

Scot McKay (00:02)

All right, gentlemen, one of the questions that confounds everybody, especially us as men, is what is love? Now, I'm gonna admit to you, we've talked about this on the show before, but I think it's such an open-ended question that it's always nice to come back and revisit it. And every time I've ever talked about this particular subject anywhere, I personally learned something from it and broadened my horizons.

Scot McKay (00:29)

We're gonna have a very fun show today because my first time guest is named Scotte Burns. He's a motorcycle guy. He's a very smart guy. He's an author and a public speaker, and he's good at writing and he's good at talking. So you're in for a treat here. And he has come to an understanding of love through his two-wheeled travels with the accompaniment of his wife of many years, not only

Scot McKay (00:56)

you know, not riding pillion with him on the motorcycle, but having her own bike and riding with him, which is extremely cool. His name is Scotte Burns, and he is such a motorcycle guy. He actually lives near Sturgis in South Dakota, so he can sleep in his own bed when he goes to Sturgis every year, which is very cool. Scotte Burns, welcome to the show, man.

Scotte Burns (01:16)

Thank you, Scot. I appreciate the invitation. It means a lot.

Scot McKay (01:19)

Yeah, both you and I have an interesting spelling of our first names. You actually have added a keystroke to the two T's, which is something I'd never seen before. I get my name widely misspelled, although I do know a couple other Scots with one T, but I've never met a I've never met a Scotte with a silent E before. What's the story there?

Scotte Burns (01:41)

My, I I don't know exactly when it happened or when they decided, but I have a cousin whose dad's his name is John, and his dad's name is John Edward, and so they always called instead of John and John Junior, they called him John and John E. And so my dad's name is also Scott Burns, and so the the running joke before I was born was that they were gonna have to have Scotte and Scotte E, and so eventually that got appended onto the name and I became Scotte with an E.

Scot McKay (02:09)

So there's method to this

Scot McKay (02:10)

madness.

Scotte Burns (02:12)

In most cases there are and I just happen to know what this one is.

Scot McKay (02:16)

Very, very nice. So you have traveled over a hundred thousand miles across the country on a motorcycle asking just a ton of people what love is. What created the fascination to finding answers to that question in your mind? I mean, it is an inherently fascinating question, but you've devoted an extraordinary amount of time and energy to it. So what happened there? What caused that for you?

Scotte Burns (02:46)

Well the the project that we started that I started with Toni was called Journeys to Love and it has sort of its own origin story that we can talk about. But the why for you know, how come I remained with this was

you know so besides it being the greatest feeling in the world to have nothing but wind, road and a beautiful woman for company across a hundred thousand miles, which is probably reason enough for most guys to pursue this. The Journeys to Love project really started as

Scotte Burns (03:14)

an exploration of love between couples because as Toni and I have known each other for over forty-five years. We've been married for forty-three years, known each other since junior high. And as we matured, you know, we've been in various performing arts and in the music business together. And in those environments, a longtime married monogamous couple isn't an anomaly, but it's rare enough that as we matured, meaning we got old together, we were we were commonly fielding this question from people about, you know, what's your secret? You know, what's

Scotte Burns (03:44)

So

Scotte Burns (03:44)

what's the secret to this, you know, relationship, you know, to somebody staying together, monogamous, and married for that long? Well, we didn't think we were qualified to be the arbiters of life, love, the universe, and everything for everybody, but we had a lifelong love for motorcycle travel as well. And so I was still in education at the time. And so we thought we'll indulge our love for motorcycles and one another, and we'll take this question and we'll hit the road with it. We'll ask America, you know, find as many different people and places and cultures and lifestyles and events as we can find.

Scotte Burns (04:14)

And talk to couples and find out what's what's their secret. How do they explain this? And see if we can find some commonality between those stories that will eventually answer that question. Well, through all those miles, we discovered, number one, that there's this profound sense of loneliness and disconnect around the country. There's you know, this sense of you know needing affirmation that somehow our love, our lives, our you know, our our families, the things that we think are important are still connected somehow, that we have this commonality.

Scotte Burns (04:44)

Between us. But we also discovered that many of the stories that we started exploring were not just couple stories anymore. People were expressing to us their loves, what we call loves of place, purpose in one another. You know, there were loves of home and loves of duty, which I'm sure we'll talk about. You know, loves of special causes and purposes and places. And so the stories about love that we started to encounter expanded. And as we were writing between all these stories,

Scotte Burns (05:14)

and the miles and you know the experiences that we'd had expanded. I started to realize that there was an inner question to this that was related to that. It wasn't just what's the secret, it was what's your secret. Because I started to really internalize a lot of this stuff because you know this it's the discoveries and the stories that we were encountering didn't reconcile with with what I knew from love growing up. You know, my my father was an abusive alcoholic, a womanizer, a pedophile, you know, multi multiple other

Scotte Burns (05:44)

descriptors that we can come up with. And so my vision of what love is through my dad and his biker buddies and, you know, spending my formative years in what was called Joe's Garage, which for you Zappa fans, there really was one, which was kind of a motorcycle repair shop converted drug den next door. And the men that and their relationships with women and the way I saw that was was so violent and so chaotic and so proprietary over women.

Scotte Burns (06:14)

That my vision of what love was, especially between couples, was really jaded. Finally, you know, the bullet that my dad put into the neighbor's house next door when he was drunk and chasing my mom across the yard turned out to be the last straw. And so she divorced him. And I really didn't have a model for, you know, this what's your secret, for what's your secret question for what love means, especially as a man, you know, as a young man growing up with that experience. And so it turned out, you know, my mom found the courage to tell dad to take a walk.

