

MASTERS by Winn Claybaugh, August 2021
Marcus Black
“Asleep at the Wheel: Taking Back Control of Your Life”



Marcus Black is a bestselling author, speaker, life coach, podcast host, and creative storyteller. Recently named one of *LA Weekly's* Top 10 Keynote Speakers to Watch in 2021, this former pastor and current urban missionary is dedicated to spreading his message of love, hope, and positivity to the entire world. Interviewed by **Winn Claybaugh**, Marcus gets right to the point in sharing his how-to's: how to overcome pain, grief, adversity, anxiety, and more. Let the messages of this interview flow over you, and you'll feel alive and refreshed!

WC: Hey everybody, Winn Claybaugh here and welcome to a wonderful issue of **MASTERS** podcasts. And I'm just so grateful for today because how this all came about for me to interview this wonderful man is—I've shared this many, many times. The first person that I interviewed, over 22 years ago, was the man Vidal Sassoon. And through all of that I became very good friends with his daughter, Eden Sassoon, and we have been very connected over the last several years, mostly in doing philanthropy work. I call on her and she calls on me to support the different charities and causes that we're passionate about. But Eden is also passionate about her own personal growth. She's been very transparent in the struggles that she's gone through and the things that she's working on. And she's also very transparent in sharing the mentors that have helped her along the way: people like Tim Storey and many, many others. Well, the man that I am interviewing today, Marcus Black, is one of those people and so recently Eden Sassoon, after interviewing Marcus, reached out to me and said, "Winn, this is your next guy. This is your next guy, you have to interview him." And so of course, I do my research. I want to make sure that I'm very aware of the responsibility that I have in this platform that I have, to deliver the best of the best of the best and that's what today is going to be all about. Marcus, first of all, just welcome to **MASTERS** and thank you so much for your last-minute saying yes to doing this interview.

MB: Man, Winn, I just have to say how elated I am to be here with you and your community and I have to thank you. Thank you for your heart to literally speak life into people. Thank you for your heart to have me here so that we can impact hearts and lives, because that's what it's all about. So, I just appreciate you, everything you stand for, not only in the beauty industry but just in the world as a human, as a man. Salute, and I'm excited for an incredible conversation today.

WC: Dang. Okay, you can all hear it already. You can hear the passion and the fire in this man's voice and in his message. Let me just share with you a little bit more

information about who Marcus is. He is a former pastor, a current urban missionary, which we want to learn what that's all about, providing leadership and mentoring programs to several inner-city schools. Recently, Marcus was named one of *L.A. Weekly's* Top Ten Keynote Speakers to Watch in 2021, and we have him here. He is a bestselling author. I want to talk about his book, which is titled *Asleep at the Wheel: Taking Back Control of Your Life*. What a great topic. What a great subject, Marcus, that we're going to jump into today as well. He is a bestselling author, traveling speaker, a life coach, he has his own podcast, a creative storyteller, which, I love storytellers. And your message of spreading love, hope, and positivity to the entire world is absolutely something that resonates with all of us. You have spoken to tens of thousands of people all over the U.S. and several countries around the world. And, Marcus, you talk about this life-changing experience and I, for some reason—I don't know the story completely but I want to jump into it because I think that our listeners would be interested in this as well—a life-changing story where you nearly lost your life at the age of 18 and how that just became this amazing paradigm shift for you. Can you tell us that story and what that meant?

MB: Man, I would be honored to share that story. I always tell people that I had a dance with death, and I will share that with you today. But before I get into that story, I feel like it's a little bit important to give you a little bit of the story behind the story. I grew up in an environment that was really tough, poverty stricken. Mississippi is where I'm from; that's my roots. There were different ills within my family: alcoholism, lots of verbal abuse. And this caused me to start struggling with crippling anxiety. Anybody ever been there? I know I was and so I struggled with this for a long time and my anxiety centered around the fear of my life being taken because a lot of times I equated reality to losing my life. So, what I envisioned was myself being buried alive, literally ending my life, like ceasing to exist, no longer living, breathing, and me being buried alive. This is what I would envision. So, I had these crippling anxiety attacks for years and years and years and that leads me to the question you asked, which was my wakeup call. And it came at age 18 in the form of this car accident where I was just hanging with some friends. It was a routine night, nothing out of the ordinary, and we were on the way home, four of us in a car. As we literally get on the highway, I'm falling asleep, which is okay; I'm not driving. And my friend who was driving was just kind of listening to music, everything was good before I remember hearing *BOOM*, and it was like the loudest explosion you could even ever imagine. And in that moment, I was startled. I opened my eyes. I looked to my friend and I asked, "Hey, man, what just happened?" Because I'm surprised that we're still okay at this point. He says, "I don't know." He's yelling and then my friend behind him is yelling, "We're going to die, we're going to die!" And the car starts jumping and it starts shaking *d-d-d-d-d-d*, fishtailing. We fly off the highway 75 miles per hour nearing a bridge into a massive median about 25 to 30 feet deep. The car is flying fast and furious style through the air. Literally, it was like the fastest, slowest moment of my life. Glass is flying, smacking me in the face. The trees are inside of my car, smacking me in the face. We knocked down six trees. If you could imagine the speed and the impact of this accident before the car spins in

the air backwards and *BOOM*, we hit a massive tree. The tree splits the car, crushes us in that metal steel like an accordion. We're squashed like sardines. And it was in that moment that I sat and I was fearful to even open my eyes because all I could think is, *You are about to die without having ever lived*, and my worst nightmare had come to pass. And that's where I sat in that car. However, comma, spoiler alert! If you're listening to the sound of my voice today, I did not die, but that led me on this journey of discovery to figure out why. And that was a wakeup call for me because in that moment I realized how fragile life is. In that moment I realized that I spent all of these years asking these questions, asking the question, why me? Why am I suffering? Why does my family have these difficulties and these ills? Why? Why? Why? Why? And it was that experience that woke me up and made me realize that, listen, we can spend all our time asking that question and waste time that we can never get back or I can ask myself a different question, which is what? Not why. What? What was it for? Because there is a purpose to your pain, and everything I'm doing now—traveling the world speaking, sharing here with you on this incredible podcast—all because I literally embraced that pain and I turned it into my power and converted it to purpose to be able to give back. That was a wakeup call for me, my brother.

