listened to that has most impacted your understanding of how to have a love and care for orphaned and vulnerable children?

Keith: [00:24:40] Well, really, I mean yeah. In Pursuit of Orphan Excellence,

Phil: [00:24:44] Which I'm sure you've read a bunch of times since 2014,

Dr. Rick: [00:24:49] Considering you wrote most of it,

No,

Keith: [00:24:52] it was the stuff that other people wrote that was right. It was amazing. And Phil did such a great job of setting it up, you know, talk about excellence.

Phil: [00:25:01] Let's keep going. Talk about different books.

Keith: [00:25:03] Come on, you nailed it. You know, just the reality is that in 1999, 2000 2001, there just weren't books. There wasn't anything, you know. It really was the Bible. And you know, I'm reading James 1:27 and I'm like, this just seems like it's out of nowhere. This is pure and undefiled religion before God, the God and father is this to care for orphans and widows in their affliction right now.

To keep oneself unspotted from the world. Going, how does that fit into the whole Bible? Why did say Jesus had said. It and make it a lot easier. You know, it's, I mean, not really,

scripture is scripture. But that was my 22 year old thinking. And, and so just to start going through the Bible, what does the Bible say?

Everything, every verse about the fatherless, what does it say? Is this, you know, and then just getting a big picture that this is really what James is looking back on. James is looking at an entire unveiling of God to his people and saying, man, if you want to see Christian, this is how I'm going to sum it up.

It's right here. And it's grounded in the gospel right before the God and Father, which is in Christ. So, so honestly, I mean, I think, not to sound cliché, but the Bible has really been my favorite as far as just nurturing that, that calling. It really affirmed the calling. Because for me, it was like, why do I have this funny desire to just work with children?

Am I just weird? And it's like, no. The scripture, this is God's passion of God, right? This is his spirit at work. And then over the years I've had fun seeing books come out. I think Tom Davis, *Fields of the Fatherless*, came out and I was like, woohoo, all right, we got a book. You know, he's saying stuff that I, that I'm saying, like, I love that. You know, he says it beautifully and he ends it, you know, in this world, you are an orphan awaiting your father. In this world, you are a widow awaiting your bridegroom. In this world, you are a stranger awaiting a home or something like that. And it was like, come on, man. He nailed it. And so just over the years, seeing that, that really there's so many good, good, books that are out there.

I've I enjoyed, Oh, see, now I'm not going to now. I'm not gonna go to think of it. It was there now it's gone. I want to say Orphan Justice is that that's not good. Yes. There we go. I really enjoyed, enjoyed that. You know, when it hit, when it hit the shelves, it was all those things make me excited because I love seeing the conversation.

I love seeing people grounding these things, you know, in God and calling God's people to, to action.

Dr. Rick: [00:27:38] And like the Bible can be a bad answer, right? Like, that's like, if you're, if you're connecting all of the scriptures together and you're connected the big story, to, you know, to the, that is, that is the, that is the best answer.

So, and

Phil: [00:27:51] normally you say other than the Bible, but I'm glad we didn't in that, in that instance. But, actually we don't say that we haven't said that for a long time, but

Keith: [00:27:58] we haven't said that for a long time.

Phil: [00:27:59] Yeah, I know because yeah. I think people kind of caught on, but. I'm glad we didn't say that 'cause that was, that was, that was great, man. it's funny, Tom Davis, he's actually living here Barcelona right now, which I maybe I shouldn't have said that. Cause now all the stalkers are going to go and find him in Barcelona. But I actually talked with him the other day and he's got a new podcast. Interestingly, it has nothing to do with orphan care.

Yeah. But it's a really cool podcast. As you know, I'm a big soccer guy. It's called *The Heroic Mindset*. Totally random. But I thought I'd throw that out there since you said Tom and

nobody has, nobody has mentioned that book I don't think ever on the show. That's it that's a first at first,

Dr. Rick: [00:28:32] no way.

Phil: [00:28:33] And I'm, I don't recall ever having Fields of the Fatherless mentioned as, as that book.