Scotte Burns (06:44)

And she started a new life of her own. But and and I learned that most of those biker dudes weren't really Charles Bronson or Peter Fonda. They were they were really just a bunch of boozy assholes with something to prove. And they didn't even know what it was. So my view of what it meant to be a man, and especially what to be to be a man

Scotte Burns (07:02)

in relationship to love started to change, but I really didn't have a new model to replace what it was I had experienced. I couldn't answer that what's your secret part of the story that we were chasing. Well, my mom ended up remarrying a man who was polar opposite from me. You know, I was a long hair, I was a rock musician growing up, you know, from my early days. She married a cowboy, a Korea War veteran, and we didn't get along, but the

Scotte Burns (07:32)

The

Scotte Burns (07:32)

one thing that he showed that I took with me onto the road and that really struck me as we were I remember the moment as we were we were riding across the Four Corners area near... in Utah, and I remember there's this quote, and I wish I could remember who said it, that the greatest thing a man can do for his children is to love their mother.

Scotte Burns (07:50)

And he was the first man that I ever saw that manifested love in that way. He never, you know, was just demonstrative necessarily toward us, but he was very open with the fact that he was he was he was devoted to her in a way that I'd never seen before. And so I started to realize that what's what's in a man's head and his garage and his pants or his wallet isn't what defines a great man. It's what's in his heart. It's that game of trucks and dinosaurs he plays on the floor with his kids. It's the look that he gives his partner.

Scotte Burns (08:21)

It's the patience that he shows while other men knows what he already knows. A real man loves.

Scotte Burns (08:26)

And I knew that, but I didn't know exactly what it was. And as a longtime educator and devoted bone warrior, I you know, Rudyard Kipling had this line about, you know, gnaw your own bone, know it, and gnaw it still. I

Scot McKay (08:40)

Mm-hmm.

Scotte Burns (08:41)

wanted to know what this thing was. I'd been redeemed by this thing called love, and we were finding all these remarkable stories and expressions of it. But I wanted to know what is it? What's its origin? What's its nature? What's its purpose? Why is it that

Scotte Burns (08:56)

this thing exists. And that's why, you know, back to your original question, that's why, aside from just being able to ride the country with who I think is the most beautiful woman in the world, I was on the trail of something that was really deeply meaningful, not just to me, but to other humans and as and to other men.

Scot McKay (09:13)

I've never said this before on this show. Finally, someone who reminds me of myself as a podcast guest. If any of these guys have ever seen me guest on someone else's podcast, I am

Scotte Burns (09:21)

That's that's a compliment. Mm-hmm.

Scot McKay (09:24)

so passionate about this that it's funny how I'm now realizing what it feels like to be in the, you know, the left-hand seat of a podcast for this, you know, piloting it. It's

Scotte Burns (09:34)

Mm-hmm.

Scot McKay (09:34)

a joy to listen to someone who's so passionate and they can take one question

Scotte Burns (09:38)

Thank you.

Scot McKay (09:38)

and just expound upon it fully.

Scot McKay (09:41)

First of all, I'd be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the many golden pop culture references you made.

Scotte Burns (09:50)

You don't get many Zappa references in there, huh?

Scot McKay (09:53)

Joe's Garage by Zappa. The most memorable track has gotta be

Scot McKay (09:56)

Catholic Girls on on Joe's Garage, which if you guys have never listened to, you know, Spotify that one and get a kick out of it. Don't do it at work. I think you'd much rather be

Scotte Burns (10:00)

yep. Uh-huh. No, there's very little Zappa you can do at work.

Scot McKay (10:11)

I think you'd much rather be Dennis Hopper than Peter Fonda as a biker to base based on the outcome.

Scotte Burns (10:15)

Yeah. Yeah, although the Jack Nicholson

Scotte Burns (10:17)

role was pretty cool too.

Scot McKay (10:19)

Yeah, well, I don't know if he even counted

Scot McKay (10:21)

as a biker.

Scotte Burns (10:23)

That's true.

Scot McKay (10:25)

Yes. Toni Basil being the woman who's the quasi-love interest at the end, who most of most of the children of the eighties know simply as the Oh Mickey you're so fine, you're so fine, you blow my

Scotte Burns (10:39)

Mm-hmm.

Scot McKay (10:39)

mind, girl, was actually in that movie, which is a mind

Scotte Burns (10:42)

Right.

Scot McKay (10:43)

blower once you realize it.

Scotte Burns (10:45)

Well that that dis that discussion between Dennis Hopper and Jack Nicholson by the fire about freedom. If you ever want to know the definition, the definition

Scot McKay (10:50)

Yes. Seminal stuff. Yeah.

Scotte Burns (10:54)

of freedom, go to that clip. It every every person should know it.

Scot McKay (10:58)

Yeah, it's definitely not the American dream. Yeah, it's definitely not go work

Scot McKay (11:03)

for the man for forty years, claw your way up to middle management and have two weeks off a year. Definitely not that.

Scotte Burns (11:08)

But it's

Scotte Burns (11:09)

but the but the personal integrity of it is astounding.

Scot McKay (11:12)

Oh yeah, for sure. Great... it's actually a weird movie, but it's better the second time you watch it. You have to kind of let it bounce around in your cranium for a while. It's like a Monty Python movie. You

know, it's better the second time you watch it. You get more out of it.