WC: Now, you talk about different mentors and coaches in your life that also had a huge influence and have put you on this journey, including your mom. And so, anytime that anybody wants to talk about their moms, I am ready to listen. So, can you talk about Mom and how she had that influence? I know that you also mention a football coach, perhaps. Is that accurate?

MB: Absolutely, man, those were the first ones. Mom was a source, she was a rock, and it was actually her who led me to forgiveness with my father because there was a time in my younger years where there was just a lot of hatred brewing in my heart. And for anybody who has hatred brewing in your heart, I want you to know that is a recipe for disaster. That is a recipe for an internal death. And so, my mom was telling me, "Listen, son, you can't hate your dad, you can't hate your dad." And I was like, "Yes I can. I can do what I want to do." She said, "You cannot hate your dad." And the revelation I had was, if this lady can say that, as a spouse, as a person who experienced firsthand everything, the worst of the worst, can say that, who am I? Who am I to be this one who holds onto this grudge? And that speaks to the character of who my mom is. She was a human being who looked me in my eyes every day when even my dad, sometimes, and the world told me I wasn't enough, she told me I was. When the world told me I wasn't good enough, smart enough, she told me I was brilliant. When the world told me I was too big, I was ugly, I didn't belong, I didn't fit in, she told me I was beautiful and that I belong in my own skin and wherever I found myself. And so, she was a literal hero for me as I would continue to walk out my journey of self-discovery. And it was her voice reverberating through my head that allowed me to start to believe. Les Brown, another one of my mentors says, "Listen, sometimes you gotta believe in someone else's belief in you until your belief kicks in."

WC: I love that message because that is a gift that we give to each other. And I've gone through that in my life. I've gone through that in my life at different stages when I was young. But I've been through that even at my age, in my 60s, where you sometimes just feel like what's the point? And there are people in my life that believe in me when I have a difficult time believing in myself. And so, I love that quote from Les Brown.

MB: Absolutely, brother, you're spot on. And I think that's a message for a lot of people today because many of you, you want to grow, you want to advance in your career, you want to literally rise up and fulfill the purpose of the mission that you're here for. You want to live a fulfilling life but you wrestle with this belief, this lack of belief. And I always tell people, listen, belief is the bedrock for everything. You don't know what bedrock is? It's literally a foundation. And so the question you have to ask yourself is what do you believe, because you become what you believe, good or bad. So, if you can't believe in yourself right now, for whatever reason, you better believe in somebody else's belief in you until yours kicks in. And that's what my mom was for me. My football coach also was instrumental because he was tough on me and I hated it. "Why are you so tough on me?" But that taught me a very valuable lesson early. Listen, teachability is everything and we can get very prideful and feel like we know the best way but there are people that I can come to in the world, like Winn, who is where he is for a very specific reason. He didn't get here by chance. He didn't get here by accident. So, why would I think I know more and be prideful because I've accomplished some things that I can't sit at the table and ask and receive. And my coach taught me how important that was. And instilling that principle in me opened so many doors and set me up for the life and the trajectory that I'm on now with all these incredible coaches who pour into me and I'm just able to receive and apply, receive and apply.

WC: See, I like the difference that you share between your mom's wisdom to you, your mom's message to you that you're valuable, you're good enough, but then your coach came along and said, yeah, I believe that, too, but you're not fulfilling your potential here. You're not showing up the way you need to. If you really want to fulfill this dream that your mom has for you or this belief that your mom has in you, you suck right now and you need to change all of that. Can you talk about that a little bit?

MB: I can, man. You're exactly right. So, as I remember one day, we were in spring practice and it's like these huge guys, I mean behemoth human beings on my team, several of them went on to have NFL careers, and I was out there with them and literally my entire basis was off because I was out there and I couldn't even get in a proper stance. And so what happened was, we came into the building and we were watching the film, the playback, and my coach, in front of everyone, with a red laser, put a dot on me and said, "Who is this? Who is this?" And you know that's embarrassing. You don't want to raise your hand but it was me so eventually I have to sulkily say, "It's me." And he said, "What are you doing? Look at yourself. Do you see yourself?" And I'm thinking, *Ah that one hurt.*

And then you might be thinking, like, *Man, that's kind of harsh. That's kind of cruel to do that in front of everyone*, but this is the part. He did that, he pointed it out, but when the practice was over and everyone was leaving he pulled me into his office. He didn't allow me to leave. He said, "Hey, I need to talk to you." He said, "Did you see what I did? Did you see what I pointed out?" He said, "Now come here." He said, "I want you to do it this way instead." And he spent the next 30 minutes hand crafting how I should move, how I should position myself, how I should stand, because he did—you're exactly right, he said, "That was really bad, but I'm going to show you how to make it better. If you're willing to listen, I will transform the trajectory of what your play looks like." And he did and I listened and I bought in and I made the adjustment and I went on to receive all these awards and accolades as a football player, from making simple tweaks but most importantly being open to someone's teaching and coaching and not allowing it to make me feel offended and go talk about him and quit.

WC: So, Marcus, as we record this interview, so this is July of 2021, and I say that because I know people are going to be listening to this in 20 years from now, as well, so to give them a context. And we've been through 18 months of a pandemic, the murder of George Floyd, social unrest, Asian hate, and I understand that from my perspective and I'm trying to grow and expand my perspective by studying and asking questions. But again, it's through the lens that I have. It's my lens of I'm a white man, I was raised in a white family and a white school and white neighborhood. I experienced the pandemic. You know, being isolated with my family, in many ways because of the quarantine, was a wonderful experience. I always said that I wanted more time with my daughter. Well, guess what? I got it. I got it. We couldn't leave the house and so that's when she learned how to ride a bike, that's when we started all kinds of different traditions with each other and game nights. So that was a great, great experience. So again, I experienced all of this from my perspective. But the only way that I'm going to grow, that I'm going to move forward, that I'm going to be a better contributor to this planet, is to understand all of that from somebody else's perspective. So, I guess this is kind of a—it's quite the loaded question, from your perspective, talk to us about the pandemic, even the murder of George Floyd. As a Black man in America, from your perspective, from your lens, what does that mean? What do we need to know? That was a lot, right?

