

Lisa Nichols: Today's guest is not only a good friend of mine, but my personal speaking coach: Lethia Owens. Known for her unparalleled ability to educate and inspire people from every walk of life, Lethia Owens is a branding expert, author, and keynote speaker. She has written over 10 books including leading the way to success, yes you can, and your brand influence: the art and science in building an influential personal brand.

Lethia Owens: Lisa, first I just want to thank you for the opportunity to come on your show and share my story and my message with your listening audience. I am honored to have this privilege. I just want to start off by sharing a little bit about who I am. People often look at us and they don't understand the journey that we've travelled in order to get where we are. At fifteen Lisa, I dropped out of high school and became a teen mom. I had teachers, I had people of my community and even people in my family speak words over my life that is essentially communicated that it was over, right? People look at where we are and what we've experienced and some of the missteps that we make in life and they make judgements about what is possible for us. I'm excited to share that even though, yes, I did drop out of high school at the age of 15, I did later on to go back to school and became a straight A student because when I look into my daughter's eyes, I realized, she didn't ask to be here. That was my responsibility to create a life for her that was better than the life that I had. What's really interesting is that my parents wanted me to go on to the military. I wanted to become a cosmetologist. My boyfriend at that time, was a cool guy, he said I should go to college. First of all, I was like, I don't really know if I should date him. He's old. I'm in high school and he has benefits, a job with benefits right? He was a firefighter. He was so much more mature and just an amazing guy and he really challenge me to study for the SAT. Every time I would say, would you take me to the mall? He

would say, sure, after you study for the SAT. He actually had me create a cassette tape that had all of the Greek and Latin root words, suffixes and prefixes. My friends were on the school bus jamming to John Cougar Mellencamp, I'm listening to a cassette tape that is playing "sub means under", "re means to do again". When it came time to take the SAT, my parents couldn't afford to pay for it. My parents told me, they were trying to buy toilet tissue. They didn't have money for an SAT. My boyfriend paid for it. When I circled the school, I wanted to send my scores to. I just randomly picked 6 schools. Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Vanderbilt, and Albany state which was in my home town. 6 weeks later, I got called into the office. What most people didn't know, I had a lucrative side hustle selling blow pop lollipops out of my locker. That was how I provided for my daughter. When I got a call to the office, my heart skipped a bit. Who snitched on me? When I get to the office, there was a man in the office with my principal. I'm thinking, they called the school board. Over some blow pops? Really? Before I could even properly introduce myself, this man starting shaking a piece of paper and he said, Lethia, I have near perfect SAT score but no college application. What's the deal? Woo! Relieved! It wasn't about the blow pops. I said, Oh, that's simple. I'm not going to college, I'm going to be a cosmetologist. He kind of put his head on his forehead like I can't believe this. What is this girl talking about? He said okay, wait a minute. What if we give you a full ride? I said, excuse me sir, but I don't know you. I'm not getting in a car to go with you, anywhere. About this time, he's looking extremely frustrated. He says to me, Lethia no, what if we give you a full scholarship to attend college? My eyes grew big. I said yes, I can do that. The reality of it is, God had his hand of protection over me, all along. Even in my missteps. Even when I didn't know it. Even bringing me a boyfriend who saw something in me that was more than I saw in myself. I'm no dumb chick. I married that handsome hunk of chocolate. Andre and I have been married now for almost 26 years and together for almost 31 years. It's important that when we meet people who may not be in the best position in their life at the moment, or maybe going through something really difficult for them, it's important for us to never discount what God can do because each of us have something extra in us. When it's activated and we realize what it is, we then step on a road and a journey that can lead us to almost anywhere. I have an insatiable thirst for the impossible because I serve a God who has proven to me.

Lisa: We serve a big god, don't we?

Lethia: Yes, Yes and Regardless of where you start, that doesn't really matter. It's where you finish, right? Look at Esther, in the bible. There's so many countless stories in the bible of people who had a not so great start in life but who went on to do amazing work for the Lord. I

work every day to be counted among those individuals whose life is a light that points back to Christ.

Lisa: God definitely had his hand on you. Just with bringing Andre in to your life. Him encouraging you. I think that's so funny so everybody else is listening and jamming to their music and you're studying Latin. I bet you aced that vocabulary piece on the SAT. It still helps today, I am sure. What do you think during that time, was your something extra that really help you get through that time. And probably still get you through things today.

Lethia: Absolutely Lisa, I believe that overtime, we just become more and more of who got created us to be. That's really this journey that we're on, I would have to say that the word I would use to describe my something extra is tenacity. Each time I fall, I get back up.

Lisa: You don't give up.

