

ADDICTION

SUMMIT



From Living in Shame to a Life of Purpose

Guest: Maria Watson

The contents of this presentation are for informational purposes only and are not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. This presentation does not provide medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

Dr. Paul Thomas: Welcome to another episode of the Addiction Summit. I'm Dr. Paul, your host. This episode, I am introducing and it is my privilege and honor to introduce Maria Watson, the founder and president of the Perfect Vitamin Products. She also has done too many things to list right here for the purposes of this interview. But I'm really excited to hear your story, Maria.

When we chatted before, I was like just floored. And I really think the world needs to hear your story because in the hardship comes hope. And that's what this summit is all about. Can you just, maybe, share with the viewers your journey?

Maria Watson: Yes. And first of all, I just want to tell you that it is such a privilege to be a part of what you're doing because the talk of addiction is easy. We can all talk about it. We can all evaluate it. We can all look at it because it's over there.

When it's here and it's happening to you, in hindsight, as I share my story with you, hindsight's 20/20, we all know that. So some of the things I'm going to share with you come because I've been able to look back. So let me start with saying that I was the only child of two wonderful but overachieving parents. And my mother was a nun, devout to her faith. And right before her final vow, she met my dad. She got married. But for as long as I can remember, I mean a young child, I remember her sadness about leaving the

convent. And that was always a weird dynamic for me because I felt bad that she left. But then, I wouldn't exist. So there was this weird torn piece.

The journey is interesting in that with these overachieving parents, which is so ironic, that the curse continues in me. But they didn't know how to be parents. And one of the things that I give my mom great credit for, much later in life, is understanding when a child doesn't have a model of what a household is supposed to be like. And you've got mom and dad so busy being so brilliant but they don't know how to even go to a recital and enjoy it and be present. Then, now, I look back and say, wow, okay, so forgive me, Lord Jesus. I didn't even know how to be anything to anybody except to try to make my parents happy.

So I think the journey, the pivotal point of my life, is I've been married several times. And one of the things that I believe happens with many marriages, one is of course you learn lessons. But there is a shame involved with I couldn't make it work. What's wrong with me? I couldn't make it work. That's not right. I didn't do the right thing by my child. Why did this happen? And one of the things that you and I talked about briefly is addiction is an insidious thing, because you don't start your life wanting to be an addict.

Dr. Thomas: Right. I didn't grow up as a kid thinking I want to be an alcoholic.

Maria: Yeah, please can't wait for that to happen, no.

One of the things that I believe now, of course I didn't know then, is that pain, in any way; shame, in any way, is a license to abuse anything.

Dr. Thomas: It certainly sets you up.

Maria: Because I'm hurting so now I get to be mean to you or I get to be disrespectful to a spouse or to a child or to an anything.

Dr. Thomas: Or to yourself.

Maria: Or to myself, exactly. In fact, one of the things that I think is the most critical for us to how to help people...And everybody says this, and it's so simple to say the words. You've got to start by believing that you have value on this planet because somebody else didn't have to give that to you. I certainly didn't know it.

Dr. Thomas: Right. We have it innately. But we lose track of it.

Maria: We lose track of it because of other people in life. So as my life's journey was progressing and things were going wrong, left right and center, I had my third pregnancy.

Dr. Thomas: Start, why don't you, with your first marriage. Just how old were you? What happened?

Maria: So, first of all, I was very anxious to get out of the house. And like so many young marriages, I found somebody that thought I was wonderful. And that was refreshing to say the least. I got pregnant. I was pregnant before I was married.

Dr. Thomas: How old were you at that point?

Maria: I was 20 years old. But let me back up. These overachieving parents, they put me in the first grade at four years old.

Dr. Thomas: Yeah. They wanted you to overachieve too.

Maria: Yeah. And I had to pass third-grade tests at four years old. And the only school that would take me was a Catholic school. So here's this little four-year-old, already trying to be more grown up. So I graduated high school—I started high school at 12, the ninth grade.