So

Dr. Rick: [00:28:40] Now we're going to have to both talk about the book and we're going to have to figure out how to Tom on.

Phil: [00:28:43] We'll have to do it. We'll get Tom on. We'll get Tom on. We'll talk about Heroic Mindset. Cause it's all about soccer. You'll love it, Rick. You'll love it. it's about actually the mindset of an elite athlete, which goes to leadership.

It goes to a lot of other things, too.

Dr. Rick: [00:28:55] College football will fit nicely into that conversation. Yeah,

Phil: [00:28:58] it probably would. It probably would. Anybody other than Alabama. but, so Keith, last question, I'm so bummed right now. I'm so bummed that we're at the end of this interview. I'm not, I'm not gonna lie. But what one person has most impacted your understanding of how we can love orphaned and vulnerable children with excellence?

Keith: [00:29:17] Can I answer the one person with a dual person answer? So, I mean,

Phil: [00:29:23] I had a feeling you would

Keith: [00:29:26] 'Cause, 'cause really it's, I mean, I'm going to say Jay Jonnes, right. Or Jonnes Jay and those two really are,

I mean, they're, they're, they're like one, I mean they're brothers. And to see these two guys live it out. I mean, the sacrifice that they made in the early years, there was no cushion. You know, when you read a, if you want to read New Hope's story, Jay's daughter, Jenny who's precious. Good friend. she wrote, oh, you're reaching for it.

Maybe it's there. The Long Road to Hope. There it is. Hey, they have small beginnings. So Jenny put together really history of New Hope. And I mean, these guys are walking into a, you know, a war torn zone. You've still got landmines going off and skulls and bones on the side of the road. That's, that's the reality of what they went into and the kids that they took in.

I mean, these were hurting, hurting kids, so, so they've lived it. They've sacrificed. And Jay got there and, and all funding that he was promised was pulled. He had no money. He had nothing. These guys, they were like, Well, God, here we are. You know, it's kind of a George Mueller, you know, well, you're the father of the fatherless, I guess it's your job to provide.

So we're going to trust you, you know? so just being able to watch them live it out and to watch Jonnes really, he's just, he's amazing. Like I've watched him in painful situations. Hard situations where I'm going. What would I say right now? And I just watched Jonnes just in this beautiful father way, just speak right into these really, really hard things.

And that's just been a privilege for me to get to watch, to learn from and to just see the consistency of how they father so many. But not forsaking their children. Right. I want to just let me end with that one because it's easy to create fatherless children in the attempts to care for the fatherless.

It's easy to leave your kids behind by caring for kids. And I've really appreciated Jenny and her voice in the way that she was able to articulate some of her struggles. At times, you know, wondering, God, so are you not my father if you're the father of the fatherless? You know, or feeling guilty 'cause I have a dad.

and just so just learning from them on so many different level. They're very open, very wise. They need to write like five books. That would be helpful.

Phil: [00:31:59] Wow man. Hey. I'm not just saying this cause I'm looking at you on a Zoom call. I am so proud to call you brother. To call you my friend. To have been able to go in the trenches with you to write this book.

It's, it's truly an honor. I hope folks out there you've had a, just a taste of the wisdom this man has. That God has just spoken through him and continues to speak through him. And I will tell you, And I'm bragging on him. I feel like, you know, actual brother. Cause that's what I feel like with you. But it's because you're in the Word. It's because you are continually in prayer, you with your family.

I wish we could just put out there the, how you, each year you take your son through a, through a, a different word that helps grow them into a man. And they focus on that for the whole year. And man, I know that you do that. I want to do it. And I just feel like, you know, I never get around to it. But you are so intentional.

You're the real deal, brother. I just want to thank you for that. I wanted to say that to, to whoever's listening. 'Cause I, I, I truly believe that. And I'm just honored that God brought us together a few years ago.

Keith: [00:33:13] Ah, thank you. I'm, I just don't. Yeah, there's not a halo there. Come to my house and you'll see

Phil: [00:33:18] No, he's not perfect but that's, what's so great. You're not real.

