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With Your Host

Dr. David Phelps

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David Phelps: Hi, David here. This podcast interview, I brought back my good friend, Mr. Steven J. Anderson. And we talk about not just return on our own investments, but I would call it a return on legacy. That is, what and how, and to whom, are we leaving the wisdom... not just the assets but the wisdom and mission critical to the next generations? I think you'll really enjoy this episode.

Good day, everyone. This is Dr. David Phelps of the Freedom Founders mastermind community and Dentist Freedom Blueprint Podcast. We talk a lot on this podcast about ROI, return on investment, and yes, that's something we all want to look at in many ways, many ways in our lives. Certainly financially, but also how we get the return on investment from what we invest in our businesses and in people. Today, I want to talk about investing in a certain segment of our population, and I think this is important to everybody. It certainly has become more important in my life, and that is the lessons I have learned, and most of them the hard way. But certainly finding great people to surround myself with, mentors, and finding that the ability to give back to other people, and particularly younger people who are the next generations coming up, is something that I love to do. With me today, our

guest today is my good friend and many of you know him; Steven J. Anderson. Steve, how are you, sir?

- Steven J. Anderson: I am better now that I'm talking to you, David. Every time we get together we always run out of time, so I am eager to get rolling and thank you for the time today.
- David Phelps: Well, I'm going to relate back to particularly the event that I was honored and privileged to participate in, which is something you've been doing for several decades, which is Eagle University. I think that was founded back in the 1990s with you and your cohort at that time. So much history there. It's a lot of people don't remember, or just remember the name Walter and Steve and the boot camps that ran for many, many years. And now Steve is, I believe you call yourself the Chief Culture Officer, if I've got that right, of ToPS?

Steven J. Anderson: Well, Chief Creative Officer-

Creative Officer. Okay. It was CCO so I grabbed culture, David Phelps: but creative, I'll go with that because you are certainly that. So Total Patient Service and many ancillary businesses or nonprofits; you serve in so many ways. And I know, this is who you are inherently. This is the culture from which you grew up in and you continue to serve in so many ways. And Eagle University was something that I believe came out of the request, if I'm not mistaken, of many of the doctors, the business owners, who you were serving back in the day. And said, "Hey, these natural laws of human behavior," which is essentially what you and Walter had been teaching, because that's the crux of, if we're going to be successful in the right... we want to be successful in life and build businesses and have the impact, or whatever our mission is. That's what it comes down to.

So many of your clients said, "Is there something for our kids? Because I think these are lessons that they can use. Many things that we missed along the way, somehow," and that's how it started. So, why don't you give us a little bit of that background on Eagle University?

Steven J. Anderson: Yeah. So you're spot on, David. This came out of a request from business owners, dentists that we had worked with, and they came to us after going through some of the education and the seminars we had. And they said there are so many principles here that are applicable to life, not just our business, but to life. And now looking at these, we wish we'd have known these when we were in high school and college and earlier on, because we could have applied them that much earlier. And so, that's where the original idea came from. And we had a member of our team that actually had a high school/college student at the time who kind of latched onto this idea. And she came in to me and she said, "This is a really interesting idea. And what do you think?"

And all I could think, David, was, "200 high school and college students under my responsibility for a week? That sounded like a really bad idea." And so I was trying to... I just said, "Interesting idea. Why don't you do a survey? Why don't you kind of query people, maybe what they would want... based on their experience, what they would want their young people to learn? And let's see what they have to say." And so she did. She came back about a month, a month and a half later, and she goes, "Great," she goes, "look, I did the survey just like you said, and it went so well," she said, "we have 50 high school and college students that will be here in 60 days. I've already collected the tuition, and here's what their parents want them to learn."

And I said... true story. She kind of subscribed to the "it's easier to get forgiveness than permission", and that was the birth of what we now call Eagle University. The name is in contrast to turkey kindergarten, right? So eagles are the high flyers, they're the ones with vision. So it's an icon, especially in our culture of high aspirations. And so that's why we call it Eagle, for that image, and University, high level of learning. And so it's packed, as you know, with a week's worth... we do it in a week but it's a lifetime's worth of ideas, techniques and systems that we have been able to show over the decades will help a young person get a, what we say, a seven-year head start on their career. And there's a reason why we say the seven years, but it is common sense things. When you learn it's, you go, "Oh, of course," but uncommonly practiced.