So all of a sudden, now, I'm in an environment where there's a lot of maturity and I don't have that. And I'm not equipped to be in this scenario at all. But, all of a sudden I'm getting all this attention from older boys. And I'll never forget, I went home and asked my parents if I could go out on a date with an 18-year-old, and I was 13. My dad looks at me and I was like, "Well, what's wrong with it? I'm a freshman. He's a senior." And my dad is looking at me, "But you're 13 years old." "But I'm in high school."

So I grew up very fast. So to get married or to say "I do" at 20 didn't end up too well for me because I felt like I was 25. So we have our son and it just was never enough. Nothing was ever enough. So here I sat with a very loving husband, a beautiful young child, and it wasn't enough. And I didn't know how I was going to fill this hole in me.

So we got a divorce. And then my dad convinced me that nobody was going to want me as a divorced 22-year-old now. And so I found the very first human being that would marry me.

Dr. Thomas: Yeah. It felt good.

Maria: Yeah. And I got the handsomest guy I could possibly find. And that thing lasted six months. I mean it wasn't even a thing. And so there I was, completely convinced now, that I was even worse than I was prior because, now, I've been married two times. And I've got a child. And I'm poor. And I'm on welfare. And, "Oh dear, Lord, what is to become of me?"

Well, by the grace of God, I met my third husband, a really good man. And we got married. And that marriage ended up lasting 20 years. In the process of that marriage, one year into the marriage, I was pregnant with my second child. And I was happy. For the best of knowing how to be happy, I was happy. And it didn't have a chance because very quickly I found unhappiness again. And very quickly, I was looking for that thing to feel fulfilled.

And I think if there's one keyword that you and I need to remember throughout this—and help me remember because I'll forget—being and feeling fulfilled is key to freedom.

Dr. Thomas: Well, absolutely. So I'm an alcoholic. And when you progress along your spectrum of disease, whatever addiction you're in, that emptiness just grows and grows. And you've got this huge emptiness you're trying to fill.

Maria: Well, it was that emptiness that got filled by another pregnancy. So, now, I'm pregnant again. But I'm unhappy. And it wasn't my ex-husband's fault. I just was unhappy. And he couldn't fix it. My mom couldn't fix it. Nobody could fix it.

So I'm pregnant now with Joshua and I am feeling more lost than ever. I just don't know how to get up each day. I don't know how to function. I don't have purpose; another keyword for me now.

So life goes on in 'lost land'. And I was doing a lot of drinking. I was doing a lot of hanging out with my friends. I wasn't being a mom. I didn't know how to be a mom. I didn't know how to be anything. I was so selfish. But I wasn't trying to be. I was just lost.

So on August 22, 1987, at 10 A.M., I left the house to go to the carwash at about 9 A.M. And I went to the carwash getting the car ready and cleaned up. I was going to take Joshua and Shawn, two of my children, to Marine World for Joshua's birthday that had happened July 27.

At the carwash, I remember it like it was yesterday. I'm watching the car go through. And in those days, there were payphones. And so I'm on this side of the glass watching the car go through. And as the car passes me, I get this overwhelming sense that something's gone wrong. A few steps away from me

was a payphone. And I called my house and there was no answer. And I couldn't get that car out of that carwash fast enough. And I got in that car and I was praying, "Oh, dear God. What has happened? What has happened?"

Now, I had no reason to think anything had happened. But I want to suggest today that anybody listening to this who pays attention to those kinds of feeling. They don't come from nowhere. And as I'm driving home, the last mile to the house, the whole time holding that steering wheel knowing something has happened, something has happened but I don't know what. I see that there has been an accident on the side of the road. I pull my car over knowing I'm in a hurry to get home but feeling like I should stop and help because we kind of lived out in the middle of nowhere. And as I look over the embankment, the car that had gone over the cliff was the babysitter that had my kids that morning while I went to the carwash.

And just then, I don't remember the details of what I'm getting ready to share with you because it was a big blur. I remember an ambulance pulling up. I remember the ambulance driver holding me telling me that my son had been killed, identifying that those were my children. One of my kids did survive. Shawn did survive. And I don't remember that day any more than what I'm telling you.