Scotte Burns (11:22)

Yeah. Or the third or the fifth or the tenth.

Scot McKay (11:31)

I'm consistently reminded as you were speaking of the extreme deficiency of the English language only having one word to define love.

Scot McKay (11:43)

And you know, I think the stereotype is to talk about the Greek definitions, you know. But really, even though some people would eschew the idea of of calling devotion to duty or to the car that you restored painstakingly from the ground up, love, I'm not sure it's inaccurate, even though some people would want it not to be and try to excuse it.

Scot McKay (12:11)

Love of country, love of your family, love of the woman in your life, the many loves of Dobie Gillis. You know, I mean, all these things classify, and I I love above all your openness to explore all those areas. Because I think that alone is going to cause this podcast to be different than any other discussion we've talked about love, which centered around

Scot McKay (12:41)

you know, how do we know when we love our wives for real, as opposed to it being some kind of ersatz version of love or just lust? And you know, the Bible thumpers will beat you over the head with that's not love, that's lust, you know, it's you know, something that AI sounds like AI wrote it, but...

Scotte Burns (12:54)

Mm. Yeah, we can we can talk we can talk about the differences

Scotte Burns (12:58)

between those two. But I'd like I'd

Scot McKay (12:59)

Yeah.

Scotte Burns (13:00)

like to touch on just a couple of the things that you brought up there. Number one is one of the key findings, you know, that we've come that we've discovered through the confluence of all these people and not just the lived experience, but the experts that we've talked to, one of the the the primary, essential, foundational findings about love is that it's not an emotion. Love is not a feeling, it's not an action.

Scotte Burns (13:24)

it's it's

Scot McKay (13:24)

It's not a verb either, is what

Scot McKay (13:25)

you're saying.

Scotte Burns (13:26)

Well, it's primary to and I don't want to sound too woo on this, but I can tell you, you know, what the

actual connection is. It's primary to consciousness. It quite literally, love is part of who you are. It's intrinsic to you. It's not a feeling. You know, when we express things like, you know, you have to love, you know, love everyone. And I and I want to touch on this a little bit more later. You have to love everyone or love yourself. We're thinking we have this image that, you know, we we're we're trying to transfer how we feel when we love someone, when we love our wives or

Scotte Burns (13:56)
our

Scotte Burns (13:56)
children or our dog and transfer that feeling onto someone else. When love is not an emotion at all, it's the reason you have feelings. And so and and I have a funny story from a golf pro out east that can demonstrate this a little better. But once you understand that, you come to realize that

Scotte Burns (14:14)
You know, we're not we're you're not just trying to feel a certain way towards someone. you know, there's it it's intrinsic, it it's something that's within when I gave my TED talk, the the analogy that I use is love is much like you can think of it as the mechanism of it like eyesight. You know, you and I can share the same vision of something. We can see the same thing, but I can't give you my eyesight. I don't give you my sight with which to see it. So you can think of love as being much the same way. It's something intrinsic to

Scotte Burns (14:43)
to us. So we don't get love from other people. We're awakening and expanding something that's already within them. We're seeing the same thing with the same sense, but we're not using the same the same exact sense to do it because that's intrinsic to us. The other the

Scot McKay (14:59)
So in other words,

Scot McKay (15:01)
it it's not like we as human beings are made up of just our feelings and our actions. There's something inherently more deeply human about it, and love is kind of part of that foundation. Am I on to something?

Scotte Burns (15:13)
Right. Love is foundational

Scotte Burns (15:15)
to consciousness. And another of the findings

Scot McKay (15:16)
Yeah.

Scotte Burns (15:18)
that that we've that we've developed, that we've discovered through, especially through the interviews that we've done with people in neuroscience and quantum physics is that I had always thought that the idea of consciousness was settled, that we knew what it was. But consciousness, when we talk to people in neuroscience, it turns out we're receiving the same answers about consciousness that we received about love. Everybody knows that we have it, but nobody can define it exactly the same way. And so that's where...

Scot McKay (15:42)
It kind of comes

Scotte Burns (15:43)
originally

Scot McKay (15:43)
back down to God is love.

Scotte Burns (15:43)
came up with

Scotte Burns (15:46)
Oh, very much so and in fact I can if if we have more time or people want to want to explore the book which we'll talk about later I can show you exactly why that's not just a state that's not just a platitude. It's not just a statement of

Scot McKay (15:59)
Exactly.

Scotte Burns (16:00)
of faith. It's it's the fact. the other thing I want to to mention about what you talked about is you brought up language,

Scotte Burns (16:07)
and you, you know the Greeks had these ideas, different forms that love can take. They used, you know, like agape or storge, philia, the kinds and those terms still show up in our...

Scot McKay (16:18)
Eros for sure.

Scotte Burns (16:19)
Eros, they still show up in our language. but language itself is really limited to be able to express what love is, because again, it's going back to hearkening back to feelings. And

Scotte Burns (16:32)
I I wanted to share with you where we first started, you know, where all this sort of changed and where we first started to realize that we were onto something much broad...

Scot McKay (16:41)
First of all, you gotta tell us the golf pro story. You

Scot McKay (16:45)
left that one hanging in the wind. We gotta hear that. Yeah.

Scotte Burns (16:47)
Okay, well bring me back to language and the reservation here in South Dakota then because

Scot McKay (16:53)
Okay.

Scotte Burns (16:54)
that's I want to finish that point. But

Scot McKay (16:56)

Okay.