MB: It's a whole lot but it's actually something I spent a lot of time talking about over the last 12 months. So, you know, the first six months was bizarre and then over the last 12 months I actually was pulled into my city and a lot of leadership circles to speak to a lot of the city leadership, the state leadership, church leadership; just as a voice of diversity. And a voice where you can literally ask any question because if we don't have the conversations, how can growth happen? If we run from every conversation that should be had, we'll never grow. You can't learn if you don't literally address the things that are on the table. To talk about it doesn't make it bad, right? It's bad if you don't talk about it. So, all of that to say, yeah man. So, I'll start with the pandemic. That was a lot and people were not meant to be isolated. People were not meant to go into this place where we don't have

each other because we are the greatest gift to one another when we function in love. When we're grounded and when we're healthy and we're whole, we literally make each other's lives better. We bring joy to each other, peace to each other, hope to each other, care to each other, compassion to each other. Oh, but if there was ever a time where that was not the case, the last 18 months was certainly testing. And I think it began with the fear of uncertainty because there was a fear of uncertainty when they were first talking about this whole coronavirus. Nobody knows. What is that? What is that? You're telling me it's going to kill the world? And then nobody knows. Then there's misinformation, then there's agendas and it's all these things and so I'm watching the world go to war over a sickness. And I'm watching them at each other's throats and yelling and I'm listening and I'm like, hey man, what if everybody's right? And I'm going somewhere with that thought. What if everybody's right? What if both sides are right?

WC: Well, I've heard you say that life doesn't fight fair.

MB: Yep.

WC: I want to read something, and I pulled this off of your website or maybe it was some blog that talks about your book. So, I'm going to read this. "We all have passions and purpose in life but life can be extremely cruel and beats us down time and time again. We eventually lose sight of our God-given goals, dreams, and passions in life, causing us to live every day sad, depressed, unhappy, and unfulfilled. In this plan, we will go on a journey of healing and self-discovery so that you never spend another day sleepwalking through life." So, with all of that, which, I'm thinking that you wrote that. Unless you have a fabulous editor, I have a feeling that came directly from you.

MB: It came from my heart.

WC: I bet it did. And you say that life does not fight fair. Okay, so the pandemic—let alone, and we'll get into the social unrest, but let alone life does not fight fair, this pandemic. And you say that we're not meant to be isolated like that. And I've heard you say that you're a bit of an introvert. Is that true?

MB: Uh, I'm getting more that way as I'm older. I love people and people are my passion but as I grow old and evolve and get older, I think it depends on the day, to be honest.

WC: So, we're not meant to be isolated because when we're isolated we start to have these negative beliefs about ourselves.

MB: Yes.

WC: And as we were talking about earlier, we need people in our lives who believe in us when we sometimes have that difficult time believing in ourselves. And then to

be isolated during the pandemic, because we were forced to be isolated, could only compound that so, can you—

MB: Exactly.

WC: —talk about that a little bit?

MB: Exactly, man. That was perfect, a perfect summation of where we are. So, basically everybody goes in and everybody's fearful and nobody knows what's happening. Everybody's here and all these different narratives from the news and the television, all the different places, all the different sources of information. Everybody's trusting their source of information is the source of information that is right and next thing you know our hearts start to become discouraged. We start to get at each other's throat and this is one of those things that, listen, there were people who lost homes. There were families who lost income. There were business owners who worked their entire life to pour out their heart and soul and lost everything. I serve for a nonprofit. I work in the inner city and we were fortunate to keep our doors open because a lot can't say that. But we all had to take pay cuts to make it happen and cut the budget to be able to stay afloat. You talk about life not fighting fair. No, no, none of that is fair but it's all about perspective because what that did, honestly, if you look at it the right way, was force every single one of us to have to face the music and look in the mirror because it eliminated every distraction you have from having to deal with you. I'm talking the internal work. I'm talking the soul work, the work that we all must do to literally free ourselves from self-imposed prisons to grow. So, listen, when you look back over that time, you had concerts, you had professional sports, you had movies, you had outings, you had social gatherings, you had clubs. All of these things shut down. Gyms shut down. Any place where people gathered shut down and that forced us to have to look in the mirror and deal with the good and the bad and the ugly of who we are. And the difficulty was we needed to keep communication and community, even while isolated. But for those who did not have a community and a support system to tap into, they started to see all of the parts of themselves they don't like and they started to accept that as the total of who they are, as the whole of who they are. They started to accept the bad parts as, "I must be bad, I must be greedy, I must be ugly, I must be, I must be all of these negative things," rather than look at the total picture and say, "Hey, there's some parts of me I love and there's some parts of me not so much, but I'm going to work on those so that I can become a healthier, better, more whole person." But it kind of crippled the world because it took away our relationships, those reminders, because relationships are accountability and those are people who get to remind you of how great you are when you start to think "less than" about yourself.

WC: Wow. I'm going to give our listeners a little preview of some other things that you're going to share with us because we're going to get into some how-to's. And some of the things that you shared with me in advance of us doing this interview, Marcus: how to overcome pain, grief, and adversity. How to overcome anxiety.

How to discover your purpose, and we're going to get into that but I've heard you say that it's okay to not be okay. But it's not okay to stay that way.

MB: Yes, I say that often and the thing is, so many people think that it's not okay for them to not be okay. They think that, *I can never have an off day. I can never have a down moment. I can never have a struggle season.* You might be struggling right now and so I always tell people, "Hey, it's okay not to be okay." If you're not okay that is okay. And part of the biggest thing you need to do to find success is to give yourself grace. You give it to everybody else; give yourself grace to say, "Hey, I'm only human." Struggling doesn't make me weak, it makes me human. Needing a breather doesn't make me less than, it makes me a functioning human who needs, and it's okay to need. But then I say, "But you cannot get lost in that space. You cannot lay and wallow around in the mud for the rest of your days." So, if you give yourself grace to say it's okay to feel this way, then you allow yourself to fully process those things you're going through internally. But then you give yourself a time limit. The people that I coach, I'm like "All right, you can go have a pity party. You can go feel bad for yourself and cry. It's okay to struggle but you can't stay there." We can't live there. So, you give yourself 48 hours, 72 hours, however many, you set the time limit, but when that time is up, it's time to get up and go back and get to it because life is continuing to tick and it's not waiting on you. That's why I say it's not fair. It's not going to wait until you're ready for a time in and to get back in the game. It's going to keep moving whether you are growing with it or not. So, that's why I say give yourself a time limit.

