

# PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COACHING TODAY Chris McCluskey & Kim Avery

The podcast dedicated to Raising the Standard of Coaching... and Changing the World

#### Episode 052

## Dale & Michelle Bartlett on Travel Coaching

KIM:

Travel coaching. What a fun episode we have ahead of us today. We're all familiar I think, with travel agents and people who give travel advice, but what is a travel coach? Our guest today, Dale and Michelle Bartlett, are going to introduce us to the world of travel coaching, coaching for both vacation travel and of course missions travel. Having travelled to more than 30 countries over the past 15 years generally with their kids in tow, the Bartletts have learned the tricks of the trade which could easily qualify them for that classic role of travel agent. Dale and Michelle are also trained as professional grade coaches and take a highly personalized coach approach to helping people identify the things they most desire to gain from travel and then co-developing trips that are truly life changing. Chris, I know that you have worked personally with Dale and Michelle and so I'm excited to be invited into this new world for me today.

CHRIS:

Yeah, Rachel and I could definitely attest to the value of their coaching because we did. We contracted Dale and Michelle back in 2014 to help us design that month-long family adventure that you know we all took to Europe with all seven of our kids. Rachel had spotted them because as Deans of Students at the

institute, she was entering their biographical information into our student center online and she said, "Chris, take a look at this neat couple." It's a homeschooling family and home business kind of stuff and love travel. That was instantly resonating with her and me. She said, "Look, they have a book out called "Have Kids Will Travel." So I was like, "Okay, wait." This has gotten my attention. Well, get this subtitle listeners here, the subtitle of their book, Have Kids Will Travel is A Family Guide to Inexpensive Travel Anywhere in the World Most of it Free. Hopefully, you're kind of perking up your ears right now just like we did back then.

That was the genesis of our relationship. We connected with them by phone, learned a little bit more about why they were taking our coach training, and it was in fact to be able to take more of a true professional grade coach approach to helping people plan life changing kinds of travel adventures, not just a vacation, not just a memorable trip somewhere, but instead to really tap into the things that you most desire out of travel. What do you want to come back not just having experienced having allowed to change you and that then, well, you can hear where the mash up is. Dale, Michelle, this is very cool to have you joining us here on the show. Welcome.

DALE: Thank you very much.

MICHELLE: We're excited to be here.

CHRIS: Let's just get very clear right upfront here that you're not simply placing some kind of a creative spin on travel planning and you're renaming it travel coaching.

You are both now trained in this ICF aligned model that we have here at the institute and you are helping people to explore what it is that they value most in travel, whether that's for their pleasure generally or for missions, or for both. I

noticed that you do a lot of kind of a combination trips for people where they have

a little bit of sightseeing and pleasure mixed in with some very intentional

missions efforts as well, but then you follow that coach approach throughout the

design of those trips so that they honor those highest values, right?

MICHELLE: Absolutely. As you have already said, we love travel. We eat, sleep, and everything travel as much as we can. It has been such a huge part of our lives and the lives of our children and as we mentioned, we're not travel agents but travel facilitators, which means making an incredible experience a lot easier for you. We just help you figure out what your values are and what kind of experience you want for you and your family.

DALE: Yes because your values have really led you to a certain point in your life. Most people already want to travel more. Where they get stuck is how to take their values and travel and make their dreams become a reality. That's where we really just draw out of you the most important aspirations that you have, your loves, what excites you, what helps mold you, and how that travel experience is going to

this very inexpensively.

KIM: Suppose for a minute that I were one of your clients, since I have not had the privilege of working with you all, I mean, this whole talk of living out my values through a travel experience sounds intriguing but what is your coach approach to draw that out of me because I would come pretty stuck other than, "Oh, that sounds interesting."

now be meshed into this and then we put our additional flare into it on how to do

MICHELLE: It's a good point.

DALE: Yeah. It is a good point and we would just have a sit down with you and we'd start talking about what matters most to you. What do you want to get out of travel? Do you just want to go and buy the t-shirt and say "I've been there, bought the t-shirt" or do you want to get a feeling for cultures, people, understanding differences? A lot of times, we look at the rest of the world and we say, "Oh, that's wrong," but in reality, a lot of times, it's just different. It's a different way of doing things, it's a different approach.