Scotte Burns (16:57)

now th the Golf Pro story started with I I'm I'm gonna have to back up a little bit because one of the applications

Scot McKay (17:06)

It's okay, man. You can't leave

Scot McKay (17:07)

us hanging on that one. We gotta hear, you know.

Scotte Burns (17:09)

One

Scotte Burns (17:10)

of it it's gonna take a little bit of groundwork first, because one of the applications of this work, one of the key truths that I've taken out of it is is a paradigm, an application of this work that that, like so many of the wisdoms that we come across in life that are really profound and meaningful, is really simple, but it's not easy. And that's to love everyone and tell the truth. And I think that's important for all humans, but especially as men, it's a very difficult thing to do. And I'm not saying

Scotte Burns (17:38)

You know, this is again not a platitude. I'm saying love everyone and tell the truth, not alternately, but at the same time. And here's why that's so hard, why it's so vital, and where it's going to lead to this golf pro story. If love isn't a feeling, but the reason you have feeling, it's it's an intrinsic capacity, you know, like your senses, like sight, like we were just talking about. That brings a fundamental shift in understanding what feelings are. You come to under... you come to know that love is not that it doesn't have different kinds. There aren't different forms of it. Love is one thing.

Scotte Burns (18:08)

And it's the reason you have these feelings. Now, the manifestations of it, we think our love, romance, adoration, devotion, cherishment, you know, the we think of those as loving feelings. But because you have love, you also experience anger and duty and hope and longing. You know, without that sense, intrinsic sense of love within you, those things don't exist. Grief is a prime example. So when we aspire to when we say love everyone and tell the truth, when we aspire to love everyone,

Scotte Burns (18:38)

Everyone and especially hard ones like love your enemies or love yourself. We're not talking about feeling some certain way about them or us. Love isn't a feeling. We're just talking about bringing that same capacity to bear on them first. And so where the golf pro comes in on this, before we got thrown out of a country club out east, because in our biker gear we don't match the dress code, we were we were interviewing a golf pro.

Scotte Burns (19:05)

And I would drop his name, but I don't know if I have permission to tell the story with his name attached. So we'll just leave it leave that part out. But we're talking to this golf pro and he said, you know, when I'm golfing with, you know, I'm teaching someone or I'm golfing with my buddies or, you know, we're out on the course together and somebody else makes a bad shot?

Scotte Burns (19:23)

My first inclination is to coach them, you know, to mentor them, to say, everybody does that sometimes. It's okay, here's how you get better. Tell them a story about when I did that. I want to encourage them to,

you know, because they can be better. I've seen it so many times. He said, but if I make a bad shot, I will wrap my five iron around a fucking tree and I'll be the first person to say, why am I doing this? I'm so terrible at this. Why do I even bother? The difference is, and these are my words, not his, the difference is when he's expressing

Scotte Burns (19:53)

that to other people, he's engaging love first, not feeling a certain way about them, but looking at them through that lens. And in that way, you find patience and you find perseverance and you find that that sense of mentorship. You know, you're gonna feel a bunch of different ways about them depending on your own state of mind, who they are, what this what the situation is, but without turning that lens on them first, like he did with himself, you know, this is what we mean by love yourself. Turn that lens on yourself first and give yourself that

Scotte Burns (20:23)

kind of patience and mentorship and you know, it's a just a much different way of looking at it.

Scot McKay (20:30)

That may be the best description, the best explanation or example I've ever heard of what it is actually like and about to love yourself. I think you nailed it.

Scotte Burns (20:44)

Well.

Scotte Burns (20:44)

I I I'd like to take credit, but like like all these things, they came from stories of, you know, and that's the remarkable thing about this work is that there is so much shared wisdom between people out there. You know, we've talked to everybody from Tibetan monks to neuroscientists to street people to soldiers, and we're finding this commonality when you know what kind of questions to ask. We're finding this remarkable commonality across cultures and times and ages and and politics that, you know, the the experience.

Scotte Burns (21:14)

It's what we understand about love and the way that we express it and what a motivational and foundational force it is in people's lives is remarkably common.

Scot McKay (21:23)

What what answer to the question of what is love that you posed to so many people changed you the most?

Scotte Burns (21:31)

Oh, that's a great segue into the the reservation story I was actually gonna gonna tell ya.

Scotte Burns (21:39)

We interviewed a man by the name of Greg Greycloud on South Dakota's Rosebud Reservation. We live up here in Spearfish, like you said, about eleven miles from Sturgis. And in South Dakota, you know, we have major reservation lands. One of the closest is the Rosebud Reservation. And Greg Greycloud is he has an organization called Wica Agli, and he's bringing in men who've been court-remanded to him following domestic violence convictions on the reservation, and he's reconnecting them with I guess you'd say a culturally appropriate vision

Scotte Burns (22:09)

of love by pairing them with abused horses.

Scotte Burns (22:12)

And when we asked Greg, you know, you we were talking about language. I asked Greg, because whenever we talk to people in different cultures and different language speakers, we want to know how do we express and communicate love in your culture, your language. It turns out that you like the ancient Greeks and those ideas of storge, and agape and philia, and you know, the forms that love can take, there's no word in original Lakota that translates directly as love. Instead, there are there are these phrases for that mean, and it's rough translation, like

Scotte Burns (22:42)

the longing to bring someone into your family or to ease someone's suffering or to express devotion to a mate. And before that there's all these myriad phrases, but before all of these phrases comes this single word wo, meaning it it means like a value or a way of being.