WC: I like that time limit. I remember a mentor that I had years ago who would talk about that, that she actually would put a number of days attached to certain life crises. So, if you lost your job, okay you have 48 hours to cry over that. If you lost money, somebody stole money from you, you've got 24 hours to cry over that one. Have you ever put time limits on some of those things? Because some people think, *Okay, I have this loss and I now have the next couple of years to wallow in this.* Do you put a time period on it for people?

MB: I put a time limit on everything. You have to, because listen, what that wakeup call in the accident did to me, tying all of that in, is it let me realize the brevity of life, that life will pass you by and there's too many people out here, AMC-ing. If you don't know what that means, I call that walking dead. There's too many people asleep—

WC: *[Laughs]*

MB: —at the wheel, just going through the motions. I cannot allow you to do that so you can say, "Okay, well I'll just wallow in this for a couple years and I'll eventually bounce back," but you're not promised two years so you can't think that way. I'm going to give myself a couple of days to just sit in it and take it in and process and heal unapologetically, but whenever that time I said is up, I've

got to get back to it because life isn't waiting on me. Purpose isn't waiting on me. My mission isn't waiting on me, it's up to me to show up.

WC: So what does that look like for you? Give us an example. And I love going a little deep and asking the people that I interview to be transparent, so give us an example of something that happened to you and that you gave yourself a time frame to wallow in this. So, I want to know what was that experience, what was that occasion? And then I kind of want to know what that wallowing looks like for you. I think I heard you say that nature is a big thing for you and—

MB: Come on, yes it is.

WC: —so, you got to get out in nature and that's part of that process. Can you share that with us?

MB: Absolutely, man. So, I might be a little bit crazy at this point and I don't do a lot of wallowing. I'll give you an example. I could think back to several of my worst memories. Here's the thing, when you've gone through as much as I have, you've been to hell and back, you know that there's a path to hell and back. You know that you're going to come out on the other side. So at that point I become expectant to say, "Oh, this feels bad. Oh, this hurts, this is difficult." Don't hear me wrong. When I go through painful—and nobody's exempt, I go through painful experiences. But when they come, when crises come in my life, I am now waiting to see alright, how does this work in the grand scheme of the picture that's the masterpiece of my life? So, a few years ago, I remember I was working a temporary job because I was struggling to find work. The economy was crashed. Nobody could find jobs and I finally found a good job. It was a temporary job. My wife and I were struggling, about to become evicted, we didn't know where our money was going to come, how we were going to pay bills, paying all these student loans off, and I remember we shared a car that had a sunroof caved in. I'm just painting—I mean this was horrible. Sunroof caved in, literally it would just pop up and rain out of nowhere in Oklahoma and I would get rained on in a suit because of this, and that was the type of situation we had. But this particular day, I didn't even have the car, my wife had it, and the job decided they were cutting budgets and rent was due. I didn't know how we were going to pay that bill and my job said, "Well, we're sorry. Because you're a temporary, you got to go first." So, they literally packed my belongings. There was nothing I had. I didn't have a bag or a case, a briefcase to put them in. They packed my belongings, I'm laughing but it's not funny, and they literally pulled a Walmart bag out of someone's trash can, took some papers out of it and put my belongings in that bag and said, "Here you are sir, have a nice life." I didn't have a ride! So now I'm walking down the highway in a suit, with no car in 100 degrees, sweating and thinking to myself, *I don't know how this plays in the grand scheme of my life but I cannot wait for the triumph that comes on the other end of this trial.*

WC: [Laughs]

MB: Because there will always be a triumph on the other side of trial. Mountains are not given to you in your life to be a barrier from your greatness. They are given to you to take you higher, if only you're willing to climb. So, when you talk about the wallowing, for me I don't do a lot of that but I do, in order to keep myself from going to that space, have very set rituals where I get out in nature on a daily basis and I protect my peace. I eliminate the distractions. But we'll get into some of that later. But yeah, I love it, man, I love this conversation.

WC: You said that it's funny but it's not funny. What do they say: one day we're going to laugh about this. And it's like, well, maybe we could laugh about it sooner. Why do we have to wait? Let's laugh about it now. That will help us get through it, right?

MB: I literally do that a lot because here's the thing. I didn't always do that. People are like, "Well, did you always do that? It's kind of crazy." No, but life has taught me so many times. Listen, everything you've ever been through, every struggle, every heartache, every trial, every setback, you came out on the other side. So, this will be no different. One of the things I'm openly—I'm getting back into your question—that I openly struggle with now is my physical health and fitness. That's been an Achilles heel. I lost 100 pounds pre-pandemic and then I found it—

WC: [Laughs]

MB: —during the pandemic. So, here we are, I'm back on this journey again but I'm never going to give up and so I finally made my mind, I got a trainer, I got all the health and wellness things, I'm going all in because it's a vital part of my life and what I do. So, I started and I was three weeks in, hadn't missed a day at the gym, started to feel good, started to get my strength back, starting to feel excited and then the next day, three weeks and one day in, I popped my calf; it tears. Here's a setback. That hurt. Not only physically, it hurt my emotional state, my psychological state, because I'm thinking, *What am I going to do now? How am I going to ever get back on track if this keeps happening?* But I didn't even give myself a day. I said, "You know what? I'm not going to focus on what I can't do, I'm going to focus on what I can." And I found little exercises that I could do to tide me over. I focused way more on the eating at that point and taking in that part; the diet, the meal plan. I focused on the supplementation. I focused on what I could control until my body healed so I could bounce back, and I'm back now. So, this is what I'm telling you. When these things happen, count them as an opportunity for growth because they're producing a strength in you that you don't even know when or where you're going to need, but you will need them somewhere on the journey.