Oftentimes, we can learn so much more than just going there, staying in an impersonal hotel that looks just like any hotel you would stay anywhere in the

world, and then be able to find ways to feel and understand what it really means to be part of this life, this culture, and a lot of it depends on how adventurous you want to be. So we try to find that out.

We went on a trip to Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand. There are people, there's no way that fits within their comfort zone. So we look at what you want to accomplish, and then we try and match that up to the right type of trip and then work you through the process that we've learned over 15 years.

CHRIS:

Well, and one of the highest values for Rachel and me was to experience the genuine culture of those countries that we wanted to visit, essentially walk a mile in their shoes of we could to immerse ourselves in kind of the daily rhythm of their lives, not kind of peering in from the outside like we were just tourists and that meant for us that we wanted to be not in, just like you say, Dale, the typical hotel. It could be in any city in any major country in the world, but instead, we wanted homes. We wanted to be in residential kind of settings in all the countries that we visited. We wanted to be interacting with the neighbors, those communities, those local establishments, the town grocer, the little shops, the cafes, the neighborhood.

I can very vividly remember our kids in a pickup game of soccer with some of the kids in the little town out in the Cotswold's past Oxford in England where we just stayed in this little tiny village that I think time forgot. A wonderful little community called Blockley and there are the kids out in a pickup game of soccer with these children. That's what we wanted. You did, you helped us to clarify what that would look like and then you put some real meat on the bones of it because we didn't know the first thing, back again, I think we started planning that trip in 2013, new services like Air B&B and VRBO, Vacations Rental by Owner, those are pretty new. We didn't know a thing about them and you helped us explore several different ways that we could facilitate such an immersion experience in cultures in many different countries.

DALE:

Correct and for some, they may want to be in a hotel, and that's fine. I'm not saying one way is better than another way, but what we want to do as coaches is draw out of you what is your comfort zone, what is your level of expectation that you want to get out of it? We will then give some ideas and if those ideas now strike a different type of fancy within your travel, then great. Let's explore that. If it doesn't, then let's go down the avenue in which you feel best. For us, we want to adventure. It would be like eating vanilla ice cream everyday for the rest of your life if we traveled like most people traveled. What we want is that explosion of flavor that comes from being able to experience things in a different way, to stay amongst the locals. All of those types of things are so much more important to us than it is than just to have the experience.

Now, on our first trips, we get it more vanilla ice cream-ish because we didn't know better. We learned, over 15 years, we have learned so much about travel and what really seems to resonate with people especially now. I think everybody, their travel expectations and what they are seeing and doing has changed over the years too because we can see through pictures, through Facebook, through other social media, through television, through movies this experience that others seem to be having that we long for.

CHRIS:

I have been fascinated to look at the photos of the two of you and your kids usually in all these exotic places that you've gone to. I got to say, maybe it's a guy thing, Dale. I get that adventurousness, but Michelle, you're right there with him in whatever they are doing. There is this photo of you. I don't know, you're on some murky looking river on a bamboo raft with a rower behind you. You have these grass hats on. You look like you were in some kind of a jungle setting. Maybe that was in Laos or Thailand, and then there's this picture of you with the koala bear in your hand. That's, I guess, when you were down under. You were on the Great Wall of China. You have these helmets on. You're on a zip line in some jungle somewhere. I just look at these and I marvel. Again, Michelle, that would be you two and the vision that you and Dale have for your family

becoming clearer the more you've traveled as to what you really want to draw out of your experiences?

MICHELLE: absolutely. As Dale mentioned before, we started out having more of the hotel experience but for us, we realized that we wanted something a little bit deeper for us. Again, that's not for everybody, but we found home exchanges, hospitality exchanges, or vacation rentals, and you mentioned that a little bit. Our first big trip to Italy, we actually stayed in a farmhouse up in the hills of Tuscany, renovated. It slept eight, had two bathrooms, incredibly gorgeous. It's olive gardens and we got the family, the count and countess that actually lived in the big house in the mountain that was built for the Macheti daughters. We had an experience of really getting to know, just as you experienced the people in the village and the people at the grocery store. It's a whole new way of experiencing life in travel when you really feel like you really get it. It almost gets under your skin and yes, I know we're a little crazy in our adventures. Some people do look at some of those pictures also and they may not be right in their comfort zone, but we didn't start there. We started moving into some of these adventures and that made such a big difference.

