

Rock Thomas: I am stoked to go deep with you on some of this conversation after 41 years of entrepreneurship.

Rock Thomas: There's definitely some things that people can learn from you and the fact that you believe that iron sharpens iron which is

Rock Thomas: I say you know in life. If you're willing to do what is difficult, life will be easy. And I think those are probably some similar concepts. What would you say to that?

Aaron Walker: Yeah, no question about it. You know, you have to do the hard thing and you're going to get great results. And I've not been afraid of that for 41 years now started early at 18. So yeah, here I am almost 60 and still going strong. I'm fired up to be leading our masterminds on a daily basis.

Rock Thomas: That's amazing. So let's talk a little bit about where you came from and how you got to where you are today.

Aaron Walker: Yeah, I'm a native Nashville. You know, I live in Nashville, Tennessee and come from a very poor family, quite honestly, and I wanted more.

Aaron Walker: And so when I was 18 I went and approached a couple of guys and started a partnership we opened a local pawn shop. I didn't even know what a pawn shop was until I was 13 years old.

Aaron Walker: When I started working at a local pawn shop and we went out and went on our own. And God just really blessed it and got married a year out of high school and

Aaron Walker: 40 years coming up this June. So we're pretty excited about that. We kept opening stores kept paying off the stores and

Aaron Walker: When I was 27 rock I retired. You know I sold out to a fortune 500 and thought, this is the American dream.

Aaron Walker: And then I realized that it's not what it's all it's cracked up to be. And so

Aaron Walker: Went back in both the stores. I started with. When I was 13 YEARS OLD AND WE quadrupled that business over the next 10 years and I tell all that pretty fast to get to this one thing rock.

Aaron Walker: My life really changed in 2001 I was headed to the office. I had all the tangible possessions in success and all those things.

Aaron Walker: And a guy named Enrique, was crossing the street in front of me to catch a local bus didn't look my way and I ran over and killed a pedestrian that day and it radically transformed the way I look at life today and so

Aaron Walker: I took five years off. I didn't do anything. We traveled around the world. I built another house, got my legs back under me and Robin woke me up from a nap. One day she said you're getting fat, lazy again.

Aaron Walker: It's time to go back to work. So I bought a construction company. We took it to a new level and then eight years ago when I turned 50 I retired and I went to my mastermind group and they say, well, what are you going to do now?

Aaron Walker: And I said nothing. I said, I'm going to go to the Caribbean, and I'm going to take it easy. And I'm not going to do anything.

Aaron Walker: Well, one of the members leaned across the table and looked at me, his name's Dan Miller and he said that's the most selfish thing I've ever heard you say

Aaron Walker: So what do you mean nothing? I've been. I've been working since I'm 13 and I'm tired.

Aaron Walker: And he said, no, he said, You've had a dozen successful businesses and Robin has been married over 30 years and I think you need to coach.

Aaron Walker: And I said, I'm not coaching anybody. I'm like, tired, I'm ready to take it easy. Well, Dave Ramsey is one of the members of that group. And he said to my right and

Aaron Walker: We've been meeting for about a decade. And he looked at me and he said, You need to come and do an entire leadership master series.

Aaron Walker: You can do it as my guest. And I think you will find it intriguing. So I did rock I fell in love with it started coaching a couple of guys and

Aaron Walker: quickly found out that I couldn't scale one on one. So I started a mastermind group continue to do podcast interviews and

Aaron Walker: Our business just skyrocketed. Today we have 15 mastermind groups. We're in eight different countries and I'm having the time of my life, helping ordinary people become extraordinary and all they do.

Rock Thomas: Well, that's the fascinating rollercoaster ride of working really hard and taking time off and working really hard and trying to take time off.

Rock Thomas: So let's break through some of the beautiful things that you've shared with us. So I'm going to start backwards 15 mastermind groups why 15 are there different categories. How does that work?

Aaron Walker: Yeah, we have 15 there's 10 in a group. So we have 150 people in the mastermind. I don't think you can effectively see over 100 more than 150 relationships at a time and

Aaron Walker: Firewall. Yep. And so that's the model that we've built. It's been an amazing ride. We've had guys meeting in the same groups for six years, you know, they meet every single week on a virtual call

Aaron Walker: It's been amazing. Well, what we found out in that process is there was a real shortage of masterminds and training and mentoring for young emerging men. And so we are launching in February an emerging man podcast.