WC: I love these conversations because, when it comes to playing the piano or cutting hair or some skillset, playing a sport, people don't assume that you should automatically know how to do those things. If I want to know how to play the piano, I need to practice, I need to have a coach, I need to have a teacher, I

need to devote hours and hours to this. It's a skillset that you learn. People get that. But when it comes to dealing with some of the life struggles that you're mentioning, why do people just assume that they should automatically know how to handle that? So, everything that we've been through, you're going to come out the other side, as you say, but you learn something and what you learned along the way is a life skill that we need to apply to the next life struggle that we go through.

MB: Oh, my goodness! That's so powerful because you're right, we do assume that we should automatically know. But listen, life doesn't come with a manual. Nobody knows how to do this, and the assumption that we make is because we see the other people further along or we see other people ahead of where we are. We start to play the comparison game. Side note: you should never play that game, you cannot win, and as you do this you only compare yourself to the people you perceive as doing better than you. So you do this and run yourself into the ground and you feel like, *Man I had this setback I must be doing something wrong. There must be something wrong with me. I must not have what it takes to succeed at a high level*, not knowing how many setbacks and failures that person you're comparing yourself to had. So, instead of looking at all of these external things, focus on what you can control, which is you and how you respond to the things that happen. When life throws a Tyson haymaker at you, how do you respond to it in an appropriate way that gets you closer to your desired end goal?

WC: I think this is the perfect time to get into some of these how-to's, then. So, how to overcome pain, grief, and adversity.

MB: I love it, man, and here's the thing: that is probably the greatest gift that I've learned in this life. And you guys, hear me say, when I tell you the story about me walking down that highway in a suit, I had a smile on my face. You can ask real people who know me, like this guy sounds crazy. No, I'm not crazy. This is what I know. People ask me all the time: how are you so inspirational? How are you so motivational? How do you speak with such passion and conviction when you communicate? Listen to me. All inspiration and motivation is, is literally putting one foot in front of the other and the resolve not to give up. So, what I realized is that, listen, nobody's perfect. And we say that all the time but sometimes some people in your eyesight are perfect to you. You might think they're perfect but you don't realize they have silent struggles. So many people smile in front of the camera but die behind the scenes and you don't see that part. You only see their highlight reels. So, the first thing you gotta do is learn to stop putting yourself in a position where you are comparing your real-life experiences, your trauma, to somebody else's highlight reel. And when you can stop doing that, you can start to look at life for what it is and you realize that all success is, is stumbling from failure to failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm. It's literally saying, okay, failing does not make you a failure. So if I bump my head, if I have a setback, if I fail, if my business fails, if I fall down, you've just got to keep getting back up. How many times will you get up? Because all it boils down to is I continue to stay

in the game. It doesn't matter how bad the scoreboard looks, I stay in the game. It doesn't matter what it looks like around me, I stay in the game because a miracle can happen if you stay in the game. All it takes is one moment to transform your entire life. So, you talk about how to overcome pain, you've got to understand that you got to keep going, you got to keep going, you got to keep going. And then you also have to understand that there's a purpose for that pain and when I say there's a purpose for it, pain is not something in your life that's meant to tear you down. I used to be a competitive weightlifter and as I lifted these weights, what they did was they'd literally tear my muscles down. If you know someone who lifts weights, all it does is literally break, break, tear your muscles apart and then they heal stronger. That's where strength comes from. And listen, the same thing is true of your life. There is no strength apart from struggle. There's no strength in your life that comes without struggle. Struggle builds strength. It builds character. It builds resources and tools and things that you need but that doesn't come without the pain. You don't get the testimony without the test. You don't get this beautiful, desired outcome without having to fight along the way. And when you understand—matter of fact, I got to witness the birth of sea turtles and as this was happening there were hundreds of turtles coming out of these eggs and there was one little turtle, and I can't think of a more powerful message to send the point of your pain. This little turtle was coming out of that egg and a few of them were newborn, fresh out of an egg, fighting for their life, fighting, fighting, fighting, little arms just flailing trying to flip back over so they could keep up with the other turtles. Well, one lady decided she couldn't take it anymore so she bends down to grab the turtle. She says, "I'm going to pick up this turtle because I cannot stand to see him suffer." And the endangered species specialist saw her and he yelled at her. He said, "Stop it, ma'am! You cannot help the turtle." And she said, "What do you mean?" She was offended. "What do you mean I can't help him? He's struggling!" And he said, "You don't understand that the strength that baby needs to survive in the ocean is built on the fight to the water." Listen to me. When you struggle, when you go through pain, when you go through adversity, you learn to fight, you learn to flex, you learn how to dig deep and find the greatest version of yourself that you didn't even know existed, if you choose not to give up. And then you evolve and then you level up and then you learn and then you grow and then you go and then you push and you do more. But when you understand the purpose of your pain, it does not defeat you, it becomes literally something that propels you into the greatest possible version of yourself in the future.

WC: How much of this comes naturally to you and how much have you had to work for? Because I'm very transparent. I've always told people that happiness does not come naturally to me, it never has. I have to work at it every single day, and I could literally spend hours telling you exactly the routine that I have to keep myself on track. To keep myself on track with my happiness, with being positive, with having purpose and passion, because none of it is by accident. It's all on purpose and I have to work at it all the time. How much do you have to work at it?

MB: It's very hard work. Listen, we're all born that way. We're born happy but then life hits us. And when life hits, this is where it gets into it doesn't fight fair and it gets taken from you. So then the only way to get back to that original state that you were in a baby, where you just like, you know, oh it's a cool world, I get to eat, sleep, you know, not stresses and cares, is if you work. So, the answer to your question is: a lot. That's a daily discipline that I have to work on to put myself in that mindset.

WC: See, it's daily. It's daily. You know, you don't go to Pilates one time. People say, "Gosh, I would give anything to play the piano like you play the piano." Really? Would you give up two, three hours a day of practice and rehearsal for the next 15 years of your life? Would you give that? "I would give anything to be as happy as Marcus is. I would give anything to be as positive and have purpose and passion the way he has." And your answer is, really? Would you give up hours every single day? Because that's what I'm hearing, Marcus. That's what you have to commit to making this happen, correct?

