



THE PASTOR'S VOICE

Insights from Church Leaders

The Pastor's Voice Podcast: Episode 5

Transcript: The Hunger for Truth

Reuel Sample: Welcome to the pastor's voice I am incredibly honored to have with us today, Nancy Fitzgerald from Anchors Away. Nancy. Glad you can be with us.

Nancy Fitzgerald: Well, thank you for the invite. I'm honored to be here.

Reuel Sample: Nancy and her husband, Edward, are the parents of four grown children and 10 grandchildren. She was educated at Indiana University, where she received a B.S. and two Master of Science Degrees. She is best known for her golfing ability. She is an amateur golf champion on the state and national level. Inducted into the Kalamazoo, Michigan and the Indiana Golf Hall of Fame. She teaches several different Bible studies and speaks to youth and adults throughout the country. She has taught at Summit Ministries in Colorado. Today, Nancy is currently chairman of Rock Organization Inc. and founder and executive director of Anchors Away. Tell us about your ministry.

Nancy Fitzgerald: Yes. Well, thank you for that intro, and I will say that all that work was done as a nonbeliever. I, at the age of five, witnessed the death of my brother by drowning and was blamed for it by the babysitter. Let me just say it was a day of horror for me is a five year old, and as a result of that moment, and not being able to process that with our parents, who obviously were just distraught over the loss of a two year old, I did decide when I was five that I would no longer ever consider a God to believe. Then we were raised agnostic. We were my grandparents were not believers, aunts, uncles, cousins, school friends, nothing. And so my attitude, I think, is a young child. I had a

heart toward God for some reason. But at that moment, when my father came to tell me that that my brother Stephen had died, that he is in heaven, which is the first time I had heard my parents ever talk about heaven. But heaven, like, I had no idea what that meant, but I said to my dad, I said, If he's with God, he won't be happy. If God is nice and loving, why did he allow Steven to die? And my dad just looked at me and I told him he is not happy. Don't tell me he's happy there. And that was the end of it.

Nancy Fitzgerald: But the beginning of a 32 year search to find meaning and defined purpose in life. And I went through life broken on the inside. On the outside, I was great. I was doing great in school. Of course, golf took me all over the world. I had a lot of trophies, but you know, God teaches us in the scriptures, trophies don't mean all that much to him. He's really not so impressed, but kind of hurt my feelings. But I got to the point where when I was in graduate school, in post graduate school earning those degrees, I did that because I love learning, but also kind of trying to figure out life. And I remember asking Christian friends of mine at that time, Why do you believe? Why do you believe in a God that would allow a two year old to drown in a five year old to get playing with it? Just answer that question, and I would consider your faith. But right now I have none.

Reuel Sample: You're still asking these questions. This was two decades after the death of your of your sibling.

Nancy Fitzgerald: Yes, absolutely. And I, with such passion I wanted, I think my soul wanted to know. But I was so angry with God. And then I just got more and more angry with the Christian Church because I did not find a single Christian who a person who identified as Christian that was able to give me the reason for the hope that they had. And it was so annoying. It was time after time when I was just the way I was raised. I mean, I mean, I don't know. And obviously, to most all of them, their faith wasn't that important. So my understanding was then why should it be important to me if it's not to you for crying out loud? Maybe there is no God. So that's what I carried on in, and then I got married and have four kids. And I remembered sitting down one day just on my stairs. I put the kids out. We had four kids in six years, so they were all taking a rest or nap. I remember sitting on the stairs thinking. This is not the life I thought I would have. I have everything the world has told me they have. My husband's a heart surgeon. We're doing well that way. It's playing great golf, but loving my kids.

Nancy Fitzgerald: But I was miserable. And at that point because I couldn't find any answers to questions, I began to do massive research myself by going to the library, starting to look into commentaries. And one thing after another when I got into Josh McDowell's book. You know, how about the Bible and the reliability of the scripture, the defense of the faith? I was overwhelmed by the evidence. Totally overwhelmed and realized that after trying to fight with the Lord over a year and a half of reading and arguing with him about people that were defending the faith, I finally had to lay the pen down and and and just say, God, I can no longer fight you. I surrender to you because when you've got 2000 prophecies in the Scripture, no other religious book has them. When you have 48 standalone prophecies and the coming Messiah and Jesus fulfilled all 48 of them, the odds of that are inhuman, overwhelming. I cannot, and I will not allow myself intellectually to believe something that now obviously is true and I. I decided, then, that I would put my faith in God. I would learn more about who He was, what He had called me to do, what my purpose is. And then at that point I said I will do whatever it takes to make sure that people that carry your name know why they do that.

Reuel Sample: You went through the the same spiritual battle that Josh McDowell did. Evidence That Demands a Verdict. That's what he did. And you were able to shortcut a little bit with what he did. But there is no short cutting the pain and the agony of all those years of searching.

Nancy Fitzgerald: No, it was crazy. And then my then I started flying all over the country because I could play golf. People would listen to me. This is what's so funny. You know, it wasn't because I was some academic genius. It was just because they were fascinated that a woman could play that kind of golf and still be able to think so, whatever. But I did that, and then my son at that time was 17, and I said to him, Scotty, what are you going to do if you get a roommate like me when you go away to school? You said, What is that? And I said, Well, you know, like an atheist agnostic. He said, Mom, I don't even know what that means.