Scotte Burns (23:00)

You know, and and that makes it pretty clear that the Lakota, like the Greeks, didn't see love as a feeling or an emotion or something that you can sort of possess and and give to somebody. You know, it's it's this one thing that's intrinsic to us all. And you know, with that stuck in my head, each time we would talk to somebody, especially people in faith, you know, we we interviewed Khenpo Karma Tenkyong, a Tibetan Buddhist monk above the the the monastery at Woodstock, New York. Remind me there's another story there.

Scotte Burns (23:31)

Reverend Cromwell Handy at Dr. King's former church in Montgomery, Alabama. You know, we talked to all these people and we're hearing this same concept continually put in different languages with different words. But what what Greg started with is was this ball rolling to realize, you know, that love is not a feeling. It's not an emotion. It's something something fundamental, something foundational. You know, and that answer changed the trajectory not just of our work, but you know, really.

Scotte Burns (24:00)

of the lives that we've wrapped around it. It became the foundation of the research, all the research that followed.

Scot McKay (24:08)

Well, first of all, based on what you just said, I already knew you were talking about the Lakota. First of all, you're in South Dakota, so it would make sense. But second of all, only a Lakota would be named Greg Grey Cloud. That's just such a cool name. I mean, if I were Native American, I would want to be Lakota and deal with the cold weather just so I could get a cool name. Because the coolest name I've ever heard was Lakota.

Scotte Burns (24:32)

huh.

Scot McKay (24:34)

Lance Fire Thunder is the coolest name I've ever heard in my entire life. And I said, God, I wish... I

Scotte Burns (24:37)

that is cool. Uh-huh.

Scot McKay (24:40)

told the guy. He was a he was our ranger guide at a national park up there. And

Scotte Burns (24:45)

Mm-hmm.

Scot McKay (24:45)

I said, Man, I wish my name was Lance Fire Thunder. And he just looked at me absolutely stereotypically and said, You're not Lakota. Not named Lance Fire Thunder. I go, but no, I I would

Scotte Burns (24:54)

Mm-hmm. Right.

Scot McKay (24:58)

not. I'm stuck with Scot McKay, you know. But

Scotte Burns (25:00)

Yeah.

Scot McKay (25:02)

wonderful, wonderful culture. And you know, anytime I really dive into Native American culture, and of course, you know, we "wipipo" were trained to think they're savages and this, that, and the other. There's so much depth there that every other culture seems to have missed. And all I can think nowadays is boy, we should put down our smartphones and just go out in the woods and we'd be a lot smarter.

Scot McKay (25:29)

You know, our smartphones really are making us stupider. And what's really sad is, you know, you mentioned how this this wonderful guy is taking in guys who have been you know, convicted or, put under the justice system in some way because of domestic abuse. And you go out on to the reservation and

Scot McKay (25:51)

the mixing of our culture with theirs has really just created chaos for them. And it it's visible. And if you're, you know, not to get all woke on everybody, but this is something that when you actually go put your boots on the ground and see is very evident. And I think that's really

Scotte Burns (26:06)

Mm-hmm.

Scot McKay (26:06)

the secret. If you want to know the truth about something, if you want to know the truth about another country, another culture, don't listen to what the news tells you. Just go there and talk to the people and

Scotte Burns (26:14)

Travel. Travel.

Scot McKay (26:16)

talk to the people, which is what you've done.

Scotte Burns (26:19)

Right.

Scot McKay (26:19)

That's

Scot McKay (26:20)

so absolutely mission critical. You have so many good stories to tell. Now you have one about

Woodstock. And

Scot McKay (26:28)

I'm sure that's great too. Talk to us about how the Woodstock story would relate back to what you learned most about love. Cause I'm not sure

Scotte Burns (26:37)

Well

Scot McKay (26:38)

you really answered the actual question yet of what was the most impactful answer you got to you.

Scotte Burns (26:44)

Well, that one I chose because it because it so fundamentally changed the trajectory of our work. That was the that was one of the moments where we realized that we were gonna have to have some better questions and that our foundational concept of what we thought about love was was in error. so I think,

Scot McKay (27:02)

Amazing.

Scotte Burns (27:02)

you know, that that one still stands. Th the Woodstock story isn't necessarily a transformational moment. It was just i

Scotte Burns (27:09)

It was the perfect... If you ever wanna have the perfect hippie moment in your life, we had ridden into Woodstock because we were interviewing a a tie-dye t shirt couple, you know, selling gifts on the street and the names were Cinderella and Shrek. They're actual names.

Scotte Burns (27:26)

And she referred to him as her Mud Man, which was it was a hilarious interview, and we had such a good time with them. And they're, you know, they were so most of the people we've talked to across the country have been so gracious, so kind, so open with, you know, intimately open with their their experiences. But as we wrapped up the interview with them, they mentioned, they said, Hey, have you been up to the temple up on the hill? And we thought, there's a temple on the hill above Woodstock? No.

Scotte Burns (27:50)

We haven't, of course, we have to go there. It turns out it's a beautiful Buddhist temple. It's called the Karma Tryana Dharmachakra Monastery above Woodstock. And one of the senior monks there, Karma Khenpo Tenkyong, gave us about an hour time sitting at the top of the temple steps you know, for an interview on the origin, nature, and purpose of love. And one of the questions, the icebreaker questions that we commonly ask people on the road before we start a conversation, and this is the one oddly enough that gets the most argument, is what's the greatest.