KIM:

I'm just so curious about this whole thing. It's hard to know where to go, but we know as coaches that so often, it's our doing that's less important than our being, or doing facilitates our being or who we're becoming. How have you changed as people as a result of what you're doing with these experiences?

DALE:

A lot of times, you're in a city. Let's take Paris for example. We're there and we're seeing all of these. It's almost sensory overload in some regards. What we've been able to learn to do is to just kind of slow our minds and everything down, take a look at what it is that's really around us and that's typically the people.

When we went to the Louvre Museum and we were in such a hurry towards the end of the day because we only had so much time. At the end of the day, we wanted to see the Mona Lisa painting. If you've ever seen the Mona Lisa

painting, it's wonderful. It's amazing, but what we were doing is we were rushing past absolutely incredible art work from that time period and Renaissance. We were rushing past it to see the one. We got there and it's about 8x10, maybe a little bit bigger. It's not that big and we're just kind of looking at each other and kind of go, "That's it?"

I mean, it's beautiful, it's great, it's historic. It has all of those qualities to it but what we past getting to that one was so much deeper. We took our time back and it really just sank into me that wait a minute. We have to make sure that we are taking in the important parts of why we're there, not just the fact that we're there and we need to see that one.

KIM:

That's funny that you would say that, Dale, because we were recently there and I remember taking a selfie of me and Mona Lisa saying, "I'm just hanging out at the Louvre with Mona Lisa," but as you were saying, we were on a tour bus. We have a very limited time. We were supposed to do the whole Louvre in, I don't know, two hours perhaps, something like that.

DALE:

And that's a three-day process.

KIM:

Immersion experience. It was this crazy breakneck speed and there were just whole rooms you're walking by and I'm yearningly looking in and they are like, "Let's go. Let's go." We've since traveled a little bit slower, tried to go more off the beaten path and get to know the people and kind of like your experience of the Mona Lisa and not diving deeply into the other things hanging around. I've learned that there are huge metaphors for life everywhere we look. If we have time not to just look at things as a tourist but to interact, to participate, to reflect, to be a part of the life that's going on around us, I think travel, to me, teaches me life lessons that I bring back when I come back to the United States much like seeing the Mona Lisa did for you.

DALE:

Yeah and as travel coaches, we try to see where it is that you want to explore those types of new expressions of life in your own life and then try to build and

encourage because we can't be there, although we'd love to. We'd love to be your tour guide but the whole idea is for you to go experience this on your own. We can't be there and hold your hand and say, "Oh, look over here. Look over here. Pay attention to this." We want to, as travel coaches, be able to get you in a different mindset so that before you leave, you understand this so when you get there, you can just relax and enjoy and live versus that rush feel that you get.

CHRIS:

I can't help reflecting on an experience we had one evening in a french café as we were wrapping up and waiting for our check, just relaxing and having a conversation with a local in this restaurant in, I think, Fontainebleu, chatting for about 20 minutes in broken french and english with this man, a married man with I think 2 children, who spoke of the increasing terror threats many were experiencing in parts of his country. Our kids stood there listening as he shared about not venturing into certain parts of France where it wasn't even safe to fly the French flag anymore, and we were shocked and realized we couldn't relate to anything in our experiences in life. He shared about even having an escape plan worked out if things should get to the point where he felt he needed to get his family out of the country — they had connections here in Quebec, Canada.

We prayed for him and his family, and it wasn't even 2 months later, when we were back here in the States, that the terrorist attack on the Charlie Hebdo magazine publishing house occurred in Paris. We realized we'd walked almost exactly in that location of that attack. Experiences like that conversation with that father have changed us and enable us to view the news and world events very differently than we otherwise could have.

I love that the two of you do keep probing with questions and again, I'm speaking from the experience that Rachel and I had of having you draw out of us what we wanted. We didn't know what we wanted. We thought cognitively what we wanted but you kept probing us with questions more about kind of after the whole trip is over and you're back home. You're looking back on what it all meant. Not what did you do, what did it mean? How are you different? How have you

returned home different than you were when you went? You helped us to identify things that we would desire as takeaways, as fruit of the trip and then kind of reverse engineer the thing to say, "Okay, where could we plug in opportunities for exposure, for experiences to things that would generate that?"