But what I remember that followed, there was not enough guilt. There is no way that I can paint a picture of guilt for you. Why wasn't I a better mother? Why didn't I take better care of my kids? You're put on this earth to protect your children. And I didn't protect him.

So, for years, that enabled me to go find any substance on the planet that would take away my pain.

Dr. Thomas: Yeah. You had such psychic pain, just unbelievable.

Maria: Well, and believe me, in those days—I don't think anymore—but in those days, I was a master at beating myself up. Because what is wrong with you, Maria? You're above average IQ. You were supposed to be so much more than this. Why aren't you better?

And that trauma went on for three years. And I remember vividly waking up in places where I did not know where I was. And I look back with such shame today on that period of my life. Because, although I will say to most anybody that meets me, "Had I not lost my son, the rest of what I'm getting ready to share with you couldn't have happened." It wouldn't have happened.

So Joshua David gave his life so that I could live and I could thrive and I could go from complete mess to a life with purpose. And you let me know when you're ready for me to tell you the happy chapter.

Dr. Thomas: You've got to get me to wipe my tears for a moment here. So, oh man, what a story. A lot of people watching this have had painful stories. And so I was hearing that shame and that, "I should've, I should've, I could've," and beating yourself up. And it sounds like you've tried every drug and alcohol that was available to try to numb that pain. And nothing seemed to work at that point, I imagine.

Maria: When the crater inside you is so big, there isn't enough alcohol or drugs on this planet. It won't work.

Dr. Thomas: That's the truth.

Maria: And if I could go one-on-one around the world, which maybe this video allows us to do, and say to people, 'there is a God'. Because on February 11, 1991, I walked into a tanning salon. And there was a bodybuilder handing out samples of some vitamin drink. I didn't even ask what it was. My goodness gracious, I have been trying for three years to kill myself, which I still tell people today, 'I am pretty darn confident, how in the hell did I fail at something as simple as killing yourself?' I wasn't supposed to be dead.

So don't, anybody, dare disrespect. When you're kept here, you are kept here for a reason. And you best spend the rest of your life figuring it out. But that day, I took that glass. I walked in. My mother would take me to the tanning beds because—although, I think you can see, I'm not a large person. But I was. I was 199 pounds. I had eaten myself into a disgusting thing. And I was so toxic. And my face was all broken out. And so my mother would take me to this tanning salon to try to dry up my face.

And so this guy hands me this drink and I drink it and I go in the tanning bed. So I'm laying there and I didn't expect anything from the drink. I didn't have a preconceived notion. I didn't even ask what it was. I thought, 'hell, if it kills me, great'. Although, not at all this time.

So then, I go into the tanning bed. And in those days, tanning beds were very quiet. So when I would lay in that bed, I would start re-living that day and thinking about Joshua. And I couldn't breathe. And through all the years of counseling, I would tell the counselor, there is this black weight in my head. I can see it. I can measure it. I can tell you that it's heavy and it won't go away. And it makes me not be able to breathe. So this day, everything's happening

like normal. But I'm breathing. And I'm aware that this blackness in my head is gone.

So I come running out of that tanning room. And literally, I'm zipping my jeans and I look at this guy and I said, "What in the heck did you give me?" He thinks I'm upset like I've had a bad reaction. I said, "No, no, no, no, no. You don't understand. You just gave me my brain back. What is it?" He goes, "It's just vitamins. It's just amino acids. It won't hurt you." And I said, "No, I don't care if it's going to hurt me." I pulled out my credit card. And I only had \$2,000 worth of space on a newly-granted credit card that my then-husband who had lived through all those three years with me and who had barely taken me back, said, "This is it."

So I go spend \$2,000 on some powder in a tanning salon. And I can't wait to go home and tell this husband who has just taken me back, "Guess what? I just bought \$2,000 worth of powder and I'm going to be normal." So I walked in. And I'll never forget the look on his face and I said, "Please, just give me two weeks. If it's all in my mind and it's not real, then in two weeks, I will get a refund. No harm. Just give me two weeks."

