

Clay Jones – Unplanned Gifts From God

Clay served as CEO of Rockwell Collins, a defense and commercial avionics division of Rockwell International, from 2001 until his retirement in 2014. Prior to joining Rockwell in 1979, Clay served in the U.S. Air Force as a fighter pilot.

Discussion Questions

1. Clay acknowledges that the breakup of his early three year marriage was largely due to his failure as a husband—selfish, self-centered, not attentive to her needs, not empathic. This was a sobering wakeup call leading to a self-assessment that he wasn't the kind of man he wanted to be.

Question: Have you at times been forced into a wakeup call about the need to improve yourself as a husband? What if any self-assessment mechanisms do you have in place for this?

2. While on deployment in England following his divorce, Clay's mother sent him a book, "Prison To Praise," written by a Vietnam POW who's thesis was that we should praise God for all things. That even in the worst of times God is with us and will take care of us. That in whatever way it happens, the path and the hope we have can't be lost. This renewed Clay's faith and brought him through the difficult period following his failed marriage.

Question: Have you ever been influenced by a particular book, article, sermon message or talk which renewed your faith and redirected your spiritual decisions?

3. In describing his unplanned decision to retire from the Air Force, and the resulting improved outcome of his life, Clay comments on a co-worker once saying to him—"If you want to make God laugh, tell him you've got a plan."

Question: Have you had plans unexpectedly change which lead to a better life?

4. In sharing about his challenges with cancer and those of his seven year old granddaughter's brain cancer, Clay describes these as "gifts from God"—which have brought his family together, made him appreciate the fragility of life, and allowed him to have conversations with his daughter about faith.

Question: Have you been able to see difficult times in your life as 'gifts from God?'