OG Pastors: Faith Over a Lifetime

Episode 1 — Rik Mumma

Full Transcript

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Host: Stewart Foley (That Texas Pod-Vangelist)

Guest: Rik Mumma — Ministry leader with Pocket Testament League and Multiplication Network

TRANSCRIPT

Host: A lot of people talk about faith, but what does that actually look like over a lifetime? I'm Stewart Foley, and this is OG Pastors: Faith Over a Lifetime podcast.

> Hey, welcome to the very first episode of OG Pastors: Faith Over a Lifetime podcast. My name is Stew, I'm also known as "that Texas podvangelist", and you can be too if you just tell one person about this podcast.
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> We sit down and talk with folks who have walked in faith over a long time. And uh, I attend Hillcountry Church here in Fredericksburg, and sometimes people say, "how did you pick THAT church?" Well I will tell you that it wasn't a sermon, it wasn't a conference, it wasn't a pastor, it was a conversation that started at our local carwash. I am a, admitted carwash-addict. And so uh, God used one extraordinary conversation with one extraordinary man to begin a change in direction in my life. And that man is sitting with us today. Rik Mumma has spent more than twenty-five years helping people know Jesus Christ through ministries like Pocket Testament League and the Multiplication Network, but that's not why he's here. He is here because he's lived a lifetime of learning to recognize God's voice, trust His leading, and faithfully invest in people. Rik, it was a godsend, literally, to meet you and I'm thrilled that you are our first guest.

Rik Mumma: Stewart, what a kind introduction. I'm trying to, uh, got a tear or two coming out with that introduction. That, it's just a pleasure to be here. It's just been a pleasure to get to know you and the friendship we have, and I never get over how awesome it is to just be able to shine for Jesus. And that's, that's what it's all about is us living this incredible life and shining for the Lord. So thank you.

Host: I love that. You know, I kind of feel like we were building a big seed-spreader, right? A big, you know, I'm just out there and we want to sow seeds as far and wide as possible. So let's start out before the ministry, right? So, before anybody knew you in that role or ministry leader, you were a kid growing up. Tell us about where you grew up, what was your family like, and what kind of a young man were you becoming?

Rik Mumma: Well all in all, I'm very grateful for the childhood I had. I grew up in Anaheim, California. Literally across the street from Disneyland. About the time I was born, Disneyland opened right after that, and it was growing up there, it was a part of life. You know, Walt Disney was bigger than life. Many of your listeners that you know are closer to our ageish will remember the wonderful world of Disney on Sunday nights.

Host: Absolutely! Absolutely!

Rik Mumma: Yeah, seventy-percent of America watched the wonderful world of Disney. So that had a just had a really big impact on me. The whole Disneyland, Orange County experience. Living in Southern California which was kind of the land of milk and honey back then. Just beautiful, yeah.

Host: If we had met then, what would you have been surprised about the life God had planned for you? Was there anything at that stage of the game that indicated to you what was in store?

Rik Mumma: Well I'm laughing because no, not at all. Not at all. I, oh gosh I you know my family, my family had grown up in the Midwest, you know the wonderful Midwestern good, good folks. Taught me a lot of good things, but you know we grew up with what I call the American Dream gospel. If you're wealthy and you're healthy, you can be wise and live the, the beautiful life. So that was my goal, you know, that's what I saw modeled for me, and I wanted to do that.

Host: And one of the things that I really appreciate about you and your story is that you didn't begin in ministry. You built a very successful horticulture business before God led you someplace completely different. And we share some of that, but tell me or tell us about that season.

Rik Mumma: Well, that season of getting into the horticulture business, it has a lot of parts to it. I initially got into that business, I, I was married, I, I've been previously married before Christie and I met twenty-five years ago and got married. But my first marriage, I, I had the privilege of running a, a large garden center in Newport Beach. And I fell in love with horticulture and absolutely loved it. But yeah, my focus was on just becoming wealthy, doing well, and I really thought those were the answers to life. But I quickly found out that a lot of the things, a lot of the stuff came early in my life and it didn't fill, it didn't fill my heart up. There was still a big hole there, Stew.

Host: That's interesting. I've always been amazed whenever I go to any garden center how good the plants look there. I'm always like, how do they do it? You know, I don't know if there's a secret, I'm sure it's like a magician, you can't share those secrets, but wow do those plants look good. And I'm always like, you know it's like I always see things, I always see plants I've never seen before and didn't know existed and you go, you know it's amazing what God's created for us to look at and be entertained by. I have to admit to you that chiggers are I can't quite figure them out, but the flowers are amazing. What lessons did you learn or were there lessons that you learned in business that helped you become a better servant of Christ?