Well, every day got better. But the beauty of this story is the very next day. I had an appointment with a hairstylist that I had never met. She had been referred by a friend. So I get my little purse. I get my little car. I'm going to go get my hair done. I walked in. I don't know what to expect of this woman, right. So she starts messing with my hair and she goes, "I'm really sorry that I'm not myself today. My cousin committed suicide. I just don't know how to deal with this depression." And I was, "Oh, wait, I have this powder. I just bought it yesterday."

Dr. Thomas: You got the magic potion.

Maria: "It's magic. It's going to help you." So sure enough, I made some for her. She does my hair. She calls me at 4 o'clock that afternoon. Now, let me back up. I didn't know it then. This was a network marketing company. That guy in that tanning booth had just started with the company. I was his first distributor he had ever signed up. And the only reason I signed up—I wasn't going to sell anything—was because I wanted the discount. Well then, this hairstylist, she became my biggest, most incredible distributor. I was allowed, Paul, for the first time, I got to taste success at something and passion at something.

Dr. Thomas: Yeah. Well, it sounds like you felt better.

Maria: Well, okay, therein lies the answer. If you—like we’ve talked about. Sometimes it’s not your fault. It’s actually a chemical spiraling that happens because you introduced a drug or you introduced alcohol or you introduced something. And it appeases a part of your brain that is raw.

Dr. Thomas: Yeah. I talk in my book, *The Addiction Spectrum*, about the keys of nutrition, eating real food, but also getting your nutrients. And when you’ve been—like you were lost there for those years—I don’t imagine your diet was all that great.

Maria: Exactly.

Dr. Thomas: There were probably some pretty significant nutritional deficiencies. And then just the stress at what you were living under just shuts down a lot of pathways. And so that supplement that you had your hands on was meeting some deficiency in a very important way.

Maria: Well, yes, yes, and yes. And because I was so devoted to what I believe I could do in saving the world, which is still my desire today, I immediately took it to a rehab center. And I said, “Just try this.” It was one of the centers that I had been in. And I said, “Please, just offer it to people in the morning.” Because you’re right, who in the heck, when they’re on suicide missions, is trying to eat properly? It’s incongruent. You’re eating like hell and you’re not taking care of yourself and you’re not sleeping. Nothing’s right. So how on earth do you expect your body to function?

Dr. Thomas: Right. And we should reassure our viewers, we are not promoting any network marketing company here.

Maria: God, no.

Dr. Thomas: This was just part of your story about how you woke up to the importance of certain nutrients.

Maria: Wait, and here’s why we can definitely say we’re not promoting any network marketing company. I did very well with that company for about three years. And all of a sudden, the products stopped working. And I couldn’t figure out what in the hell was wrong. I had the product tested. And the actives, the entire component in that product had changed. That is when I decided I was going to go into manufacturing. Because never again will somebody going to compromise something that I was putting in my body.

So when you started this introduction about Maria Watson and Perfect Vitamin Products, the journey that got me there started with first me saying, “How dare you mess with a product that was helping so many people?” Then I

walked away from that income, from everything because no way are you going to compromise. If I give you my word, I'm not going to let somebody else challenge me in any way that I can't keep my promise.

So in 1994, I went into manufacturing. And that's how I met my current husband. And I want to tell you that in closure of the 20-year marriage, there was—first of all, it was doomed in that it's very hard to lose a child together and survive that.

Dr. Thomas: Yeah. It's a big stress.

Maria: But it's never ever will I say it was his fault because I was the broken one and I didn't know what I didn't know. So as I started finding my way in supplements and in the science of how to make the body stronger and healthier and better is how I met my current husband, he actually became my private label manufacturer.

Then I sold my company and I went to work with him. And 18 years, then we sold that company. I tried retirement, which sucked. I made it three weeks and that was like, "Oh, God, don't ever make me do that again." I am too filled with burning desire to just do nothing. And people that know me now know that how Perfect Vitamins got named is all I ever wanted was to give you perfect vitamins.