I wonder if I can maybe ask the two of you to share. You've purposely integrated into many of your trips what I would call micro missions trips. We all talk about short-term missions trips, but these are often ministry opportunities that you plug into an otherwise typical vacation kind of a travel, but you would go to orphanages or special places where you have opportunity to serve maybe just for an afternoon or for a day or two. Can you kind of illustrate some of those things that are purposely worked into a trip because of the desired fruit that you want to come back with that's more than just "Been there, done that, got the t-shirt."

DALE:

Exactly. A couple of them, I'll go into one, Michelle can go into another, but we were recently in Cambodia. Michelle found out about this little village that was about three hours outside of Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. The state took all of the undesirables they could round up, about 100 families from the capital city, they drove them about three hours outside of the city and just left them to die. No, they didn't say that. They gave them enough water for a day or two and a little bit of food, but these were people who were drug dealers, prostitutes. These were the homeless. These were the people they didn't want in the city anymore and they knew they couldn't function out in the middle of nowhere. This Christian man came across them and he started bringing them rice every week just to keep them alive. Then he showed them how to take their houses and put them up on stilts versus in the ground where when the floods came, they would be flooded out. He brought in medical help. It's HIV village.

When Michelle found out about this, she contacted them and asked what we could do to help them and they asked us, first of all, they said, "Could you come and speak at their church services?" We thought, what a monster opportunity to be able to do that because again, the Christian churches in Cambodia are not very

plentiful. I was actually very surprised that they had created a Christian church for this. So we went and we spoke, but we also brought large bags of rice out to them and it was. It was a three-hour drive out there and a three-hour drive back, but the experience was amazing.

As we pulled up, they were already pulling the rice off of the truck. They had actually run out of rice and food before that. So they were immediately starting to cook that. Their whole thing is about survival. They are always hungry, but the first thing we were able to do was feed them spiritually. That meant a lot to us. We needed a translator. Both Michelle and I spoke on faith and on the love of God, and then we sang them a song. It was just amazing. The ability for these little children that are in this village to come up to us and interact and feel that spirit that we brought to them and likewise, the spirit they gave to us was an amazing experience.

MICHELLE: May I add that even though we were not exactly in tune, they still so much appreciated us coming and trying, right, and then we had the opportunity to meet with villagers and spend the afternoon. That was beautiful. On that same trip, we hired a driver and his tuk tuk because we're all about a different experience. We didn't want to take just a taxi so we hired this tuk tuk driver to drive us to different places because we didn't have a rental car. Whenever we had lunch, we would invite him to have lunch with us or whatever, and ask about his family because to us, that's part of what we had just talked about and join the culture and getting to know more about what their lives are like and what it really feels like to be there.

The last stay, he made a comment to us as we were sitting down for dinner. He said, "You know, I've never done this before but I really want to invite you guys to come to my house for dinner. I've never done that with anybody I've driven but I would really be honored if you would." We said, "Of course. We'd be so honored." He came and picked us up that night and he warned us. He said, "My house isn't very nice." We said, "Are you kidding?" That doesn't matter. We

know that you work really hard to take care of your family and you do everything you can to support them, take care of them, and so you need to be proud of what you have."

He took us to his house and it was this one room, no furniture whatsoever. They had a bed that they laid on the floor at nighttime for the four of them. It was him, his wife, and two kids. During the day, they just set it up against the wall. They had no refrigerator, stove, or anything else. They had one little thing. That was for the bathroom and to use for cooking. We just sat on the floor and they fed us. They put the plates on the floor we ate right there. That wasn't necessarily so much disservice to them but I felt like it was disservice for us, that we gained so much more from his service to us and that experience, I mean, you could never pay for a travel experience like that. it's really opening your eyes and your hearts to totally see things differently.

KIM:

That is just such an incredible story and one of the things I love about what you're talking about is that your children are with you and they are watching you and they are taking part. I remember taking our children several different times to places like Romania and them coming back being appreciative of all of a sudden of everything we have and loving to serve other people and seeing the joy you can experience when you really give instead of taking. The fact that you make these family trips I think is another part of what makes it powerful. Thinking about that though, how is it that a family, not just you all, but any family can afford to do this type of thing?