MB: Every. Single. Day. You're exactly right. People always say, "I want what you have." I was like, "Be careful what you wish for because are you willing to go through the hell I went through to get here?" So, be careful comparing yourself to Winn and all these other people you look at and admire, because you don't know the sacrifices they had to make to get to where they are. And that is exactly right when it comes to me and even the speaking. People don't know how much time I put into that. People don't know how many years of sacrifice. While everybody else was going out and partying and turning up and having fun in the club, I was in a book. I was writing down thoughts. I was literally building and crafting in the lab. So, like you said, are you really willing to pay the price as required for you to achieve the goal that you have in your heart?

WC: Let's go into this other one: how to overcome anxiety.

MB: Wooooo! So, that was my Achilles. When I say that crippled me, the first time I ever experienced it was nine years old. And when I say experienced it, I'm not talking about was a little nervous and felt a little—no, I'm talking about felt like I got swallowed up into a vacuum, I went into a black hole, I was being buried alive, hyperventilating, like serious anxiety attacks. And those haunted me like a recurring nightmare for years and years and years and years before that wakeup call happened but they didn't go away. They just started coming a little less frequently because I had a different awareness of how to maximize my life, but they kept coming for years. And this is the thing that I did to defeat the monster's anxiety. And when I say defeat it, don't get me wrong, attacks still try to come today but when they used to come, they used to come about six times a week, six days a week. After my car accident, they came maybe once or twice a week. As I learned some of these things I'm about to teach you, they started coming maybe once a month. And now I haven't had a single attack this entire year. So, I'm about to tell you how we eradicated that and it's a few simple practices. The first one is an immediate thing to do when the attack comes on. When you feel

anxiety creep in your heart and your breath starts to shorten and you have this uncontrollable fear deep down in the pit of your core, you've got to practice grounding. Grounding is a literal technique that snaps you back into reality and out of this conspiracy theory against your own self. So, what you do is, you rub something. Use your five senses, so you start by touching. What do I feel? I literally grab a wall, I rub my skin, I feel the hair, I feel the texture, and then you tell yourself what you feel. And then you look at what you see. Okay, what do I see? I see a color, I see brown, I see green, I see blue. And then as you're doing this, literally, you'll start to feel your nerves start to suppress. You'll see it, you'll feel it, you will feel the shift as you continue. Okay, what do I hear, what do I hear? I hear a sound, I hear the fan buzzing, I hear a voice. Okay, what do I taste and what do I smell? You go through all five senses. As you do that, it pulls you out of that head space and back into reality, which gets into point number two, the second thing you gotta do. You have to live in the moment. Eckhart Tolle talks about *The Power of Now*. Listen, right now is all you have. You can worry about what's going to happen later today, you can worry about what's going to happen tomorrow, next month, next year. We can't control any of it. So, it starts with control and what you can control, which is you. Guess what? That may never happen and you spent all this time worrying for something that never happened. And it might happen and if it does you deal with it when it gets here because then that will be your now. But for now, that's not your now, this is your now. So, you live in this moment and you react to the things that are happening to you and then that gets me to the third thing, is gratitude. In that moment when I become present to myself and what's happening around me right now, this very moment, then I practice gratitude, because we spend so much time focusing on what we don't have. Yeah, you're not where you want to be, yeah you're not where you're going to be, but you're not where you used to be. So, what do you have? Don't tell me what don't you have; what do you have? And when you start taking stock of your health and the breath in your lungs and your eyesight and the ability to hear and the ability to love and the relationships and the roof over your head and food and clothes, you start realizing, "I got a whole lot more things than I often think about," because we take them for granted. And those are literal recipes to keep you from this anxiety. And so once you do that, you've eliminated all of this sideways energy and then you learn what are you on the planet for? What do you want most in this life? What do you want? And I ask people that question all the time and they can't tell me. They can tell me what he wants for me, what she wants for me, what I'm supposed to want. I didn't ask you that. I said, "What do you want?" Because when you can answer that question and you can start to literally chase that, you stop shooting from the hip and you get a laser-focused target that you can go towards. And when you go towards this target with intention, that is space that allows you to wake up and live in purpose. And I always say, when you start to look forward to waking up and what you get to do more than that fear of what may possibly happen, you now can step on anxiety once and for all. And I'm telling you, I'm living proof. The attack will creep in. They used to last like three to five minutes. When they happen now, it's less than 15, maybe 10 seconds, because it will creep in and I'll start to feel it and I'll

do those things I just told you and I'll snap right out of it. I'll start thinking of what I'm grateful for. I'll start living in the present and not worrying about what may happen. *BOOM!* You can kick it to the curb. I'm telling you, try it and see.

WC: You know, I'm sure some people listening to this are like, "Okay, that's too simple." And that's the message. Why do we complicate it? It's supposed to be simple and I think that people who are dismissing this really haven't had the faith or haven't had the conviction of listening to a mentor. Just surrender your belief system about this, your belief that anxiety is much, much bigger than it really is and it is something that we can control, something that we can work on, something that we can manage, and I love it that you broke it down to something so simple; those steps. So, thanks for that.

MB: Absolutely, man. Even with everything, and we don't even have to get into that conversation. You talk about everything that happened with George Floyd. That was crippling, that was debilitating, but—in many ways, for me—but we tried to overcomplicate the solution to that. What do we need to do? How do we change the policy? How do we change the president? How do we—man, it's none of that. None of that is the solution. All of this sounds simple because it is. We make things rocket science. Sit down with somebody who doesn't look, think, believe, or act like you and have a conversation, not for the purpose of you listening to them and them listening to you, not you telling them what they need to know and them telling you what you need to know. No, just sit down. If I sit down with Winn and I get to listen to his heart and he hears my heart and we just focus on a relationship, I'm going to learn how he views the world. He's going to learn how I view it and I'm going to understand why he views the world. He's going to understand and we're going to love each other anyway because our differences don't have to be something that causes us to want to go to war.