And now, I think about the information that God has given me, the first I learned about amino acids and then I learned about progesterone and then I learned about iodine and breast cancer. And then I learned about nitric oxide and now I'm learning about hemp and—

Dr. Thomas: CBD.

Maria: CBD and things that—I mean, I am so excited to be part of your world and part of what you're trying to do because what you can do with your book. And if people will let you be the beginning of their journey and all of us that you're bringing together for this summit, that we are communicating ways to survive and then thrive. But let's get you strong. Let's get you well. I am so proud of what you're doing.

Dr. Thomas: Well, thank you, Maria. You're bringing to this summit just a specialized little niche about nutritional supplementation and a phenomenal story. I mean, what you went through and got through to the other side, I feel a lot of healing that happened there. There was probably more than just a supplement. You've done some work.

Maria: Yeah, a lot of work. And you know what? It's easy. I don't mean this. I know what it's like to be sitting in that counseling chair. And I mean, there was a point at which I could have said to the counselor, "I know exactly what you're going to tell me. My God, I've sat in these chairs for enough hours that I know what you're going to tell me."

But if you want it bad enough and imagine movies like *Rudy* or these movies like *Rocky*, you've got to want it. And it, for the sake of this conversation, you want to find wellness. You want to find purpose. Who in the heck wants to live a boring life? Look at you. Look at the passion you have for what you're doing.

Dr. Thomas: Yeah. In my second to last chapter, I talk about 13 things that you need to do. And I start with the why. It's about finding your passion. Something that's going to drive you to do all the things you need to do. And what this piece that you're also bringing is bringing nutrients to—it's so hard. I see so many people in my addiction clinic, even in my pediatric practice where I have over 13,000 patients. I mean, there are a hundred—sorry, a thousand patients who are just struggling with anxiety, depression, mood disorders, no energy. I mean that's almost 10% of children. We're talking teenagers.

And when you get older, the percentages get even higher of people who just are washed out, no energy, tired. And you need a why, you need a purpose, and then you need your energy back, which requires—I really promote whole food, real food. You want to eat the rainbow. But the deficiencies are too great oftentimes that you do need nutritional supplements. And we're teaming up here to bring that to the world so that you can have a much better foundation from which you draw on that energy.

But I want you to just—if I can take you there. I don't know if you're going to be willing but we'll see. Tell me just a little bit about some of the harder work you had to do, kind of emotionally, spiritually, because there is that piece of it.

Maria: I wish that I could sound like I went through a lot and maybe I forgot some of it. Like God lets you forget childbirth or you'd never do it again. So, I don't know. I woke up the other day and I kid you not, I don't even know when my faith got so strong. Even my husband said, what happened to you? When did you start this? My mother tried to get me to be more aware of God's blessings in my life. I just didn't get it. I didn't know.

Dr. Thomas: Well, when you're in the middle of huge hurt and pain like you were going through—

Maria: No, I mean, now. She died in '06. And even then, I didn't understand. Sometimes I am so overwhelmed with, wow, how do I deserve the blessings that I've had. And I think when you talk to me about taking me to a place that helped me heal, I always wanted everything to be as simple as that amino acid drink. I promise you. I wanted my weight to be that easy, just lose the weight because you take some pill. I wanted everything to be simple.

Dr. Thomas: Was it?

Maria: It isn't.

Dr. Thomas: No, it's not.

Maria: That journey isn't. It doesn't have to be—the journey can be so much fun. And what we could do—and forgive me for immediately becoming a wee with you. But I want to be with you. I want to help people enjoy this journey. It is so much fun after you get some good food in you and you get some nutrients in you and all of a sudden you go for a little tiny walk. And even if it's only a three-minute walk, you get so excited that you walk for three minutes because you know you're starting that journey.

Dr. Thomas: Yes, yes. I'm glad you brought up the journey. The process of healing, we're all broken. And I think most of us started our life pretty straightforward out of our mom's—if you had a vaginal birth, even better; but C-section, whatever. There you are. You're pretty pure. And then we have—life happens. And by the time we go through childhood and adolescence, most of us, in my experience, have suffered some trauma. And like yours was horrendous as a young adult.