Aaron Walker: And also an emerging man mastermind group as to which 20 to 25 year old men can come be led and be mentored and prepare them for the is a mastermind well

Aaron Walker: Well after we were talking through this, I discovered that the men were outpacing their wives, all of the people that are in our groups are men.

Aaron Walker: And so we discovered a real gap between the personal and professional development side and my wife came to me one day and she said, we need to do something for the women. So we've recently launched iron sharpens iron for women.

Aaron Walker: And so we've got the young emerging man covered. We have demand covered and now we have the women covered. So we're going to develop this into pods of 15 groups so that they can have their own community.

Rock Thomas: So what does somebody get when they come there with their specific curriculum. You go over is it accountability. What are some of the key pieces?

Aaron Walker: Yeah. Well, first of all, there's no set curriculum. We have themes and books and titles that we go over, we read a different book every month.

Aaron Walker: So that's just kind of get to, you know, conversation started. But there's huge accountability. We have a digital platform that each member signs on to weekly

Aaron Walker: And there's 10 things that you're ranked in and you rank yourself well that is displayed in your Facebook group for your 10 members for everyone to see to hold you accountable.

Aaron Walker: Also we do to live events annually. One is in April one is in October I bring everybody to Nashville, Tennessee at my expense. It's part of your dues.

Aaron Walker: And we bring in guest speakers like Mike McCallum or Brian Moran or Dan Miller, or, you know, many, many people Pete Vargas was there back in

Aaron Walker: October and spoke at our last event. And we do think we're crazy because we start at 730 in the morning and we usually go till 10 o'clock at night.

Aaron Walker: Everyone leaves, there it goes back to the hotel and they reconvene and I talked to one or two o'clock in the morning and we do that for two and a half days.

Aaron Walker: We do that twice a year. So all that's included in the mastermind as well. But the truth is, 60% of it is professional development about 30% is personal development and about 10% is spiritual development.

Aaron Walker: Almost lost my family. Years ago rock, because I was chasing money and I came home one day with a pocketful of money to a house full of strangers.

Aaron Walker: And I was like, hey, it was just another store. It was another hundred thousand dollars. It was a vacation home. It was a bigger house and a nicer car.

Aaron Walker: And I found out that what was really important was relationships.

Aaron Walker: And I almost lost the most important relationships that I had and I said, I'll never do a mastermind again to where I just teach people how to make money, because if you

Aaron Walker: alter your family. All for your family on the altar of finances, you still go home a loser. You have a lot of money. You got a successful business but the people that care about you. Most don't even know you. And so we really encompass every area of your life.

Rock Thomas: Why do you think that that's a theme we hear so often that people who are trying to become financially free millionaires make it at the office?

Rock Thomas: And they struggle to spend time with people that as they become more mature and they're 56 is like, Oh my God, why did I not spend more time with my family with my kids when they were young, what do you think is the driving force behind that.

Aaron Walker: Well, a lot of it is we're trying to prove something to someone. Oftentimes, sometimes ourselves but sometimes to others.

Aaron Walker: We have found a real disconnect in the father son relationship when the father doesn't show special attention to their son, they're always trying to prove something. So I think that is one huge detriment.

Aaron Walker: Also think that we have larger egos, then we let on. Like, we want to outdo the next guy. I think it's a false assumption that their security and finances.

Aaron Walker: It doesn't scratch the itch, like most people think, and I can attest to that numerous times it doesn't give you that sense of security that you really think it's going to give you

Aaron Walker: The other thing that my dad really proved true to me. He never made over \$15,000 a year in his life. But at his funeral in night in 2006

Aaron Walker: It was an hour and a half, wait to get through the line to pay your condolences. The line went through the lobby out the front door and around the building.