Rik Mumma: Yeah I, I think so. You know, when you run a business, when you have to make payroll every couple weeks, and there has to be enough money put aside for all the things you need to do, all your plans to grow and expand, and uh, you know it teaches you an awful lot about stewardship. Just handling money responsibly. And it really affected me as I think I got into ministry. I had a real desire to see good stewardship in ministry.

Host: And it's interesting because I'd love to know about God leading you into ministry. Was that gradual? Or was there a defining moment? Like what did your family say? I mean it- I mean I think that a lot of times people hear like "God called me into this" and you automatically assume "oh well that's great for you." But there's implications, there are changes that come from those kinds of decisions. Can you tell us about that transition?

Rik Mumma: Well the transition was very painful. Um, it was a, oh gosh it culminated really with a divorce. It's like a two by four to the middle of the forehead is what it was. But you know the family I was married into didn't understand what I was going through as God was calling me, He was wooing me. Um, I was getting more and more interested in who this guy Jesus was, and how He could change my life, and, and through all that. And a lot of the story and I- and I take responsibility, I made a lot of bad choices in my first marriage. And I like to- I like to try to take responsibility for them the best I can. But uh, that was a, that was a pivot point for me when my wife, when my wife left me. And I'll say for a lot- for- in fairness to her for some for some pretty decent reasons.

Host: Yeah, I can relate to that in all sincerity. Trust in God. It's easy to say, hard to refute. But it also in our human frailness can become hard to do. Especially when you know the looking out through your eyes things look pretty challenged. Now the Bible's full of stories like that, right? What finally gave you the confidence to trust God and really make a significant departure from what you had been doing up until then?

Rik Mumma: It was hard, but you know in ways I'm grateful that happened in my life as crazy as that sounds. Because it real- like I said it was a pivot point for me and it pointed me towards our Lord. Pointed me towards Jesus. And you know you often hear that there's a big hole in our heart that only God can fill. And that's what really pointed me, Stew. Pointed me.

Host: That's really interesting. All right. So you have served with- and I want to hear about these things- you have served with Pocket Testament League and I'd love to know about that. Vision for Villages and now Multiplication Network. So looking back and you've spent I mean it's essentially a lifetime of investing in people, right? So looking back the common thread seems to be helping other people grow in Christ. Talk about that passion and kind of what you've been up to.

Rik Mumma: Well a lot of it, a lot of it I think stems just out of how God put me together. I love a tool out there, it's called Strengthfinders. It determines five strengths in your life. And two of mine are faith and connectedness. So connectedness is wanting to understand people, learn about people, being interested in people. I love to connect. It's very easy for me to do and I like doing it. It's natural. So that part that was already in me and God had already let me have success through that strength, He just He just kind of clicked the dial click or two to get it focused towards the kingdom and being a seed sower for him.

Host: And talk a little bit about the concept of multiplication and why that's so important.

Rik Mumma: Well my journey when I first gave my life to Christ, I, the first ministry I worked with was Pocket Testament League. Very beautiful simple ministry that was about the scriptures and reading, carrying and sharing the word of God. Very simple ministry. And I fell in love with it because the word of God early in my journey was very powerful. I- you know I opened the Bible up, I was not someone who grew up with the Bible. And now I can say in my life it's truly food, it's sustenance, I can't get enough of God's word anymore because it's just so beautiful and it continues to shape me and grow me and prune me and do all the things that I need to be the best version of myself. And so I served in that scripture ministry, but through that journey and through God's word, I wrestled with him to see churches that looked like the first church in the New Testament. Where the Holy Spirit just moved powerfully and I love this subject it's just love it because God is so good and He wants to be in our lives, He wants to lead us, He wants to use us to do good works, which is such a joyful thing to do. And through that, I wanted to see these churches, and I love the churches that I grew up with in Southern California, Orange County, but I didn't see a

church look like a church in the New Testament. One that just was powerful and moved mightily and multiplied. Through that journey and through my wrestling with God on that subject, I won't bore you with the whole story but within a period of a couple months I left the scripture ministry and gotten involved and got to be part of the Multiplication Network which is a ministry that literally trains and equips indigenous nationals people in their own country all around the world to start these new churches and God in His goodness showed me that it's still going on very very robustly around the world. And it was just what a beautiful gift, yeah.