I mean, you're not real. You are real.

You are real. And it's real. And I have been there with you, but I will say though, you, you are seeking, you are pursuing God, you are pursuing that excellence that we talked about. And I say that because I do want people to know and understand that when you say stuff, it's not just a dude in some ivory tower saying, this is what you know, I think, and I'm just musing.

It's a guy who's living in and trying and struggling that freedom to fail that, you know, releasing to fail, you do fail, but you know what? That's not the end. That's not the end of the story. Right. And so that's just, I do want to say that and I, I knew that it would be, you know. Just receive it brother, just receive it.

Keith: [00:34:04] Thank you. Thanks.

Dr. Rick: [00:34:07] Thanks. Been a, such a privilege to be able to do this interview with you and just to spend some time and, and thanks for thanks for sharing and going deep with us.

Keith: [00:34:18] Hmm. Thank you, Rick. I've loved the love the time. It's been fun to get to know you a little bit too, just to get to be here with you guys.

Phil: [00:34:27] Well, if you, couldn't tell, I just, I really do respect and love that man. And I just thank you again, Keith, for being a part of this show and I will, will tell you, the book, and I tell this to people a lot, the book, In Pursuit of Orphan Excellence, became what it was when Keith McFarland came onto the project.

And I, I say that because, we pushed each other to be better. That's what teammates do. That's what collaborators do when you're truly working together for one project. When you're working together for one message, for one goal together, you push each other to where you would never have gone if somebody wasn't pushing you.

And so I think we pushed each other in our thinking, we pushed each other in what we covered. We pushed each other in what we knew we could do. There were some chapters that as you'll see, he wrote that he didn't feel like he was competent enough to write. And I had to come behind him and say, you are. I have no doubt.

And just put pen to paper and let's see what comes out. Right. And without that, I think that it's a, it's a struggle. So we're not going to talk a lot right now about that. We do want you to just, you know, I think Rick and I talked about it and it's just, man, that was so rich. We want you to just be able to think about it. To bask in it. And just to really think, what is God teaching me through this and go back and listen again to it. You know, this is the second part of the, of the two part episode, as you know, if you're listening to this. Go back and listen to the first part if you haven't. If you just somehow stumbled upon this part 2. Go back and listen to the first part 'cause it will provide a lot of context.

But Rick, I just want to ask you, you know, you wrote Orphanology with Tony, and did you feel kind of the same way with writing that book like that it was pushing each other or was it different?

Dr. Rick: [00:36:19] Yeah, but it was different. I think we were, we were serving together and, and we were, we were in the middle of, of, of doing the thing that we were writing about and more together.

And so I think that the difference in what you guys experienced, first of all, it's a, it's a much larger collaboration and, you know, and we referenced a lot of people in the book and that kind of thing, but we didn't have collaborative relationships with any of them. I think the

other thing too, is like, you've got to, you've got to sort of look into the backdrop that, Tony and I have known each other for a long time and in one way or another, we had, we had served with each other alongside each other for,

you know, the better part of eight or 10 years by the time we, by the time we wrote Orphanology. And so I tell people sometimes that our, you know, our relationship, to put this in a very American, very first-world Western kind of, it was, it was like, you know, Stockton and Malone, right? Like it was the, it was that, that relationship of the guys on the basketball court that are playing with each other, that, that don't have to see each other to know where they are.

And, and so as we, as we really began to, to frame up Orphanology, that was so much a product of just dozens, hundreds of hours of life and conversations and things that when, when we actually started to really put the outline together and began to frame the book up, it came together pretty effortlessly.

And, but in our, in our writing, to be honest with you, we didn't, we really didn't collaborate a whole lot. We took our pieces and we went and did our thing. And, and then when we were finished with something or at a point where we'd share it with each other and kind of, you know, kind of go back and forth, but, but the thing was kind of remarkable about it is we, even when we did that, it wasn't like, it wasn't like there was a whole lot of editorial, you know, stuff between the two of us, because we were just so much on the same page that it just, it just kind of flowed together. And I think that, you know, that, that to me just plays back into, you know, some of the things that Keith really emphasized, even in the interview with, with his, you know, his relationships at New Hope and some of the things that have, you know, that have grown and flourished there, you know, that, that he's talked about. It was our, Tony and my collaboration was the result of an experience like that.