Nancy Fitzgerald: And you now point to parents. And a reminder to myself, sometimes we get so involved in ministry. I was just on this, you know, a bent to find answers kind of journey for a couple of years. I had. Quiet time with the kids, we have Bible study in the mornings with the kids, but I never shared with them a piece of that journey because

I was trying to figure out the answers myself more and more and more. And now we have a book that's almost 400 pages long a handbook for kids with 21 lessons in it that that is an easy to learn compilation of the questions that agnostics and atheists have about their faith. And now that Christians have about their faith that have gone unanswered.

Nancy Fitzgerald: So I asked my son to bring some of his friends over. I want to answer their questions they have about God. Let's do it. And they have the same questions I have as an atheist. So I started just taking my notes and writing some lesson plans and kind of working through that. And they loved it. And I did it from from January to the end of April. And then the next year I had another kid coming, so I did it again. And then we moved, went to a church and it grew. And then we move it out of the church into our home and within. I would say, eight to 10 years, we had one hundred and fifty six seniors in high school for 13 different schools packed into our great room. They were there to learn they were there and they defied statistics because kids don't want to learn this and that and the other, well, guess what? They were coming early to get a good seat. They were squished in there. I lectured to them an hour and a half. They did not move now, and I did have PowerPoints and a bunch of videos and stop the clips to show them. That's how I taught Worldview. Mostly by video clips. They could see it, but they were there. Not because I'm such a great lecture or even teacher. They were there because they were starving for truth.

Reuel Sample: Unlike sitting through a social studies class or a math class and try to get a teenager to sit still for 10 minutes, much less an hour and a half is that God puts into each one of us a hunger to learn is that we're hardwired to learn about God, we're hardwired to learn about Jesus, and so naturally, people will gravitate towards that if it's done correctly.

Nancy Fitzgerald: If we teach Socratic. I teach Socratically. I'm always open for questions. I know Chuck Colson after I met him, he he was something else. He couldn't believe what we were doing. And so I talked with him in Indianapolis and I let him see some of our videos. He called me back. He said, Those are the worst videos I've ever seen. Talking about, yeah. He said, how you can allow students to interrupt you. And I said, Chuck, I'm not speaking to them, I'm Socratically teaching them. I want them to ask questions because when they ask question, that means they're learning. I don't

want this to bounce off with them. That's why they're such good listeners in this. But honestly, it just caught on. It was ridiculous. We had a live feed downstairs, 20 small group leaders, so the house was insane. They were parking. Luckily, we had 10 acres of land, so they were parking all over the acreage. I didn't care where they parked. I could care less, but they were there to learn and it was absolutely phenomenal, not what they had learned academically, but how their life had changed. They understood their purpose. They understood how much they're loved by God. They knew that the iris of the eye and the thumbprint are unique to them. They know, they know, know some of them for the first time. You are not a mistake. You are called to love God and love others. That is your that is your overall goal and to do this by discipleship. And the thing is, I I think just as parents and grandparents listening to this, perhaps we want our kids to say that almighty sanctification, you know, a prayer that that we would become Christians. You know that that I believe that you are my savior and come into my heart. And you know, it's that if that is a prayer of truly of the heart, that is just the beginning. Parents, that is not the end.

Reuel Sample: How did you how did you morph all that into Anchors Away? Because just to recap, you just started this by talking to your son about your own faith journey. And how did that morph into an actual Anchors Away ministry?

Nancy Fitzgerald: Well, I tell you, we were going about, I don't know, 10, 12, 14 years or so. And Chuck Colson did come to town, heard about us, had a conversation with him, and he actually wanted to start what we know, what we used to call the Centurion Programs of a hundred Christian leaders coming together and learning worldviews so they could teach it in their communities across the country. It's now called the Colson Fellow Program. But that was his dream is to have people learn worldview and then take it around the world because he realized he realized very clearly. And he said on our website, If you go there anchorsaway.org, you will see a video. There he is on that video. I save that video because he said this should be our number one mission field is to reach young people before they go to school. And it's our number one mission now to be that training center to teach the adult population Christian adults. Please let us teach you how to teach this. Open up your home and change not only the lives of your own children, but also of those in your community. Let's do it community by community, and we are offering that.

Nancy Fitzgerald: That's that's the pulse beat of what we do. And it all started with Chuck Colson when I started putting these notes together and book form and we I traveled all over the country teaching people how to teach this to their youth. And now, because that was extraordinarily burdensome for me, we now have an online learning system where anybody that goes to our website can begin instantly to learn world view by going to our boot camp by by going through The Unanswered Smoke Mirrors and God curriculum we have just for anybody. You don't have to be trained to teach it, but just go through it. Read it, do it with your kids.

Nancy Fitzgerald: We offer all this on our website, but I'm telling you, kids are so thirsty and hungry for this, and I tire of kids thinking that all there is to life is to just say that prayer of salvation. And you will be saved and your life will be happy ever after. And we're not being honest with these kids. How on earth do you say a prayer and give your life to a God you do not know? I don't understand the thinking behind this.