Lethia: When you have an insatiable thirst for the impossible. You're going to be bruised, you're going to fail, and you're going to fall down. I've just learned to fail faster so that I can get to that next level of success that I desire in my heart.

Lisa: Absolutely and That reminds me of something you told me a long time ago about getting to the next level. It doesn't even matter where you are. There is a next level that every person can get to.

Lethia: Yes, There's always a next level, God says that his desire for us to go from glory to glory. That means that he's constantly making great things even greater. We live our lives in such a way that that's reflected in how we deal with people and how we conduct business and how we love others. I think we become an awesome reflection. You're that Lisa, When I met you, it was so interesting. Because of who I was, the light that was shining through me. People kept saying, you need to meet Lisa Nichols. This happened for like 2 weeks, I believe that we have the ability to be intentional about creating serendipity in our lives. I call it intentional serendipity. Because of the intention that I set, all of a sudden, in 2 weeks, people kept saying you need to meet Lisa Nichols. Guess what happened? At the end of that, on a Friday, I'll never forget it. I get a phone call it goes like this. Hi, this is Jenny Heal. I'm the assistant for Lisa Nichols. She's looking to work with someone da da da da... and the story goes on from where to connect us. I believe that when we're intentional about the good fortune that we want to create in life. That we begin to magnetically attract that.

Lisa: I just think it was not a coincidence, it was a God-ccident. There's no doubt about that. At that time, I was doing my due diligence because I felt like I needed to go to the next level in my speaking. I was looking for a coach. We started doing the betting process and you came out on top and I'm so glad because we've gone on to do other things together as well.

Lethia : I've learned that God is always in the serendipitous moments that we think are random or a coincidence. Sometimes we forget that He is constantly rearranging things for us to be able to have everything we need to do what he's called us to do.

Lisa: As long as we let him have control. That's the key. Wow. Tenacity is the something extra that Lethia used to get her to the next level.

Announcer: We're going to take a short break and we'll be back.

Lisa: Lethia, tell me something extra in one of your current team members.

Lethia: I would have to say it's actually 2 team members. Taylor Robinson, and Eremus Bryant. These individuals have brought something to our team that has been difficult for me to find in others. That is their ability to anticipate my needs. As a leader, that is huge to have someone who can watch you and listen and to you and move and shift into action without you having to make a formal request. I know you can attest to that.

Lisa: I can attest to that. That is my Jenny Hill. She just walks with me and now she can answer the way I would answer a question. Isn't that valuable?

Lethia : That is and as a leader who is responsible for managing a lot of moving parts, I find these qualities extremely valuable. Almost anyone that I interview now, I'm always looking for that. They'd always possess that particular something extra but I've always looked for it because of how valuable it is.

Lisa: Very good. So Anticipating the needs of the leader is important.

Lisa: Tell us a story where story where something extra was actually missing in you.

Lethia: I took the strength finder's assessment which is a tool used by the gallop leadership institute and Donald O. Clifton and Marcus Buckingham wrote an amazing book called now discover your strengths. When you take the assessment that comes along with the book, it gives you or reveals your top 5 God given talents. Because I had an opportunity to go and spend a week at the leadership institute, I was able to see all 34 of my attributes in order. Empathy was 32 out of 34. When I received that information and saw it on my assessment, I said to myself. That explains a lot. It's interesting how even though empathy is not a strength for me, I've learned to pull upon other strengths to help me relate more effectively to people. I discovered that I'm attracted to friends who are super emphatic. Their empathy rubs off of me. Here's a great example. I'm leading a group at our church. I've planned our leadership retreat. Because I love to cook, I volunteered to cook all of the food for the weekend. We were to arrive at 5, have dinner, and the meeting started at 7. I cooked a great meal and at 6:30, I'm telling everybody if you want more food you better come get it because I'm cleaning up the kitchen so we can start on time. One of my friends, comes over to me and she says, "but Melissa and John aren't here yet". And I replied "Well Melissa and John knew what timed dinner was." I didn't leave it any thought. My friends said, but "Lethia, they contributed to the food budget just like everyone else." Because of her empathy, I immediately thought, I should probably put a plate aside for them. She said, that will be a good idea. She helps me, Tracy helps me to be more empathetic because she reminds me or models for me what that looks like but not having empathy and not realizing that I even lacked it, really caused me early on in my leadership career to not be as effective because I didn't think about them. What the other person was going through. Or I didn't think about how a situation was affecting someone. When I discovered this, I was able to put some things in place. I began to lead in a way where my employees would often tell me they felt encouraged, felt trained, felt coached instead of reprimanded and that was really really important to me.