Scotte Burns (28:20)

love song ever written. And so, so,

Scot McKay (28:23)

there's so many choices.

Scotte Burns (28:24)

so here, yeah, we've heard some beautiful ones. And I every time I think of it, I come up with a different

answer. But so Khenpo could not agree with himself whether it was Leo Sayer's I Love You More Than I Can Say or Michael Jackson's We Are the World. And so we all started singing them to see if we could figure out for Khenpo, which and I thought this is.

Scot McKay (28:43)

I may have gone in a different direction.

Scotte Burns (28:45)

This is the perfect hippie moment sitting at the top of the Buddhist steps above Woodstock with a Tibetan Buddhist monk singing Leo Sayer tunes. It was just I I guess that could qualify as a transformational moment.

Scot McKay (29:01)

You know who was really good at making love songs that transcended lust and love, and and you just didn't know what Robert Smith was saying, but you sure could recognize what he was feeling as an 18 year old kid in the 80s was The Cure. Man, The Cure wrote great love songs. There's one called

Scotte Burns (29:19)

yeah. Yeah.

Scot McKay (29:21)

Why Can't I Be You?

Scot McKay (29:23)

Which is I

Scotte Burns (29:24)

Mm-hmm.

Scot McKay (29:24)

want this chick and I adore her so much that I not only want to get inside her with my member, I just want to go crawl inside her skin and be her for a while. I want her

Scotte Burns (29:34)

Mm-hmm.

Scot McKay (29:34)

so badly. And I'm like, yeah, you know what? I think that would be a pretty hot chick. That'd be a chick that I'd want more than just sexually. You know, but there's there's songs like that, you know. And The Cure was good at really just being visceral. Yeah. Yeah.

Scotte Burns (29:45)

Yeah, there are there are so many. Yeah, you're right. Mm-hmm.

Scot McKay (29:48)

And it's a different whole wavelength than, you know, like obviously every Motown

Scotte Burns (29:51)

Right.

Scot McKay (29:52)

song

Scot McKay (29:53)

ever written. You know, if the guy's not acting like a total simp about it, right? You know, Ain't Too Proud

Scotte Burns (29:58)

Mm-hmm.

Scot McKay (29:58)

To Beg is pretty simpy. But you know, just amazing songs from that whole genre.

Scotte Burns (30:03)

Well one of my one of my favorite

Scotte Burns (30:05)

songwriters actually was the writer of our wedding song was an Emerson Lake and Palmer tune called Closer To Believing by Greg Lake. And Greg Lake

Scot McKay (30:12)

Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Scotte Burns (30:14)

a a a very deeply romantic, but profoundly you know, we we tend to think of romance as being something, you know, sort of surface and cartoonish, but it's it can be, you know, such a profound aspect of love. And he was a deeply romantic writer.

Scot McKay (30:29)

I always define romance as anything shared between a man and a woman that would feel really awkward and weird if it was between two heterosexual dudes. And I know that's real simplistic, but it followed on my definition of flirting, which is any

Scotte Burns (30:39)

Okay. No. huh.

Scot McKay (30:44)

communication between a man and a woman that would feel really awkward between two heterosexual dudes. You know, to me.

Scot McKay (30:50)

If you're talking to a woman like she's a woman, you're already flirting. At least that's how women understand it. Men are so black and white that they struggle with it. So

Scotte Burns (30:56)

Okay. huh.

Scot McKay (31:00)

the action, the activity that you're sharing with a woman that feels intimate in a male-female way with her, you know it's not platonic is romantic. And that may actually be a good segue into another question that you had on, you know, your one-sheet as a sample question, which I found fascinating, which is

Scot McKay (31:20)

Why do men struggle more with articulating what love is? And I'm guessing it may have something to do with that black white thinking that men always have, but I'm sure you have something deeper to say about that. So what what is your take on that?

Scotte Burns (31:34)

I think the way that I had put it, the way I fielded the question in the past is do men need permission to talk about love? and I think, you know, whether men need permission or whether they find it difficult to articulate really amounts to the same thing. It's entirely contextual.

Scotte Burns (31:55)

It depends. You know, I was as I we talked about earlier, you know, I was raised with this counterfeit masculinity as my primary model. My dad had all the exterior markers of being, you know, the all American man. He was biker, former military, had, you know, these perfect Burt Reynolds looks, but he was also a liar, a drunk, and a cheat, you know, and I watched the the those qualities in a man.

Scotte Burns (32:18)

You know, and in this masculine man destroy family and the people around him. And I know I'm not alone there. You know, I mean we've talked to multiple men around the country that have these sort of violent, chaotic models of love that we face growing up. And the romanticizing of those things in culture and media breeds this sort of fundamental confusion, not just about what it means to be a man or to be human, but about the nature of love itself. So what what I found on the road is men are much more willing to talk

Scotte Burns (32:48)

about love with me than they are with me and Toni. And I'm not sure what that dynamic is there. But the men will often talk more openly about love when they're with their partners as well. When we interview couples and they can look at each other and bounce their answers off of each other. You know, it's like they're completing a circuit.

Scotte Burns (33:07)

And so the the communication flows through that circuitry more easily when they're not feeling it interrupted by their impressions of what they need to be with one another, I think, because we find that men are more reticent or less serious, especially less serious about talking about love when they're with their friends. If it's just a group of men, unless they know they're there specifically to talk about this thing, if we've set up an interview ahead of time, they're oftentimes more focused. But if we

Scotte Burns (33:37)

run into a group of men or I do and and start talking about love, it's very difficult to get them to sort of take it seriously when they're with one another. Whereas when they're with a woman it changes the dynamic entirely.