And, and so it was, you know, it was just very, it was just very different.

Phil: [00:39:00] Yeah, no, I think that's good. That's, that's something that I think is important to understand too, like, there's different things that will come out of different teams and different projects. And you guys that you said you, you experienced that together.

And so it probably was more of a, is that really what happened? Is that, you know, is that exactly what, you know, when you come back on saying there you're on the same page, but maybe there were a couple of little things here and there. But with us,

Dr. Rick: [00:39:22] it was just so much, we had processed along the way with each other, that, that, that stuff, that stuff was kind of already said and worked out and worked through because we were,

like when we were just, we were just pretty deeply connected in life and a lot of ways. And so our, you know, our, our, our ministries we're connected and we serve with each other in a variety of capacities. Our, our families were interconnected and our adoption stories and all those kinds of things. We, you know, like he was a part of my life.

I was a part of his life for all of that. And, and so, so as we were, you know, it it's, it's funny. And there are times where it's really funny now, even going back and, and, and reading the book. It it's, it's like, I mean, I know who wrote what, and it's hard to, but it, but like, it, it's hard to even find it if you don't know what you're looking for.

And, and honestly, there was not a lot of editorial work that even had to come to that to make it, to make it fit that way. Right. because we, we were just in that season and we're just very much in sync and, and walking together.

Phil: [00:40:34] That's awesome. That's awesome. And I, and I, yeah. I love how the different projects, the different teams, they, they, they take different shapes, right.

And it's just like anything else. So there's no rule book. And I think that's part of, even In Pursuit, going back In Pursuit and just what we talked about and even hearing Keith talk through that interview, it's clear that there is no, you know, the book is not a, "how to." The book is a, a framing of a conversation of how can we do this together and what does it look like to pursue this excellence together? And even in the conversation of family, you know, there are ideals, but there's also brokenness and it is, you know, as he said, it's rooted in suffering. And so, you know, those are.

Dr. Rick: [00:41:21] It's every bit as relevant a conversation today is as the day is that it was published.

Phil: [00:41:26] Absolutely

Dr. Rick: [00:41:26] And I, I think, you know, one of the things, so I would, you won't say it, but I'll say it to, you know, to the folks that are listening to us. If you, you know, if you're passionate in this area and you haven't picked the book up and you haven't, you haven't considered the stuff that's there, you need to. Because, because I, because I think it is a, you know, it's an evergreen conversation and, and there's, there's a, it's not, it's not a paint by the numbers project. It's not a how to, but it, but it surfaces some really key points and key perspectives that, that have to be wrestled with if you're gonna, if you're gonna gonna do, you're gonna, if you're gonna serve in this area and, and do that to the glory of the Lord. These are things you have to wrestle with.

Phil: [00:42:13] And I will say, you know, it's. It's not just a book for some people like, Oh, it's a book about orphanages. No, it's not. It's a book about how we can love orphaned and vulnerable children. What they need. How we can wrestle with the things that we know children need. I've told people I use this book in my parenting. What I learned writing this book in my parenting of my five biological children.

There are principles in here. It's Biblical. It's, it's a book about justice. It's a book about making things right. What does that look like in the context of orphaned and vulnerable children? And that is something that we sought to do you heard from Keith's heart. You've heard from mine over the last, you know, 150 episodes if you've listened to them. Just our heart is to help people. Our heart is to encourage and build people up. Our heart is to help people understand how they can flourish. And that comes through in that book. And I will

tell you, there are people on that. All 15 authors are people that are struggling with understanding all these things we're writing about.

And so I, I too would say, you know, we're really starting to, what I want to start doing on our, in our episodes is, is picking a couple takeaways and/or action steps out of these, out of the interviews, out of the conversations that we're having. You know, we always say use everything that you're learning to help you understand how you can love the children better.