Aaron Walker: And people came up and they said, Hey, your dad was there for me at this time, your dad helped me with this. Your dad was an encourager Your dad was always there to help our children, your dad did this and that. Not a single person said

Aaron Walker: Your dad had a nice boat or a nice house or nice car and I found it ironic in that we spend 90% of our time trying to possess something rather than building the relationships that really matter.

Aaron Walker: And it taught me a very, very valuable life lesson that day when I really stood there for six and a half hours greeting people and not a single person mentioned material possession

Aaron Walker: Rock. You've been successful because I have early on and it's nice and I never want to discount the fact that I like to make money. Money can do great things for you.

Aaron Walker: I like to take nice trips and live in nice houses. I like to give money away, but just don't make it your central focus. Don't make it the God of your life if you make relationships paramount.

Aaron Walker: The money will come as a result of pouring into other people. So I think it's just a mindset shift. We just have to understand what really is valuable. At the end of the day, and for me as relationships.

Rock Thomas: I love it. Beautiful. Well said. Let's go back a little bit and let's talk about

Rock Thomas: That moment that changed your life in 2001 ironically, that was a big shift year for me for different reasons. So we have a similar timeline there.

Rock Thomas: And one of the things that I learned is that we have this force inside ourselves to

Rock Thomas: Remain congruent and consistent with how we think others see us. So if we're polite and kind and then we get caught in a bad mood and we're yelling and upset and somebody calls us out on that.

Rock Thomas: There's this discomfort, because we're incongruent with how we think we are. If we are honest and we get caught lying there shame and embarrassment.

Rock Thomas: Now you've gone through very various iterations of yourself. But I'm very curious to know that it seems like you know a man who's been married as long as you are with the values that you have when you had this incident happened where you

Rock Thomas: Were you killed by this man? What changed for you. How did you handle that?

Aaron Walker: Well, what I discovered in the process of that is, first of all, I'll back up just a little bit. So after the accident happened that was on a Wednesday morning 730 in the morning. They called me on Saturday at 930 and they said Enrique didn't make it. And I was devastated.
Needless to say,

Aaron Walker: I called my legal counsel and they said, well, first things first. Don't approach the family in any regard and hung up the phone, I talked to my wife about that. And I said, I can't do that. I said,

Aaron Walker: You know, I get it, understand what they're trying to say. But I called the family. And they said, Mr. Walker, we've talked to eyewitnesses. We know it wasn't your fault.

Aaron Walker: Said, our dad just didn't see you coming. He was 77 years old, originally from the Philippines and he'd been warned over and over, not to travel alone.

Aaron Walker: And he had come to other occasions where that had almost happened. It just so happened the day I was traveling down that road. It did happen and I paid my condolences and I told him how sorry it was, and they understood, but I was grieving.

Aaron Walker: You don't take someone's life and get over it quickly. Right. There's a grieving process.

Aaron Walker: I couldn't handle the stress. Matter of fact, I had some episodes in our business. Shortly thereafter, I just couldn't handle the stress. And so I decided

Aaron Walker: That I had the resources to retire for the second time. My wife said, I've retired more than the law allows

Aaron Walker: But I retired in the US and said, Hey, I'm, I'm going to take it easy. I'm going to get my legs back under me and going to go to counseling and get some friends around me to help me.

Aaron Walker: So it took five years, you know, took five years to work through that and people say, why did it take you so long. And I said, well that was somebody's father, and that was somebody's husband.

Aaron Walker: And that was somebody's brother. It was an individual. And what I discovered through that was I felt very guilty and what I felt guilty about was not necessarily the accident.

Aaron Walker: I started thinking through what my legacy would have been had that been me. That was killed that day and what my legacy would have been was a poor kid from Nashville, Tennessee making enough money to retire by age 27 and nobody cares.

Aaron Walker: And I said, that's not what I want my legacy to be. I want my legacy to be his rocks. Life is different as a result of having known Me and interacting with me.

Aaron Walker: And I can help him. Well, I was so focused inward that I didn't have time for that. It was about opening another location, building another house, getting another car, getting a vacation home, having a place on the beach, all those things were vital to me.

Aaron Walker: And I realized that it didn't matter to anybody but to my immediate family. Now here's what my legacy has been since then. Now he's a giver, not a taker.