Host: Yeah, I mean we've talked about this a little bit is that in the US when we say "church", we're thinking about a structure as opposed to what you're talking about which is a little different. In the ministry and the work that you've done, is there a story about the work that you've done with the Multiplication Network for example that really sticks out?

Rik Mumma: Gosh yeah. Ask question too, I- I have a few of them going through my head. A beautiful one to share. Just a little over a year ago, about a year and a half ago, I was in Tanzania. It's on the East Coast of Africa and I attended a church that was started about ten years ago by a couple who were involved with Multiplication Network and the training. And it was started in a ninety-eight percent Muslim town. The Muslim people didn't like the Christians were coming into the town. So it worked, but they burned the church down. They were very upset and they burned the church down. Well think about this: the couple felt led by God to continue to love these people. Now think about the power of Christ in your life, how powerful it has to be after you just have a church burnt down but you still want to love these people. Well they did, so they went about thinking about how they could build relationships and love these people, help these people. And they did two things: they got some guys together and they dug a water well in the village. And they shared the water well with the Muslim, their Muslim friends. And think about it, ninety-eight percent of them were Muslim. Then on top of that, they started soccer programs for the kids. And lo and behold they built relationships. They built trust. People could see that although they worshipped this, you know, Muslims different religion different ideas on who Jesus is, all these profound differences in Christianity and Islam, but they built bridges. And here we are ten years later, that church was striving and I- I love going to African churches usually oh few minutes into the into the services, women get up and they've got their beautiful bright clothes on and they start these circles and before you know it there are thirty women dancing in a circle and it goes on they worship for hours because they just love God so much they can't help it. No, I being an American I looked at my watch a couple times thinking oh we don't do it this long, but it was fabulous.

Host: That's amazing. So kind of a little bit of a pivot, right? So when you've walked with Jesus for decades as you have, there's also times of disappointment and loss and unanswered prayers and seasons where God felt quiet. So can you talk a little bit about kind of what carried you through there and how did your understanding of God change? I mean it was essentially what did you learn?

Rik Mumma: Waiting on God is a really tough thing to learn. But it's a beautiful thing once you learn it because He shows you that you can trust Him. That He's always got a good good answer. And if you're just patient enough to wait a little bit you'll see how good He is. I- I can't think of one thing that's happened in my life that I can't apply that to, you know, even losing children. Something good came out of it. Yeah, it's hard to say, that's really hard to say, but it's true.

Host: Yeah, it's- I mean that's really that is really tough. I mean I can tell you that you know in my own life I've jerked the steering wheel out of- and then like run it in the ditch and then handed the steering wheel back and I'm like "I'm sorry," you know, and then I'll jerk the steering wheel, "I know what I'm doing," you know, off I go and then and then I hand the steering wheel back. And it's like it's the being patient and waiting for God I think is really a great lesson. Do you think that people today- and you've spent a lot of your time- I'm kind of trying to get at the evolution of kind of where your belief started and where they are today. So do you think that people are hungrier today for authentic relationships than polished programs that are beautifully choreographed but may lack that real family that I've heard the term "church family" and never never felt it until I got to Hillcountry Church? Very different experience. What's your experience with- I know a lot of your work is done overseas, but you do a lot of work here too. Can you talk about what you think where you think people are today?

Rik Mumma: Stew, that's just a great question. Thank you for asking that. Gosh more than ever we're all so we've been so conditioned with you know whether it's the types of media, mainstream news, whatever it is we were you just get the feeling you're just getting talked at. You know you don't have a relationship and I think people are just so hungry to be in real relationship where we love and accept each other doesn't matter how many warts, how many bumps, because we all have them. If we're honest, right, we all have a big old list of them. People want that. And it's a beautiful thing, you know I think I think the two biggest things is you know we want to know God and we want to be known. I think those are longings of our heart that we- it's so hard to get to the big questions of life which is you know why am I here, what am I here for, and where am I going? And Jesus answers those questions in a beautiful way that's exciting. I- I'm seventy-three and I get up in the morning excited about what He has for me to do today. I get to be part of His story, I get to be part of the kingdom of God growing. What a- that's unbelievable. I mean if you know who I really used to be and that I get to do that that's that's a wow I get to do that.

Host: Yeah I mean it really is and you know it's also you know it reminds me as I look at the two of us how much younger you look than I do so there's that's interesting too.

Rik Mumma: I'm comforted by cameras, Stew.