And that's the whole deal, is if they'll implement them early on then they'll get extraordinary results that would... typically takes the average person years to figure it out. We try and instill that early on in a lot of different ways; academically, in terms of career goals, mentors. We talk about how to get a job. We did the job of your choice without using a resume. We talk about how to study less and make better grades. It's things like this that are like, when you hear them at face value you go, "Wait. What?" But they're proven systems to do this. And it's not just me. I mean, we've got a whole faculty of proven performers like yourself. You were on our faculty this year, thank you very much. It's not talking about financial literacy and the things that, learned and applied early on, can contribute to a huge gain later on in life.

David Phelps: So that people know, a lot of what is taught, these natural laws of behavior, a couple of books that you have written, and which I love, and if people would like to get these to pass on. I think they're great books for any team and culture, right? I

mean, it's what you use inside of ToPS. But the Culture of Success, I've got it right here: 10 Natural Laws For Creating the Place Where Everyone Wants to Work. And then the follow-up, which again, love this one, which we all got this year: Nearly Everything I Learned in Kindergarten Screwed Me Up, the antithesis to Fulghum's book. But these-

Steven J. Anderson: And, can I add one more to it, Dave?

David Phelps: Yeah. Yeah.

Steven J. Anderson: So this is the textbook for parents that send their kids to Eagle U. So, and this actually came out of our first 14 years of doing the program. So it's called The 13 Biggest Mistakes Parents Make and How to Avoid Them, and it is 13 things that show up repeatedly over and over and over, as we've worked with high school and college students, that are going on at home that if corrected would create a more positive trajectory. And it's filled with everything, it's like, well, where does motivation come from? How do you motivate a high school or college student? It talks about all... And a lot of things, very, very basic common sense, but things that have come from them that we've learned from their experience, from what's happening at home that could create a better environment.

We joke about this, David, and I'll be very, very upfront about this, is the parents that we've worked with over the years, they kind of laugh and say, "Yeah, I send them to Eagle U for you to tell them what I've been trying to tell them for years." And there is some truth to that. And truth is the truth. And the source matters. A lot of times, when they hear it from a different source... and what I hear from parents a lot is, "When I send my young person to Eagle U, I got a lot smarter in their eyes." Mom and dad became a lot smarter because they'll come home and they say, "Daddy, I met this guy who said he knows you. His

name's David Phelps and he taught me how to invest and save my money and doing the whole deal." And your clients are going, "Yeah, that's what I've told them." Same thing, but they hear it from a different source, then it resonates.

And that's one of the key principles, is birds of a feather flock together. We talk about this, and flocking causes birds to be of the feather. It's who they hang out with. So, and this is the most inspiring part of this experience for me, is this... when we do Eagle U, it is clearly, it's the hardest work I do personally all year. It's early in the morning to late at night. It's teenagers who, some of them walk in maybe kind of wondering what they've gotten themselves into. And it is by far the most rewarding to see the change in their vision and what they see as being possible. It's remarkable what happens. And when they get surrounded by good mentors, and we surround them with amazing mentors, that's a big theme for the week, and good, positive peers and great team leaders, it's amazing to watch how the vision rises, how their expectations of themselves change and evolve and improve. It is an amazing, just whole process to watch.

David Phelps: Well, that's really what I found. I was inspired to see the... again, the culture and how quickly... I think I was there by day two, but you'd had them for a day or so. And I know you've got returnees. In fact, the thing I love too is, you've empowered some that have wanted to come back and act as mentors within their group of peers, right? And so they've got leaders from within. So, empowering leaders from within. And it's difficult today. We all know as parents that the culture that society has created by default, if we allow that to become the mode for our kids, the ones that we want to give guidance to, that's going to go awry all day long because social media, peer pressure out in that world; it is difficult to be willing to be different and go

against the grain. Yet when you have assimilated and aggregated, as you have done over the years with Eagle U, those kids who are maybe tempted to follow the wrong crowd, to be with the wrong group, to flock with the wrong feathers, they can quickly see that this is a place to go.

And they've seen the mentors who are there that you, again, and you curate a great group from all across the country who come, volunteer to come to be there, during that week or during the day when the students are going table to table. It was so inspiring. And you set them up for success. But the whole week... I was there and I got to look at the curriculum and in how you guide them through areas, as you said; goal setting, core values, personality profiles; how to relate to different kinds of people because we're all different, right? Time management. Interview questions. I was so impressed. Of course, I got to watch the work you did the day before. You were setting them up. So, here's what you do, here's how you do the research. You're going to research the mentor or mentors you'll be in front of. Here's the research. You learn to control the conversation by asking questions, not talking, not telling.