Aaron Walker: And see the natural reciprocity when you're a giver is that people want to be around you, you bring the light you bring the energy or the encourager

Aaron Walker: And what's happened. And this is so funny rock what's happened as a result of that we've been far more significant in the lives of other people. And we've been twice as successful financially.

Aaron Walker: And when you get it in the right order the resources come, but then you have the right perspective to deal with the tangible possessions.

Rock Thomas: So how would you describe yourself today using the words I am because I think a lot of times we're not conscious of who we really are what we really value. And I encourage people to spend some time around that. So I know I'm putting you on the spot, but what

Aaron Walker: Will

Rock Thomas: Pop up for you. Yeah.

Aaron Walker: Thank you. Yeah, you just put me on the spot, but I think I can easily answer that I would say, first and foremost, I'm a person of faith. So I am a Christian. I am a Christ follower.

Aaron Walker: I am an encouragement, I am a developer, I am a creator. I am the catalyst for change and I am a husband and father and grandfather, and I am enjoying my life today, better than ever before.

Rock Thomas: That's so beautiful. Because people that spend time really working on being the best version of themselves don't struggle with coming out with a litany of words that includes themselves and others like you just did. So thank you for that.

Rock Thomas: Iteration of who you are. Now, how does one get to that place of being so altruistic

Rock Thomas: Because of the obstacles that just inherently happen when you go through life, and you're obviously with your different groups, helping young men. So how are you helping example those young men, create a plan to become the best version of themselves.

Aaron Walker: Well, I think, first and foremost, the men that are in ISI proper is a very diverse group there from 27 to 65 years old. Some of them are very, very successful in their own right.

Aaron Walker: A lot of those guys come today to just help. They're not even wanting anything for themselves. They're wanting to be the mentor, they're wanting to be that giver because they've experienced things such as I've described to you today.

Aaron Walker: So I think that we've really got to take a self evaluation to see if we're authentic and genuine

Aaron Walker: And I've really talked a lot about being transparent and you can't do that before the entire world because they don't have context of your situation. But when you put yourself in the

Aaron Walker: Privacy of a group 10 or 12 people that are non biased. They can be trusted advisors and they can give you honest feedback.

Aaron Walker: The only way that we can ever grow is if we're genuine and authentic if you let that veil down and you let that facade go

Aaron Walker: And we really get to a place that's real for you. We can help you grow and we can help you develop, but I think that comes through trial and error. Oftentimes I think it comes through a sense of maturity.

Aaron Walker: Because you know well as I do rock when you're young, you know, you've got it all figured out. You don't want anybody to know that you don't know something else and

Aaron Walker: You've got everything figured out, and it's amazing how when my children have gotten older, I have become much smarter from their perspective. And I think that's true for all of us.

Aaron Walker: The best way that we can grow is we're designed to be in community.

Aaron Walker: Isolation is the enemy to excellence and if you want to grow beyond anything that you've ever achieved before you have to surround yourself with trusted advisors.

Aaron Walker: In order to point out first of all your superpowers and then your Achilles heel and then more importantly your blind spots.

Aaron Walker: Because masterminds offer perspective, it's the most valuable asset that you can get is a different perspective. And I think once you understand that in its entirety, you can grow to heights. You've never been

Rock Thomas: Whoa, ladies and gentlemen, that was a beautiful sound bite. I couldn't write notes quick enough that was really, really beautiful.

Rock Thomas: I love that isolation is the enemy of success and the solitary confinement for the people that go to prison. When they behave badly. So, I get that.

Rock Thomas: Know what your superpowers are, know what your Achilles heels are and more importantly. You said know what your blind spots are and I echo all those sentiments so well.

Rock Thomas: strung together. I know that you've spent some time learning those principles of success and sharing with other people.

Rock Thomas: And you mentioned to me that you have different books that you kind of book at the club sort of thing. So I would imagine there's some books that you must have top of mind right now that you would perhaps recommend to our listeners.

Aaron Walker: You know, it's kind of ironic because of your background in Gary Keller's book. You know, the one thing was a great book. Chris Voss wrote a great book.

Aaron Walker: Out there on how to negotiate with the never suppose never split the difference. Yeah, it's a great book . Well, you know, we have hundreds of books that we've read over the years.