CHRIS:

Yeah, Kim. That was definitely one of the other things that Rachel and I were so immediately taken with is as we worked with Dale and Michelle, they helped us explore what were our highest values were, what we really wanted, and of course in the mix somewhere if you've got kids is financial savings. You don't just have a bottomless pool of money from which to draw. Dale and Michelle, we're going to toss this question to you but with your permission, I'm going to read a small section from your book that kind of illustrates how out of the box you two are

when you approach this whole issue of affordability for all of these life changing experiences. Okay if I read this little section?

DALE: Sure and when you talk about out of the box, we're out of the box that's out of the box that's near the box that you started with.

CHRIS: Yeah, that would be true to say. So this is from their book. "Consider a family of four on vacation to Disneyland for one week. If the cost of a hotel is \$80 per night," and I'm thinking, "Wow, what hotel are you staying in, but okay." "If the cost of the hotel was \$80 per night and food per day was 115," that's for four people all day long but you're doing very conservative estimates here, "Three days at Disneyland for four would cost about \$600 if you got it discounted, souvenirs about \$120." That's somebody who is doing a very good job of limiting the purchases," You're already at \$1,695 and you haven't even left the house. As for transportation, whether or not you fly, it could be based on how much you have left in your vacation budget or how full the credit cards are, so flying or driving, you are easily over \$2,000 probably much more but the kid will have fun and everyone will see Mickey."

And then you say this, "Now, what if I told you that for the same family of four and the same amount of money, maybe even less, you could spend two weeks or longer in Europe? Would you be interested?" I told Rachel when I read that, I said, "That is either the best marketing ploy I have ever seen or you are on to something here when it comes to helping people sift through their competing values when it comes to travel so that they can land on a plan that really honors all of them including the financial viability of this thing. would you talk a little bit about some of the insights, some of the, as you say, out of the box that's out of the box kind of ways that you help make these kinds of things affordable?

MICHELLE: We say that some of these things seem simple now because we've done it for so long. It really isn't that hard but we can teach you a lot of these ways to save. I'm just going to talk a little bit about accommodations. We talked earlier about home exchange on vacation rentals or even hospitality exchange, which is where

you go and stay at somebody's house with their family. They feed you, they take you places, and they come stay at yours. That's been one of our favorite ways to do it. It totally eliminates the cost of hotels. It actually decreases the amount of money you're spending on food because they are feeding you and very often, they take you to some incredible places and pay for it. It really can cut down a lot of options on your budget.

The other one is home exchange where you exchange homes straight across at the same time. You're at their house while they are at your house, and that will totally eliminate the cost of your accommodations.

DALE:

And really what we're trying to do, what we found that we were able to do was eliminate as much as possible the big ticket items — the air fare, the accommodations, the transportation while you're there, reduce the food as much as possible without starving. All of those kinds of things and the air fare was one of the big ones, but you also have to understand, there are different ways to do this and there are different values that people have. One of the things that we use a lot is our air miles. You got to understand that we don't get a lot of miles with all the flying that we do because most of the flying that we do is on using the air miles. When you fly using the air miles, you don't accumulate any air miles. This is catch 22.

So how do you get air miles? Well, we use the airlines associated credit card to accumulate through all of our just everyday purchases. Now for some, that may not be an option they want to use. Then we look at when to look for air fare, when to buy air fare, and when to fly. There are different times of the year. There are different times of the week. there are different times of the day in which all of these becomes much more reasonable than just saying, "Hey, let's buy some air fare today," and if you didn't know that if you bought it tomorrow, you just saved 40% on your air fare. There are all those different very unique opportunities that we've learned – when to look, how to look, and then when to fly.

A lot of it will depend, and that's what we do in coaching, we bring out what makes sense to you and a lot of it also depends on how much time we have. For instance on your trip, you guys had a specific time in which you must go in and it was fairly close to that time period so there were certain aspects of what we do that didn't fit, but we had other avenues that said, "Okay, let's look at this other area and we were still able to reduce that very significantly."