Lisa: You bring up something else with me. Understanding your strengths and weaknesses, is really important as a leader because what you want to do is you want to surround yourself with people that are not like you. That's exactly what you've done with bringing Tracy and these other friends that are more empathetic, you're learning from them and they're sometimes maybe filling in the gaps that's really important for leaders.

Lethia: Being open when we discover those things about ourselves, it's important we have dialog with the people that we're doing life and business with. Not our customers so much, but like the people that we are, committed to working with 2 move our vision forward and get the work done. It's important that too an extent that we are open and vulnerable and we're sharing

the reality of who we are with them so that they can make adjustments, so that they can step in where we may be short on or not as strong because we're communicated with them. I think that's really important for us to be transparent and a little bit vulnerable, if you will.

Lisa: Right, Those are really great points. What do you think is something extra that every leader needs? No matter who you are, if you're a leader you need this something extra. What do you think that is, Lethia.

Lethia: One of my favorite shows is called the Prophet with Marcus Lemonis. He goes into companies that are struggling, as an investor, he evaluates the people, the processes, and the products that they sell. He makes a decision of he's going to invest in the company. Watching him and just looking at my life and the role that I've played as a leader. Inspiring and leading people and really encouraging them to come to work and do their best every day. I think while we should keep our eye on profits. I think while the product we create is extremely important. I think the something extra that every leader should possess is a passion for their people. Because if you have a passion for your people, you can bring out the best in them. We can then position them to take their brilliance and they're most creative selves and position them to do things and create things, and solve problems that otherwise would be impossible. If you're focusing on your people, they can create great products. You could teach them how to follow a process.

Lisa: You hear the big buzz word right now is the employee experience. How important the employee customer experience has been important in a very long time. Now it's the employee experience and how can you build a culture where people really know. I'm going to say the word love, that you love people. If you truly are loving people then you're going to do right by those people. One of our mantras here is that we've always said that if we do right by our employees, our employees will do right by our customers.

Lethia: I love that.

Lisa: I do believe that. Even Ancient scripture talks about faith hope and love. What is the greatest of these?

Lethia: Love.

Lisa: It's love.

Lethia: I'll never forget working for a leader named Ken Endresy? When I worked at state farm. There was nothing this man couldn't ask me to do. Why? Because He stretched me beyond my wildest imagination and pulled out of me, things that I didn't even know I could do. He loved me in a very appropriate way, professionally. He loved me as a person and desired for me to be super successful and his actions and his words, they all supported that. As long as it wasn't illegal and as long it didn't hurt or harm my family, there wasn't really anything I wouldn't do for Ken Endresy. I think when we show up as that type of leader, we not only inspire people to bring their best selves to work every day but we also challenge them to tap in to what they didn't even know what's inside of them.

Lisa: That's powerful. That's so powerful. Last thing, I want to talk about. Do you have anything really exciting in your life coming up? That you want to talk about and let our audience know about it?

Lethia: Let me think? Yeah! Lisa, my husband left corporate America about 6 months ago and he has joined me full time in the business because God has given us both the vision to create a space where likeminded entrepreneurs and business owners could come together and learn and grow and stretch by applying Christ centered strategies that help them grow their faith in their business. When that vision was created, audacious faith was born. We know have a movement that we are championing that really inspires Christian business owners to into great they faith with they're business. They don't have to be 2 separate things. It's interesting that in the Old Testament, God uses the same word for work as worship. Avodah, Our work is worship to him, I'm learning that day by day and I'm extremely passionate about an inspired to share this message with others who haven't yet quite positioned God as their CEO. Imagine what we could accomplish and what could be possible if we made God our supernatural CEO in our organization. I may wear the title but I'm learning on the guidance and the wisdom of a source much greater than I am.

Lisa: Awesome. Very exciting and this is coming up and how will our audience tap into this. Is this something they can listen to?

Lethia: Once a year we do a huge virtual conference and listeners can go to myaudaciousfaith.com to find out what's new with us. We have live conferences held at a venue here in St. Louis, we've had our virtual conference that's held once a year over a 3 day period where people can tap in and listen to right from their own home or office and we're really busy about expanding this. We have connections and partners all over the world and we're really working diligently to get this message to everyone.

Lisa: So exciting, So exciting. Lethia, thank you so much for being with us today. It's truly a pleasure to sit here as one of your mentees and be interviewing you. I want the world to see how wonderful and brilliant you are.

Lethia: Awe, Thank you Lisa. I could do this all day, sitting across from you, having a conversation and just loving on each other and celebrating with each other the beautiful things that God is doing through our lives. I could do this all day. Thank you for the privilege of this platform.

Lisa: You are very welcome.