Again, as you said, common sense. But how much common sense is really put into common practice today? And these young people are just, are getting such a step up to go out in the world and be ahead of the large group as a whole. When they're looking for ways to enter their career, the marketplace, how to position themselves, how to, again, throw out this resume. How do you stand out, just right there with the stack? That people are looking at it and... How you can be different, right? Just the skill sets were amazing. I loved every moment of it. It was fantastic.

Steven J. Anderson: I would say a big part of it, David, as you know, I'm a bit of a contrarian; just kind of by nature I'm wired that way. And a big part of this is, it's not about necessarily good and bad, or... we get outstanding students that come to this. I mean, this is not a reform deal. In fact, just as a quick side note, you'll appreciate this because of our long history. We made the mistake early on; we called our first program Youth Bootcamp. And we had young people that came just heartbroken. They go, "What did I do to deserve to come here?" Because bootcamp for young people's like a reform deal. We changed the name real quick to Eagle U. So these are good students, that we're not talking about trying to reform their lives. They're on a good trajectory. They're doing well. We're going to put them on a great trajectory.

So here's the old analogy about the airplane and if it flies two degrees different, that by the time it gets 1,000 miles out it's two different spots on the earth. Here's the difference, is most people... just as one example, most young people write a resume and they send it out to whoever's... has job openings, and then they become a product of the system, right? They're basically laying themselves out there and say, "Somebody, please come pick me up." Versus, we teach them a different system where they're in control of the system. So instead of waiting to be chosen, they're the ones that are doing the choosing. They can take control of their direction, where they go, and it's a very, very different approach. And it's 10 times more effective because they can get through doors that would never be open through their traditional job search process.

And we've seen this over and over and over again, where they take control of it the way we show them how to do it and they get offers, they get opportunities that would never have been offered out there to the public. It's a totally different process

when it applied. So that's why I get so fired up about it, because when I see the results that come back, when they apply it in grades, just the way that they're taught to study is very different than the way they're taught in school; saves them time, helps them get better grades, creates a whole different result. Just all of these different areas, it has the potential to take something good and make it great.

- David Phelps: Yes, absolutely. So how are Eagle U participants selected? How do they find you, or how do you find them? I want to talk a little bit about that. What's the mix? I mean, I got to meet a lot of them so I have some background, but give us that if you would.
- Steven J. Anderson: Yeah. So typically, our classes are kind of split half and half. Eagle U's a nonprofit education foundation. We have done this for many, many years, as you know, and it is one of the ways that me personally, and the team that we work with, that we choose to do good. And there's a lot of ways we do that, and this is one of them. I love, love, love doing this. And this is a doing good thing. So about half of the students that we have attend come through some type of scholarship that is provided by a sponsoring organization. So, we have foundations and businesses and contributors. We have dentists that will contribute a scholarship or a scholarships, and the students can then apply for full or partial scholarship to attend. We have other students that pay to attend they come as a regular student. So, it's usually a mix between those two.

They hear about it through all kinds of different means; through social media, through their friends, through their schools. We have companies that promote this to their employees. Children have all kinds of sponsors. We have foundations that work with young people that make the program available to them. So, all

kinds of different ways that they hear about it. Our goal is to... for those who want it and desire this as an advantage in their future and see the value in it, we'll do anything we can to make it possible for them to attend. So, like I said, it is... the students go through an interview process to be accepted, and that's really for the benefit of the other students that are there; that everybody that walks through the door wants to be there. They're not being held captive and being someplace they don't want to be.

And so we vet them, they go through an interview process to be accepted to the program, and then they go through the whole process. And then, the real key is, after the fact; the implementation, the application at school and the workplace, we're now on... just this last year, we had... and I think this may not be the first time it's happened. It's one of the first times. We're on the second generation. So, we now have students that attended years ago who are now sending their kids, which is really cool. So they're being raised in Eagle homes and now going through the program; the second generation, which is really cool to see that.

We got a lot of dentists that went through this in high school and college, that are now sending their kids as well. Our whole goal is to give them, I'd like to say, I mean, an unfair advantage, but it's totally fair. As you know, the truth is out there. You just got to find it and you got to apply it. So what we have attempted to do is take the principles, bring them inside, organize them in a way that's easy to understand, easy to apply, and give them a support system where they can look around and go, "You know what? I can do this, and so can everybody else that's here."

David Phelps: Let's give our listeners a little bit of an idea of what is happening during the week. As you said, start early, goes late.

What are some of the sessions and breakouts and small groups, and... how's this being provided to them so they have the constructs and actually putting into practice?