CHRIS:

Yeah and you know, Dale is correct in pointing out that we did not go the lowest, lowest budget way that actually probably could have been done for some of what we decided we want to do because again of other competing values that Rachel and I were helped to sift through together as a couple, what did we want. For us, this was kind of an opportunity of a lifetime because with seven kids spread out all across the age ranges, our youngest was old enough that he could hoof it and keep up. He was I think 7 at that time, but our oldest was already into her 20s and was not yet engaged to be married but we could see that that was coming and so the window's closing. She's going to be emptying the nest and the others are not far behind. We knew we had an opportunity here which is why we went ahead and did the full month.

We didn't pinch pennies everywhere but not only did the experience of coaching with you guys around this made that trip a truly transformative experience for the McCluskey family. There's hardly a week goes by that some aspect of what we experienced those two years ago doesn't still come back in conversation, but it has changed the way that we look at everything we do with travel now even here in the United States. We use those same kind of cards and actually, we've chosen not to do so much for air fare, Dale, as we use the American Express card that is issued by the Hilton Hotel families. There's a whole bunch of Hilton Hotels and we have not paid for a hotel anywhere and with our large family, we always have to get two rooms each night. In Hilton properties, those are usually like \$180-\$200 a night rooms. We haven't paid for those since that connection with you in 2013. We just started using those very practical things. I've totally lost track of the number of times we've had amazing adventures, quick pick up, "Let's go"

because we know we don't have to think a thing about what it's going to cost us to stay there. It's free.

DALE:

So true and it just warms my heart to hear people who get little aspects of it and you don't have to do all of it. If the air fare, you're okay with how that works and you just go ahead and we give you some ideas on how to reduce that as much as possible but you use the accommodations, you eliminate that, just think about how much you just saved over the life of your travel that you're going to be able to do. Food is the same thing. We teach people how to eat differently on vacation. The idea of eating at a restaurant morning, lunch, and dinner needs to go away because that will completely destroy a budget because you don't budget for those things.

You budget for the air fare, you budget for the hotel, but you just think, "Oh, we're going to eat," and then you go back home and you're going, "Holy cow. Do you know how much we just spent on food?" Those are some of the things. Transportation while you're there, there are free transportation if you use home exchange and they exchange the car with you. There are so many different avenues that we eliminate those big costs. We've even rented our house out on Air B&B while we're on vacation so we're actually making money. We go and we stay at a free place while we're renting out our place. We're making money on the accommodation part of it.

KIM:

I love your passion around it and I can see why you're passionate about it on so many levels. The opportunity for coaches to travel with their families is undoubtedly here but also just a whole niche that I didn't know anything about, Dale and Michelle, and that's this niche of travel coaching. I'm very intrigued and I'm definitely going to learn more about it. Having said that, I know our listeners probably will want to learn more about you. I do want to mention that if they go to your website which is <a href="mailto:TravelingU.com">TravelingU.com</a>, they can avail themselves of a 45-minute webinar called Five Ways to Travel For Less. That's Five Ways to Travel for Less and after talking to you all, I know it's possible and I know it can

be done, so I know they are going to want to take advantage of that. Thank you so much for being with us here today.

DALE:

You bet you. On that website, they can purchase our book that will give them a lot more information. It's just, we want to give. The U is for University. We want to teach people how to do this. We want to be there for you and our coaching is all part of that website as well. We really thank you for this opportunity to share this really unique way of coaching. It's a different way of looking at how to do coaching.

MICHELLE: Thanks for letting us be here with you today and we hope that you were inspired to go out and make a difference in the world in your travels and while you're traveling so that you can see the world in a totally different light than you see it right now.

CHRIS:

Listeners while you're out on the web visiting their site at TravelingU.com, be sure to visit us over at ProfessionalChristianCoachingToday.com. Check out our free coach search engine. I know that many of you who are listening are looking into coaching and you can do tailored searches for Christian coaches who specialize in more than 50 unique niche areas and the number of our coaches who list themselves there is expanding every single month. Also obviously, if you are a coach listening to us, you will definitely want to list your services there. A basic listing is absolutely free and the upgraded listings are available for \$50 or \$100 a year. The very first client that you get is going to pay for your listing for years and years to come. Great resource there that folks need to be availing themselves on. Until next time everybody. Keep raising the standard of coaching and changing the world.

KIM:

God's richest blessings to you.