WC: See, I love that message. Nowadays it's "If I don't agree with you or you don't agree with me, I'm going to unfriend you." We can't have a dinner party if we are sitting on opposite sides of the table, so to speak. If we have different political or religious points of view, then there's no way that we can sit down and have a conversation where we all learn and benefit from that. For a lot of people those days are gone. They're gone and that's just so heartbreaking. You mentioned before that, because of the death of George Floyd and the social unrest, that in your community you have been asked to speak and to show up as a leader. Can you kind of share with us, you said that there's questions that people just don't want to ask. So if you're a Black man and I'm a white man, what are the questions that somebody like me doesn't want to ask and yet we should be asking those questions?

MB: Man, this is where it gets deep and I've had a lot of these and I give people the permission to ask me any questions, and a lot of the questions I get from many people who obviously if you guys can't see me, I'm not white but I'm very much a bridge between two cultures. And so I give a lot of white people in my community the permission to ask freely. And a lot of questions they ask center around like

why are Black people so ungrateful for what's happening here? Do they hate America? Why this whole kneeling for the flag thing? How can you spit on the face of the troops? Why are they more concerned with police officers and police brutality than Black on Black crime or the rate of crime in their own neighborhoods? They're killing each other at a higher rate. Nobody cares about that, which is also a spit in my face as an urban missionary because I show up every single day and fight that and speak and educate and these young men and women. But anyway, there's organizations in every city that are doing that on the front lines and what I tell people is there's like 11 different issues that are happening in the world around us, but by the time they hit the media, the mainstream media, and they come out, they all kind of get merged and intertwined into like two issues. So, like racism is its own issue. That has nothing to do with police brutality. Police brutality is its own issue. Those have nothing to do with each other but they do have some overlap. But when they come across the media it's like police are only brutal towards Black people, and that's not true. So, I try to get people to realize that we are oversimplifying that conversation and overcomplicating the other conversations, the ones that should be simple. And so what I tell people is this. Listen, I don't believe in good or bad cops. I don't believe in good or bad—like I don't even really believe in good or bad people. I think that there are good and bad choices and every human being makes good choices and every human being makes bad choices. And the choices you make are determined by your life experience, what you've gone through and what you've been through, and your environment, the environment you're in. And so what you see people doing is literally based on those couple of things. So, what I started doing is trying to figure out, okay, I have been abused by police. I don't talk about that all the time. I have, I have been slammed on the car, accused of having drugs, spread apart, yelling, and people are like, "Well, if Black people would just comply, they wouldn't die." Oh, my goodness. If you've ever been in the situation where there are six officers, there's dogs barking, it's frantic, I'm afraid. I've never been in this situation. I got one officer yelling at me, "Get out and put your hands up." I got another officer yelling, "Don't move." Okay, what do I—what do you mean comply? What does comply mean? I don't know what to do right now. So, I'm painting this picture, not as an excuse but to show people. It's easy to sit back and judge from afar, but if you sit down and get to know me, you'll know that, like that experience was traumatic for me. It traumatized me for life. That happened also when I was 18 but it doesn't also cause me to hate officers and think every one of them are bad and that police need to go away. So, it's a very nuanced conversation but I think we overcomplicate all of that. Listen, if we sit down and focus on relationships with somebody who's different and hear where their heart comes from, then I can understand. Okay, I get it. This is a difficult conversation and we might not see eye to eye but it doesn't change my love for you because at the end of the day we all want the same things. We all want to build a better life for our family and our friends and our loved ones. We all want to create a legacy that outlasts us and maybe in the process be able to give back and serve the greater good around us. Everybody wants that. Even the

gangs want that, whether you believe that or not; they want that. How we go about it is different. So, yeah, that's a lot.

WC: Wow, and it's a necessary conversation and it's something that we're never going to graduate from. This needs to continue, and thank God for the lessons that we've all been through, the things that have happened in the last 18 months, as difficult as they've been. I know it's opened up my eyes and my heart and I am on a much better journey than I was prior to all of this.

MB: Can I summarize it for you, right quick?

WC: Yes, please.

MB: I wrote an op ed and it was called "America the Beautiful" and the subpoint was "Make America great or when was it great?" because those are the two discussions at hand.

WC: Wow!

MB: Those are where the two sides are. Make it great again or was it ever great for people that look like me? So, I wrote about it and I said, "Okay, make America great." The question is, when was it great and the answer that I said was, "America's always been great." You don't take those men and those founding fathers and the dream and the vision they had and the story of resilience and heroism to literally overcome something that literally represented oppression, and fight to create something that was so beautiful, the ideal of what America is. So, the answer is it's always been great. That story is remarkable, the revolutionary story of the birth of a nation. And then some people start to get angry that I say that and then I say, "Alright, the question is, at the same time, while it's always been great, it's also always been terrible," because then you get into some of the underbelly and the slavery. And I'm from the South and I've seen things. There were not even birth records kept for my great grandparents and my grandparents. These are people I know that don't have birth records because they weren't even considered human in this country. So, the point is, there's a duality in everything in life and something can be both great and terrible, both good and bad at the same time. You know, just like people. All of us are good and bad so what we gotta do is, with that information on the table, make the best of what we have. We can't go back and change what happened. We can talk about it, we can learn from it, we can agree to sit down, grow together. We can agree to sit down, build together. We can agree to sit down and, despite our differences, work to make everybody's goal and dreams come true to make this a better, safer, healthier, place for those—our children, our grandchildren, and those who will walk and take the torch from us. That's what we gotta do but now everybody wants to talk about the problem but nobody wants to be a part of the solution and actually sit down and have the conversations.

WC: Wow! So, tell us about your book, which is titled, *Asleep at the Wheel: Taking Back Control of Your Life*.