Steven J. Anderson: Right. So, we have a pattern that we use. And so, here's our instruction pattern, is: tell, show, do. So we give them a principle, and then we talk about, okay, here's how that principle applies in different areas. And then we have them do something to apply that principle. So, here's a principle. Let's give an example. One principle that we call overhear psychology says that people believe more what they overhear than what they hear. They'll believe more about David Phelps that they hear from somebody else, about David Phelps, than if David Phelps sat there and bragged about how cool he is for the next 10 minutes, right? We believe what other people say. And so, and that's a truth. I mean, we all get that. And so, that's the principle.

Where it applies is, we show them how to get other people to do the introduction, for them to introduce them to the right people and to do the bragging about them, so they don't have to do it themselves. So for example, David, what's the number one most frequently asked first question in a job interview? It's "tell me about yourself". So we sit down, and first thing you're going to say is, "Well, Steve, tell me about yourself." So we show them how that'll never be a question. They'll never be asked that question because all that got covered before they ever sit down with any kind of an interaction with a mentor or a future employer. So that's the principle, that's the application. So that's the tell, the show.

Now the do is, we actually walk them through an exercise where they start creating the content and the material that will do the bragging for them so they don't have to do it themselves.

So, that's just one example. So walking through the different things that we do, we start with a pattern of, we're going to talk about principles all week long; truths, foundational truths, and how they apply. So, we start and we go from the inside out. One of my hopes is that they'll walk away with a better understanding of themselves through that experience, because if they understand what their values are... so we walk through a whole process of identifying and helping them understand what they believe in the most, what their values are, what their core is, and we differentiate that from accomplishment.

Who they are is different than what they accomplish. They're related, but they're different. So they've got to figure out who they are first, what they believe in. And then, now what are we going to accomplish? How are we going to travel? And then, where are we going to go? So, we walk through a whole process of identifying that. The high school students, part of the doing of that is we have them create what we call a treasure map. So we give them a piece of poster board, we give them stacks of magazines, and they go through and choose pictures and words and phrases that are symbolic of their goals that they have set, that we've helped them through. And then that creates a visual that then they can take home, and they look at that and has a daily impression impact on them.

One of my favorite faculty members that we have, in addition to yourself, of course, is Ron White, who is the USA... a former USA memory champion. And Ron walks them through the principles of how their brain works. Nobody shares this in school. So he shows them how their brain works and how to take advantage of its natural wiring to be able to remember things. And he gives them all kinds of shortcuts; not cheating, but shortcuts based on how we're wired so that they can streamline the education process, do well on tests, because

that's part of the system. You got to work the system. And go through that in a much more time effective way to get the results that they want.

So I mean, we could talk for days about everything we do, but that's just a little taste of what they do. One of my favorite things that we do near the end of the week, and you've referred to this, is we prep them all week to sit down with successful mentors that they can interview, right? So, we prep them all week for this. We bring in a whole group of very accomplished, successful people in all different areas of business and the professions, and the students interview the mentors. So they can ask them any question that they want, and it's on the students to carry the conversation. So they have to prep all week to do this. And for most of them, it is a, just an amazing, eye-opening experience when they see the kind of information that's available to them if they just ask.

David Phelps: If they just ask. Absolutely.

Steven J. Anderson: And that's one of the pinnacle, real experiences that we create. That's part of the doing; as we prep them for this, we tell and we show all week, and then they do near the end of the week. They get to go through this immersive experience where they actually get to experience this back and forth with mentors. And it's transformative, not only for the students but for the mentors as well.

David Phelps: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Steven J. Anderson: It's, as you experienced, it is quite an experience to have a young person sit there and just drill you with questions about, why do you do what you do? And what's your passion? And what are your goals? And for a lot of our mentors, it's like, "Wow." Yeah, I mean, they've thought about those things but

now they got to articulate them to another person. It's a great experience.

- David Phelps: It surely is. And many of the principles that you espouse during the week are right there in the large auditorium, where you meet... in certain parts of the day. It's a large group. And as you said, one of those is: ask, don't tell. Ask and it shall be given. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened.
- Steven J. Anderson: That was in a very famous book, David. I mean, I think it came out before your What's Your Next? book. I think that's—

David Phelps: Yeah. Yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah. For sure. For sure.

Steven J. Anderson: It had kind of a boring cover but it was a big seller.