Scot McKay (33:51)

I think that comes down to the difference between machismo and virtuous masculinity. I wonder if their reticence to talk about it with your wife around is caused by the simple training societally that you're creepy if you talk about this stuff around women you don't know. You know what I mean?

Scotte Burns (34:10)

It could be

Scotte Burns (34:11)

and and it could be too that, you know, her her persona when we're on the road, we're oftentimes conducting extemporaneous or spontaneous interviews and we're dressed for riding and so she looks like a biker chick. And so that that may cause them to sort of perceive the answer. 'Cause I think men are very careful of most men I would say are very careful about what they say about anything around women. You know, there are there's this there's this dynamic

Scot McKay (34:38)

Yeah, you'd have to be... It's the vulnerability

Scotte Burns (34:40)

Of Well, and yeah, and that's

Scot McKay (34:41)

factor too, yeah. Also, yeah.

Scotte Burns (34:43)

an interesting take because you know one of the things that we found about vulnerability is that men oftentimes equate vulnerability with weakness. where,

Scot McKay (34:51)

Sure. Yeah.

Scotte Burns (34:53)

you know, one of the things that that we've discovered that I've discovered through this research into love is that vulnerability is actually hardwired into us as living beings. You know, there was a neuroscientist named Karl...

Scot McKay (35:05)

It's courageous when

Scot McKay (35:06)

it's done right. Yeah.

Scotte Burns (35:08)

Well, and it and it not only is it courageous when it's done right, but it's actually the nat it's our natural state. You know, there was a I was gonna say there's a neuroscientist named Karl Friston who does who developed what he called the free energy principle. And all it basically means is that every self-organizing system, whether it's a single cell or a human being, has to reach beyond its own boundary to survive. None of us are independent. You know, you

Scot McKay (35:32)

That's right.

Scotte Burns (35:33)

think of a cell reaches toward nutrients, plants reach toward light, infants

Scotte Burns (35:38)

reach toward faces. Every living system, including us, because we are a living system, sustains itself by turning toward the other. And so, you know, recognizing that within us makes us naturally vulnerable. We have to vulnerability just means leaving an opening for something to enter.

Scotte Burns (35:55)

You know, now you can be

Scot McKay (35:56)

Yeah.

Scotte Burns (35:56)

protective of that, but it doesn't mean weakness. Weakness is separating yourself from all of those things and trying to be hyper-independent, hyper-individual, and pretend like you don't need anybody

else. That's not natural and it's also not healthy.

Scot McKay (36:12)

You know,

Scot McKay (36:12)

nowadays I think it's very easy for us to overlook, especially the younger generations, that the perception of absence of risk is very much a postmodern development. I mean, that's been thirty years. You know? I mean, all of human existence is a life and death situation from the moment you're born till you draw your last breath for the entire balance of recorded time up until basically

Scot McKay (36:42)

suburbia and DoorDash happened. You know, this whole idea of we live in a cocoon and nothing

Scotte Burns (36:46)

Right. Right.

Scot McKay (36:48)

bad will ever happen to me is very, very, very recent in human history. So I think a lot

Scotte Burns (36:53)

I'm sorry, go ahead.

Scot McKay (36:55)

of people had a much different view of vulnerability naturally that didn't require such depth of explanation as today's cultural environment demands. You know what I mean?

Scotte Burns (37:06)

Yeah, I do know what you mean. In fact, your your timing is perfect because the the piece I just published on Substack this morning was called Back Back to School of Life, drawing on my background as an educator because one of the one of the most destructive manifestations of that dynamic you're talking about about, you know, the protection and nothing can hurt me and is that especially in the last I'd say the last ten or twelve years, students that we have coming in are oftentimes, especially male students are so

Scotte Burns (37:35)

reticent, so hesitant to take risks. When you know

Scot McKay (37:39)

Yes.

Scotte Burns (37:39)

it's the risk, it's tackling tough problems and mitigating conflict with others who are also maybe part of those problems is part of what builds our character. Learning how to navigate those things with one another is part of what makes us who we are. And we've almost excised that from our culture. And so it's very difficult for kids, for especially for young men growing up today, to understand you know that conflict is a natural

Scotte Burns (38:05)

part of existence. It's navigating conflict is part of what makes us who we are.

Scot McKay (38:10)

I think the irony of that whole statement, Scotte, is that you know, when you perceive your life as being

absent of risk, that might be the most dangerous state you can be in. Because then everything that comes upon you, first of all, is gonna cause you to freak out and you won't be as prepared

Scotte Burns (38:27)
Right.

Scot McKay (38:28)
for it, thinking it's never gonna come. No, it's fascinating. Last question before we tie this up.

Scotte Burns (38:30)
Very, yeah. Yep. Sure.

Scot McKay (38:35)
What is the direct impact on your marriage?

Scot McKay (38:38)
What has it been riding around with your wife and talking about love with all these people? How has it affected the love or impacted or enhanced the love between you and your wife particularly?

Scotte Burns (38:53)
Well, as I said, so much of what Toni have done to have done together over the years, on top of, you know, raising kids, being married forty five years, you know, the just no, no. No, her f no, no, different Toni. Although oddly

Scot McKay (39:01)
Not Toni Basil, right? you're not married to Toni Basil. Okay, just checking. All right. Okay.