And whatever your pain is, if you're watching this and you're feeling broken or you're feeling hopeless or you're just feeling tired, there is a journey back to wholeness, back to energy, back to a spiritual recovery as well. And that journey is the whole thing.

I'll share one story. Sorry, this is supposed to be your time but—

Maria: No, no, no. I want to hear it. I want to hear it.

Dr. Thomas: You triggered something that I'm just remembering. So I'm a doctor, an M.D. I went to Dartmouth finally after like six years of college trying to get in and getting a master's. I finally make it. I did not enjoy that journey, folks. I was just trying to get grades, working my butt off, intermittently drinking a little too much. I finally graduated from medical school, so we're talking 10 years later. And I'm standing there holding this diploma and I'm going, 'That's it?' I had not enjoyed the journey one bit. It was all about the

destination. And so when you're sitting there in pain, let's start this journey together.

And I know, Maria, you and I were talking about something else that's going to be needed here in addition to the book, *The Addiction Spectrum*, and there are lots of other great books. I'm not just saying you should get my book. There are so many helpful books. And we're bringing to you so many other experts on this summit to bring you the information you need to be able to start that journey of healing. Embrace everything. And let's get on that journey.

But what you were also sharing is there's this need for a forum. So after the summit, after you've read these books, and if you happen to not have that sense of community...Because I talk about it in my book, you need the food, you need the nutrients, you need to avoid toxins for sure, and avoid stress. Get enough sleep and exercise. You were talking about moving in biggest community. We need a community of people who are on the same path. And so, I know you and I have chatted about putting this together for us all so we can connect online when we can't be there in person. And I'm looking forward to that as well.

Maria: And I'm so excited that I would even be—and chosen. I'm using that word on purpose. If I could be chosen to help you, then what I want to do as we talk to the audience that's listening right now is invite them to help us. That could be purpose. Let's start by instilling that much purpose into every single listener. If there's anything right now that has moved you or touched you or gotten to that bottom of that crater—that is so needing to be filled—let's fill it together. Because by the sheer fact that you would help us create this community, create this place where we can be together, help me help you, Dr. Paul, help me help you. And just that—

Dr. Thomas: We'll all help each other.

Maria: Yes. That becomes purpose.

Dr. Thomas: Yeah. So with addiction, we all have these stories, right. And the shame that surrounds our stories and our journeys, we're often not feeling like we're ready to share. But like when you share the pain of losing your child, that touches me. And so your story, if you're watching this and you've got shame or you've got pain, we're going to provide a place for you to share that. I go to 12-step meetings and it's so raw and it's so powerful because of the honest sharing that goes on. And this is how we develop a safe community where we can start healing together and be on this journey together. So it's that other final piece that pulls it all together. So you embrace all the people in your life that are bringing positive to your world, right. And if there are

really toxic situations or toxic people, they need to be set aside for a time while you're healing. You can't help someone else who's toxic when you're still yourself in such pain and anguish.

Maria: And sometimes toxic people need toglom onto those of us that are weak and that are hurting because they don't know what to do with their pain either. Nobody woke up wanting to be toxic.

Dr. Thomas: No. And we're not, by the way. I'm not saying you discard your toxic family or your toxic friends for good. But I'm saying, in the journey of recovery, at the beginning, you need to be a little selfish. And really do that self-care. And it starts from having, first, that powerful why. And then digging into proper nutrition so you can heal and taking the nutrients you need. And then getting exercise, getting better sleep. and then we're going to be all connected and, now, we're on a journey together.

And I hope you feel that sense of, "This is more than just me. This is something bigger than me." And it's something better than you and I. As we share this with the world, we're just becoming aware that, oh, my goodness, something huge is just beginning.

Maria: I agree. And as you're talking about eating better and diet, I would be so excited to share with people now how I eat. I mean, I suck at cooking.

Dr. Thomas: So tell us how you eat?