- David Phelps: But that is so true. And just to see the lights go on for these young people as they were prepped all week to ask these questions, and to see the knowledge and wisdom that was being revealed to them by just asking those questions. And you're right; as mentors, sometimes we have to really reflect hard to be able to articulate what's been in our head for many years. And there's a huge advantage to that, to learning to articulate what one has learned, to take those experiences and give it to somebody else in a way that can be impactful so they can use it. Totally amazing. Where can people go, number one, for application? Where's the application? We'll put this in our show notes here, but go ahead and give it to us.
- Steven J. Anderson: Yeah. So all the information is at eagleuniversity.org. So, eagleuniversity.org. All of the... there's a lot of information there in terms of what we cover. There is financial aid information there, and there's also information if those watching or listening would like to participate with us and

fund a scholarship or make some donation, because we...
There are young people... I'll give you just one example. We had a group of students this year that are first-generation college students, so they're going through a program that supports first-generation college students. I didn't realize this, David, but nationwide, first-generation college students have a 50% dropout rate of college because they don't have the support.

David Phelps: No support. Exactly.

Steven J. Anderson: And so, this was one of the pieces of that puzzle, to give them the support to make the journey, to cut a different path than maybe what was shown to them in their upbringing, so they can create an even better life for themselves. So, I would say this: I know... everybody watching this, listening to this, because I know the caliber of people that you flock with, that flock with David Phelps. There's two things. One; just the impact on a young person's life, whether it's a son or a daughter or a grandson or somebody you're related to, it's huge. It's why we do what we do. And then number two, it's about legacy. As much time, effort and energy as you and I both spend on ROI and saving and investing in the whole deal, we're not going to be able to take it with us. We might be able to pass it on, but we're not going to be able to take it with us.

But what we can do is make an impact on someone else's life, a young person's life, so that they can benefit from the things we've learned and have that much better of a life because of it. And that, for me, is why I do this. That, to me, is true wealth.

David Phelps: Yeah. It's true wealth and true legacy, because like you, I used to think that legacy was something that, number one, you waited until your last years, last months. Two, and it was all about assets. It was about actual, financial wealth that you were

going to pass on to your heirs. Well, that's what a lot of people think about. And that can be a component to that, no question. But the real wealth we will pass on is the knowledge, the wisdom, the resources that we have curated as individuals, and as participants in our own tribes, if we've done that well over our lives, and what we learn. And we're constantly learning, constantly evolving, and that's what I want to pass on. And Eagle U does that so well. And so I encourage, because I was there. I got to be a part of it. But if you know a young person who could benefit, certainly help them make the application, encourage that they're the right person.

Number two, if you'd like to be a part of it, as Steve said, there's different ways you can participate. And financially, another way is just to help sponsor some of those students that financially couldn't otherwise participate. And I know there were a number of those there, and they were all so appreciative. One of the things that they learn is appreciation for, and gratitude for, what they have been provided. And they all did that. So, you're teaching them such really good lessons. How to write notes, right? Thank you notes. Actually, my gosh, that's a-

Steven J. Anderson: What a concept, right?

David Phelps: It's a lost art. How about a text? How about an emoji? I mean, right? So these skill sets, that are dissipating quite quickly from our culture, but these are the seeds of sowing success for these young people who are getting, as you said, a big step up. Seven years of what most young people unfortunately go through; the back and forth, the twists and turns, not sure, unclear. And here they're getting a focal point and learning to find mentors who can help... continue to give them the clarity that we all need in life as we go through our own path.

- Steven J. Anderson: So true. And that's... there's so many different ways to do that. This is just one. But I would say anybody who's watching or listening, that would be my challenge, David, to everyone, is find a way to do some good. We all do good every day by virtue of our profession and all the things we do. And especially in today's time, there are a lot of ways that we can do that to make the world a better place. So we hope that Eagle U is one of those ways that instills some hope and improves the next generation and makes a difference in any young person's life. That's the whole goal. So any way that you choose to participate, as I said, eagleuniversity.org. And we would love to have your participation. We have an entire faculty... our entire faculty is volunteer. They all come because they want to share and they have valuable things to share. And so it is a team effort, a team of eagles passing on great things to make a difference. So, come join us in whatever way that fits for you.
- David Phelps: And if you missed some of the college food, it's right there for you as well. So if you go back in time, then-
- Steven J. Anderson: You got to eat some of that cafeteria food. You've forgotten how good it is, David.
- David Phelps: I have forgotten. Yes. Hi carb diet. It was a lot of fun.
- Steven J. Anderson: Exactly. And thank you again for taking the time, and donating your time and your wisdom this last year at Eagle U. Made a huge difference in the students' lives, and we appreciate that very much.
- David Phelps: My pleasure. Steven J. Anderson, always a pleasure to speak with you, sir. Thank you for all that you do.
- Steven J. Anderson: Thank you, David.

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