Host: That's right. It's a filter, right? So I'd like to make it a personal for a minute. We were drying our cars next to each other um at Smitty's carwash in Fredericksburg. And that conversation changed my life. I don't think that you necessarily, I mean, and God's tried with me. I think God's made a run at me a number different times. And with you it led me to Hillcountry Church uh which introduced me to people like Dave White who's also a guest on this show. And has helped me with a much different walk with Christ. It's much more meaningful and I- I'll always be grateful for that. I believe God led me to you somehow. But does it ever amaze you how God can use one simple conversation to completely change another person's life because I suspect in over the course of your work, I'm not the first, I'm certainly not going to be the last.

Rik Mumma: Stew, it's a beautiful amazing thing about serving our king. When we love Jesus and the Holy Spirit comes into our life, you know, I can honestly you know for people who are watching this they probably think that I've got all this amazing training and I said just the right perfect words and honestly I don't even I- I have no recollection of having that kind of conversation. All I know is that I was next to this really interesting guy with this cool beard and this really cool beautiful blue car and I was excited because I'm kind of a car guy

and I just started speaking from my heart. And you know and that's the beautiful thing. I got to be used in your life, Stew. And I don't even know what happened honestly other than I love God and I love you because you're made in His image and I get to be part of the kingdom story and somehow all this came about from a crazy day of two guys drying their cars off at the carwash together.

Host: Well the fact that we're both car guys didn't hurt anything, right? That certainly helped facilitate it. You you were kind enough and I mean like really personally like you were kind enough to send me ten verses and a note behind each one and I've read that over and over again and I really appreciate that. After all these years walking with Jesus, one of the things that we talk about in our lead-in and our trailer is we talk about what lasts, right? Whether that's a change in your definition of success or whatever or what you're most grateful for or whatever it may be. What would you say has lasted over all these years?

Rik Mumma: Gosh, I just love just love in my life. How that's affected me, how that's affected my family, my grandchildren. How my grandchildren love me, I didn't have grandparents so what an amazing thing he's done that I somehow am loved by my grandchildren. I feel like I don't even know how to be a grandpa, Stew. I really do.

Host: I got a chance to be a step-grandpa for a minute and that was a pretty good gig. Kids are fun, super fun. And then it's time for them to go, and you know the grandparent thing is has got to be one of the best things going out there, right? I mean that's a good that's a good gig. But it's a wonderful answer that how how it's a beautiful story. You're one of those rare people that it just oozes out of you. There's a there's something about being with you around you that you know you can you can feel it, right, which is really really special. I mean you have a gift and you're using it in- beautifully. And so, you know, this is our first this is our first episode, but I sort of want to create this last this final question. I do- I do an industry podcast and we kind of end with a final question and I'll end with this one. So imagine that you're sitting down with someone who sincerely wants to follow Jesus but doesn't know where to begin. What's the first piece of wisdom that you'd want to share?

Rik Mumma: I would share the gospel. Because it's truly the story of the love of God. You know the truth that that Jesus was born, He was man and God all at the same time. He lived, He died to pay a price for all of our sin, for your sin, for my sin, we've all sinned and fallen short of God. He rose again and because of that we're new creations in Christ. Because of that the Holy Spirit came about the world He through His resurrection the Holy Spirit came and we are temples for the Holy Spirit. And an amazing story is ahead of us if we just lean into that and trust. He will do things in our lives that we never even imagined. The word love- the word love- gets meaning that we didn't even begin to understand until we have Christ in our life.

Host: That's what keeps them coming back, Rik. That's you know yeah it's it's amazing. So thank you. Thanks for being on. I don't even think I said the title of the podcast which is One Conversation Can Change a Lifetime. And and that is that is true, absolutely true for me and I know I know that the work that you're doing and the people the lives that you're touching you are a master seed planter for sure. So thanks so much for being on, we certainly appreciate it and um I have a feeling you may be back.

Rik Mumma: My pleasure, brother. I love you, brother.

Host: I appreciate it, Rik. I love you too, and uh I want to thank everybody for listening. This is our first episode. We have we're going to do season one which is going to include ten

episodes, and then we're going to take feedback and see how that goes and maybe we'll make adjustments and maybe we won't. So uh this is a great start and we're thrilled with that. If you would, please rate us subscribe and review us on Apple podcast, Spotify, or wherever you listen to your favorite shows. You can find us on YouTube on the OG Pastors channel, um which we're thrilled to have. And thank you so much. My name is Stew, I'm known as that Texas podvangelist, and this is the OG Pastors: Faith Over a Lifetime podcast.

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