But I want to just kinda think about together what are some action steps we can take? The one I was really thinking about today is, you know, if you've read the book, go pick it up again and read it with fresh eyes today, and, and through the lens of what Keith talked about in that interview. And through the lens of maybe how you've engaged some of the conversations we've had on this show, in the work that you're doing. In the understanding of the conversations you've been having. Read it with fresh eyes and I myself.

I'm going to do that. 'Cause I haven't read it for awhile. You know, when you write a book, you read it so much, you know, you're in the thought of reading it again is just somewhat repulsive, quite frankly. But, but I will say, you know, read that. Read the book. Pick it up. If you haven't read it, read it. And engage it.

And I, and I would say the other action step I would have is find someplace that you're uncomfortable culturally. Find a place that you're uncomfortable and enter into that and learn it at some level. Find someone who knows that who's fluent in your language and your culture and fluent in that other culture. Get out of your comfort zone and engage a culture that is a challenge and learn. Don't go in thinking you know what the right answer is for anything. Just go in and learn. And see what God shows you and teaches you about yourself. And, that identity that Keith talked about. Man, that's there. It's rich, as we said at the beginning, just, just bask in this, in this interview. Listen to it.

Just, just wrestle with it. Engage it. Rick, do you have any other takeaway action step that you thought of?

Dr. Rick: [00:45:23] I think here here's my here's what I would say. I want to, I'm really interested to hear what our listeners take away as action steps. And so what I'd really like to ask the folks who are out there that are listening to us is to hit us up on the Facebook page, hit us up, you know, through social media. Come connect with us on the connect tab on our website and what are, what are the, what are the things that got rose up in your heart as you know, as a result of, of the interview with Keith? What are the, what are the action steps and the takeaways that you're, you're bringing away. It'd be a great help to us to hear that. It'd be a great encouragement.

I think it, it also, we wanna, we want to hear we are, we want to hear where you are and we want to hear what you're thinking, because it, it really helps us to know how to, how to guide this podcast and how to, you know, how to, to, to think about the interviews and the people that we, you know, that we get together to, to bring before you and the directions that we move.

And so we, we would love to hear from you. And, I, you know, for, for my part, my, one of my action steps is there was so much packed into this interview. and over these two episodes is, is just personally, I feel like I'm going to need to come back and kinda dwell over and conserve over these, these conversations a little bit, because, because it was just, it was just so you know, you know, so deep and so rich and, and so, but yeah, let us hear from you.

Phil: [00:46:49] Absolutely. Yeah, I'd say by the time this airs, actually it is already up. I, I haven't, I haven't, finalized and put the finishing touches on it, but we will have a Facebook Group that I invite all of you to join. The nice thing with Facebook groups versus pages is you can post stuff. You can, you can engage the conversation with things that you're reading, that you're seeing, other podcasts that you're listening to that will help inform our, our, our community.

That, we can, we can truly have these conversations that aren't just us posting something onto a page and having you comment, but you can actually be commenting on those. Yes. But, if you want to go deeper into this conversation with us and be a part of this at that deeper level, join the Facebook group so that we can have those conversations there. And I don't want to put something else on your, on your desk that, that you feel like is a, is another project that you have to do, but I get excited to go deeper with you. I get excited when I see emails from you. Don't feel like you're bugging me or Rick.

We get excited with it, with the engagement, with the conversation. It's something that is part of why we do what we do. We want to really be able to engage with you and have these conversations at deeper levels. So that's why we're starting this Facebook group. As I'm learning, Facebook groups are a much better place to engage than a Facebook page. And I, you know, it's a, it's a learning curve, it's a culture I'm not fluent in and I'm learning from other people on how to do this thing. So with that folks, you know, keep learning. Keep engaging. Keep asking the hard questions. Keep seeking those answers. Keeps pursuing excellence and just use all that you're learning, all that you're just finding, all that you're hearing on this podcast. All that you're reading in the books you're engaging and use it to help you to understand how you can love orphaned and vulnerable children better and better each and every day. Thanks a lot. Have a great week.