Scotte Burns (39:08)
enough, there are th I've never met another one in Colorado where we came from. There are three Tonies in Deadwood.

Scotte Burns (39:15)
Where's which is about 10 miles from where we live, which is odd, an odd aside. Anyway, so much of what we've done together on top of raising kids, you know, we were Renaissance festival performers together for years. We've, you know, we've we've shared interests in shooting and camping. We were in the music business in Colorado for almost 30 years together as a parallel career. We looked at the work that we were doing for Journeys to Love and, you know, the the writing adventures that we've had as another shared adventure. But what it really showed most clearly of anything that we've done.

Scotte Burns (39:45)
And what I really enjoy about it the most is constantly experiencing how differently we perceive things, how how differently we experience the same things. Again, back to that sense of eyesight, you know, you can see the same thing, but you're seeing it differently because your eyesight is a little different than mine. So she she calls it same road, different bikes. You know, we're we're going to the same place and we're going there together, but we're not on the same ride.

Scotte Burns (40:12)
And that that difference and and and accepting that that not only is that difference important, it's essential.

Scotte Burns (40:19)
To the relationship is, you know, that's been key for us. So I kind of chase this work because and you probably noticed, I have this deep need to understand. I want to find the mechanism behind things. I

want to find the meaning in everything. But she's, Toni is like this devoted extrovert. And so she just does this because she loves meeting people, telling the stories. You know, she dives into things, you know, for this, I don't want to say for the sensation in a cheapened way, but she dives into it strictly for the experience.

Scotte Burns (40:49)

Where I'm trying to make sense of it all. She's just experiencing it all. And each time I see that within her, each time I see her laugh, you know, or or embrace somebody or th embrace the Buddhist monk, which she found out you're not supposed to do. I just it just expands my heart. You know, just the the differences between people and cultures that we talked about before, you know, that you overcome through travel, through learning about people, through through experience, through broadening your own perspective.

Scotte Burns (41:19)

Then when you start to do that, the differences between you, between you and other people and other cultures, become conversations. They don't become divisions. And what we found out through this work is the same thing happened to us in our marriage, and it is continuing to happen. Our differences have always been our strength. And the more we we explore this work, the more differences we find in each other, and the more fascinating that is to both of us.

Scot McKay (41:44)

I think that's fantastic. I love that answer. Yeah.

Scotte Burns (41:47)

So do we.

Scot McKay (41:49)

the more you celebrate what allows you and your mate to compliment each other, I think the deeper your love grows. It's really as simple as that. I love it.

Scotte Burns (42:00)

Agreed.

Scot McKay (42:00)

His name is Scotte Burns. He's an author and he's a public speaker. And when you go to mountaintoppodcast.com/scotte front slash

Scot McKay (42:12)

I'm gonna make you spell his name right. How about that? S-C-O-T-T-E. Okay, when you go to mountaintoppodcast.com/scotte, you will go to scotteburns.com, and Scotte, what will they find when they get there?

Scotte Burns (42:29)

There's a complete background on on all of my work. If you'd like to, you know, book for public speaking or you know explore the Journeys to Love project, my Substack is is linked there. Basically everything in this work and the project and you know, ten years and a hundred thousand miles of exploring the origin, nature, and purpose of love and and what it and and what it means outside of just an academic exercise, you know, the vitality of it. So all the project work is there and I'd love to have people visit.

Scot McKay (42:56)

Yeah, and I would love to have you come back to the show because man, you have so much to offer and so many stories to tell. And I feel like we've just kind of hit the tip of the iceberg here proverbially. So yeah, man, you're welcome back. Yeah. Good stuff.

Scotte Burns (43:05)

And any time. Any time. Thanks for the invitation.

Scot McKay (43:09)

Good stuff. The discussion between two misspelled Scots is always gonna be an interesting thing. Very, very good.

Scotte Burns (43:17)

Yeah, and you don't

Scotte Burns (43:18)

yeah you don't get much more Scottish than the two of us, so when you introduce

Scot McKay (43:21)

No.

Scotte Burns (43:22)

the next show it's gonna have to come out with pipes and drums. I'm game. I'm game.

Scot McKay (43:25)

And we'll have to wear kilts. Of course you I could be wearing a kilt right now and you wouldn't know. Yeah. I

Scot McKay (43:30)

might not be wearing pants at all for the for all this audience knows. Yeah, how David Letterman of us. All right. So very, very

Scotte Burns (43:32)

That may be the topic for the next show, who knows?

Scot McKay (43:38)

well. I appreciate you coming on, man. It's a pleasure to know you. And we had great discussion even

Scotte Burns (43:41)

And you, Scot.

Scot McKay (43:42)

before we started. Yeah, definitely, definitely.

Scotte Burns (43:44)

Thanks,

Scotte Burns (43:45)

thanks for the invitation. I look forward to seeing you again.

Scot McKay (43:47)

Yeah, man. And you you're definitely gonna come back on the show. I I love this conversation. Gentlemen, if you haven't been to mountaintoppodcast.com lately, first of all check out our three sponsors, Jocko Willink's company Origin in Maine, the guys from Hero Soap, John Hendel and the guys over there, and also David Cooper and the guys at The Keyport.

Scot McKay (44:11)

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Scot McKay (44:36)

And until I talk to you again real soon, this is Scot McKay from X & Y Communications in San Antonio, Texas. Be good out there.