Maria: Well, like I just have learned how to cook vegetables. I never got excited about vegetables. But I do stir-fry now every night. I let the process of cutting those vegetables become almost rhythmic. And I spend my stress of the day in those vegetables. I mean, sometimes those carrots when I'm cutting them, I'm taking it all out on that carrot. But then I cook it and then I enjoy it and then I eat it and then I sit down with my husband.

And I would love for part of this healing journey to show people how to find simple pleasures. I don't know if you remember that commercial, "Simple pleasures are the best." And it was about baked beans. And when I was growing up, I remember I would see the little horse and carriage riding along with the husband and wife thinking, wow, who lives like that? Simple pleasures are the best.

Dr. Thomas: They probably put sugar in those baked beans, folks.

Maria: Yeah. They do.

Dr. Thomas: So don't go buy those baked beans.

Maria: No, no, no.

Dr. Thomas: But this concept of starting with whole food and especially vegetables—and one of our other interviewees was talking about eating the rainbow. So you want a variety of color to get all those phytonutrients. It's the foundation. And so whether you steam them or stir-fry them, lots and lots of fresh vegetables. If they can be organic, all the better. If you can't afford organic, just avoid the dirty dozen; environmentalworkinggroup.org, tell you what those are to avoid. But young folks today aren't learning how to cook.

Maria: No. They aren't learning how to cook. And I watch my son, the one who survived the car accident. And I mean he is an amazing, amazing father. He is an amazing husband, provider. But he just doesn't—it's not a thing for him. It's just not a thing.

And yet, I had found that my evenings now center...I'm sure this is how it was in the olden days. Like you kind of get to get together and it's about that meal. Preparing it. It's talking about it. It's talking to each other, like no cellphones. And I wish we could teach so much of this because there is happiness on the other side of this.

Dr. Thomas: Yeah. So to wrap it up, folks, I want—Maria, can you maybe just final words, final thoughts for our viewers that you would like them to just sort of take home message.

Maria: Don't give up. Don't ever give up because three years is a long time. And I am not exaggerating when I say that I woke up in places that I have glimpses of now that are haunting. But don't give up. Be with us. Please be with us. Because what you are doing, Dr. Paul, is the beginning of a movement. Because we don't have to hurt. We don't have to own shame. We can get rid of this. We can live. We can thrive. This is now. This is time. This is the most beautiful world. Every day I wake up. And this is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad. Because every morning that you wake up, you darn straight better say thank you. Thank you, I get one more day to find happiness.

Dr. Thomas: Yeah, absolutely. And if you're struggling with a substance or an addiction to a behavior or whatever it may be, when you get that day, that one 24 hours free of that addiction or that substance or that behavior, that's a really good day. And then, you just plug in to the resources that are available so you can get another 24 hours. We say a day at a time when you're in that battle. And one thing I learned, which I thought was sort of revealing was, if—let's say, I have just the most ridiculously easy day, I mean, everything went perfect. I mean just everything was perfect. And I stayed sober, because

alcohol was my drug of choice back then. That's a good day, right? It's a great day you would think. But it's when I have the absolute worst day and everything went wrong and I still don't drink. Now, that's a great day.

So sometimes you have to keep your top priority when you're still early in the process of recovering from an addiction, is just make that your number one priority while you institute all these things that Maria has been sharing with us, that you've been reading about, and hearing in this summit. You plug it in bit by bit by bit. But don't lose your number one focus. You cannot safely go back, in my case, for alcohol. I don't know for you. But you probably don't experiment with too many drugs or alcohol at this point in your life.

Maria: Just vitamins. Yeah.

Dr. Thomas: Just vitamins. That seems pretty safe and clean water, exercise, sleep, right?

Maria: Yes.

Dr. Thomas: So anyway, thank you, Maria, for your powerful message and your energy and your dedication to this journey and for welcoming our audience. And I feel very blessed that we're on this path together. And thank you very much.

Maria: Oh, me too, thank you. God bless you.

Dr. Thomas: God bless you too.