MB: Man, I alluded to this earlier that I just honestly got tired of watching people walking dead. And I say that and you think of the show or you think, you know, I'm not being facetious. I've had so many conversations with people who say, "I just don't know what the point of me being here is anymore. I fought so hard for so long, I thought maybe my dream could come true. I thought maybe I knew what I wanted," and then that's when the life comes in. It's a hard-knock life and the school of hard knocks starts slapping you around a little bit and people start hurting you a little bit and circumstances start literally hurting you and then you get to the point where you wonder, what is the point? Why am I even here? Do I even care if I'm here? Would anybody else care if I wasn't here? And you find yourself in this place. And so, after hearing this for years and years and years as a recurring theme from people that I was talking to, mentoring, helping, working with, I decided I was going to do something about it because just like I had my wakeup call in my life, I literally decided to write a book to be a wakeup call. So, if you ever struggle with understanding why you're here; if you've ever struggled with questioning your worth, your beauty, your purpose, your passion, how to even find all of that, what does that look like; if you've ever struggled with believing the lies that they told you about you for far too long and you cannot find a path forward and you just sometimes feel like giving up, I wrote this book for you because I wrote it from the depth of my heart and soul, from the pain that I experienced. From the life stories that I've been through. From the real experience that taught me how to overcome and how to find that path to purpose and how to go at it with everything I got, I want to teach you to do the same.

WC: Wow! Again, our good friend, Eden Sassoon said that one of the things that she has learned from you is to stay present. That staying present is big, and that's something that you have taught her.

MB: Man, I love her. She's such a remarkable human. Her heart is golden and when we talk about those things, it's so easy to get swallowed up by the ideas of what we have to become. So, that's why it's so difficult to stay present because everything around us is telling us, sending us messages of where we can improve, where we can be better and worry about this and worry about that. And we get all of this and we go into internal crisis and I'm like, "Listen, control the controllables." I don't know how many other ways to say it and all you have is right now. Nothing is promised to you. No moment is guaranteed. Don't take for granted this moment. And if you can learn to maximize this moment, then you can maximize this hour. And if you keep maximizing every hour, you maximize the day. And if you maximize every day, you maximize the week and the month and the year and your life.

WC: Wow! And again, it's supposed to be that simple. Doesn't mean that it's easy but it's supposed to be that simple.

MB: Well, my mentor talks about this. One of my mentors, Trent Shelton, he's always talking about people saying, "You make it sound so easy. That's easier said than done," and he says, "You're right but everything is easier said than done." It takes no effort to say words but that's where you got to choose your heart, right? So, even though it's not easy, it's just simple. It's a simple concept but it's not easy. But you've got to pick a heart. You can either choose the heart of feeling, like what's the point of being here and the despair you feel in your heart that there's nothing left you've got to give or you can choose the heart to force yourself to be present in the moment, to force yourself to affirm yourself and speak good, healthy, happy things to yourself, which will feel silly at first but if you learn to truly affirm yourself and appreciate yourself and appreciate every blessing you have, every human you have, everything you have, that is a recipe for you living a fulfilling life.

WC: Wow! Marcus, as we wrap things up here, first of all, just wow! Thank you so much. Would you mind just sending a message out to the youth of today? I work a lot with that generation. You are an urban missionary. I'm not sure that I really know what that is but I like that fact that you're an urban missionary.

MB: So, I'll tell you what it is and then I'll send them a message.

WC: Okay.

MB: An urban missionary basically means, like, you know, we got missionaries who go to Cambodia, they go to Indonesia, they go to all of the different countries—Africa, Honduras—and they go and they reach people there and they do work and they serve those communities. Well, I am a person who does the same work but without leaving the confines of my city. I go into the neighborhoods, the worst neighborhoods, and we provide resources, whether that be food, meals, life skills, teaching these kids emotional resilience. I'm in the school, I get an hour in the school where they get to come and sit with me and I teach and I expound and I pour in, and so that's what that means, to be able to do that on the front lines of being the change I want to see. Everybody can talk about the problem; I chose to become a part of the solution. So, the message I would give for the young people of today is this. Listen, you got a lot of people telling you what you should be. And the thing is, people often discount you in your youth. People try to make it, "Oh, they don't know what they're talking about. They're young, they're dumb, they're just Millennials or they're just Gen, whatever," all of the things right? And they discount you and they make it seem like your experiences aren't real and aren't valid just because you haven't had a lot of years on the planet. But I'm knowing that there are things that you are facing that other generations, previous generations, never had to deal with because cyberbullying is a thing and people will take and they will literally manipulate you, take advantage of you, send things you said, screen shots shared, things that were meant to be intimate, and cause you to question your sanity, cause you to question your purpose, cause you to question if there's a reason for you being here. Then they will lie about you because they are looking for significance their selves. And when people are on

the search for significance and they don't feel it, they try to make others feel insignificant and they try to tear you down and they try to belittle you, all in the name of clout and all for a good he-he and a ha-ha, a giggle from those around them. Well, I'm telling you that no matter what you're going through, whether you come from a beautiful family but there was some brokenness nobody saw, or you come from a family that was broken on the outside and everybody saw it, either way, you are not defined by anything you've ever gone through. You're not defined by the struggle, you're not defined by the pain, you're not defined by what they said about you. Those are lies and you gotta learn to believe the truth about you, which is that you are resilient. It's that you are an overcomer, and it's that you have power beyond what you can imagine. But if you're willing to take a step and be different, you gotta dare to be different. You gotta dare to do what no one else is doing, to live like no one else can. You gotta dare to be the one who thinks different. That's not the popular choice in your youth, but many of those people wind up being the very people walking dead 10 years later and you can be the one that gets to show the way. You can be the one who gets to be the voice and the leader if you're willing to make an extraordinary choice. Listen, a legend is just an ordinary person who made an extraordinary choice and dared to be different and maximize their life, their potential, their passion, and their purpose. So, what I'm telling you is never take for granted a single day of your life. Never discount yourself, your wisdom, your authority because you're young and to own your greatness. Show up, believe the truth about yourself, affirm yourself, and then you can rise up, you can go, you can grow and live and love the life and you gotta do that because you can. You don't need any other reason than simply because you can. The world might have told you, you can't, I'm telling you that you can.

WC: Wow, I'm going to add nothing to that other than just to thank you so, so much, Marcus. I am thrilled that I get to use my platform, the stage that I have worked 22 years to build, and I get to share your message on that stage. So, Marcus, thank you so, so much.

MB: Man, I thank you for having me. Thank you for the opportunity to connect with you. So much love, respect, and admiration for you and I am grateful, my brother.

WC: This is just the beginning for you and me. I feel it, my friend.

MB: I love it. I'm with it. Let's go!

WC: Thanks, Marcus.

MB: Yes sir.