Aaron Walker: A classic is How to Win Friends and Influence People you know I think you'd already be required reading, but there's so many great books out there that you could

Rock Thomas: I think he downloaded that from the universe. I don't think he wrote that on his own. It's

Rock Thomas: I agree to be robust with just absolute gorgeous principles of success.

Aaron Walker: You know, the thing is, is anyone can implement those principles into their life, regardless of what profession that they're in. And those are timeless everything that he writes in that book works.

Rock Thomas: I had the honor and privilege of meeting him personally and getting a picture with him and having a small conversation with him. And I still remember the moment today, even though it was probably 20 years ago.

Rock Thomas: It was up in Montreal, Canada, he came up to do an event, and he was off to the bathroom and I remember chasing him down just to get my picture and those great people, they, they tend to create that

Rock Thomas: So if you were to and it's a bit of a classic question. If you were to talk to the younger version of yourself.

Rock Thomas: What are one or two things that you think you would have liked to have had as a perspective back then that you might not have taken while you were proving to the world how you know you had already figured everything out.

Aaron Walker: You know, one of the things that holds everyone back is the fear of failure and I wished I had had a mentor that could have walked me through that earlier.

Aaron Walker: And let me really understand what that even means. And today I've adopted the mindset of

Aaron Walker: You either succeed or you learn, there's really not a failure involved there. And I always say fear missing an opportunity, more than you fear of failure.

Aaron Walker: I couldn't lay in bed at night rock and think work would kill me.

Aaron Walker: I would know. Sometimes though after I've done something that didn't work out the way I had planned, if you don't take some measure of risk there will never be any great rewards.

Aaron Walker: My mom when I was a child had a saying. And she said, Can't couldn't do it, and could do it all.

Aaron Walker: And I really hated that. When I first heard her say it as a young child, I adopted it as my life mantra. Now my mindset is, yes, I can do it.

Aaron Walker: What is it you would like for me to do, not that I'm arrogant.

Aaron Walker: But people by confidence. People want to be around people that have a sense of confidence, not arrogance, not being boastful.

Aaron Walker: But people want to know that you've got this under control. And the only way that you can do that is by surrounding yourself with the right people that will tell you the truth, so that you can refine the areas of your life to make them better.

Aaron Walker: And so I just want to encourage people today to develop a mindset of I can do this and be fearful of missing an opportunity, more than you fear failure.

Rock Thomas: Well, I want to thank you for joining us today. You're so eloquent and you've obviously spent a lot of time focusing on how to communicate to people in a way that they can get it succinctly and I thank you for that. How can people follow you and get in touch with you?

Aaron Walker: You know, rock. Most people contact me now because of the mastermind group and we had people paying the ridiculous sums of money to coach them to teach them how to build their own mastermind group, which I did.

Aaron Walker: And our CEO walked in my office one day and said, why don't we develop the mastermind playbook. And we'll put every system and process in this to teach other people to do it themselves.

Aaron Walker: A lot of people encouraged me to do that. But other people say, why would you want to do something to compete with yourself.

Aaron Walker: I said, because I have an abundance mindset, not a scarcity mindset. There's 7 billion people on the planet and you have a sphere of influence. I don't have

Aaron Walker: So we created the mastermind playbook to teach other people to do exactly what we've done. Listen, if I with a high school education can do this.

Aaron Walker: And have 15 very successful masterminds you can as well. So if you're interested in connecting with me. Go to the mastermind playbook.com forward slash a run a RO
n

Aaron Walker: And you can learn more how you could create your own mastermind. If you're looking to get involved in a mastermind. Being calm is an easy way to get in touch with us. We're pretty easy to find online now.

Rock Thomas: Well, thank you so much for joining us here on the #IAMMovement. I want to remind all the listeners of the words that follow. I am following you to describe yourself.

Rock Thomas: With intent and in a purpose driven way so that you can leave a legacy that is as beautiful as today's guest. Thank you so much for joining us on this. I really, really appreciate it. It was great to get to know you.

Aaron Walker: Thanks Rock. We'll see ya, buddy.