

## Living the Mission Episode 1: Diet Coke and Commitment with Kyle O'Dell

**Delaney** [00:00:05] Welcome to Living the Mission with the Center for Service and Social Action. I'm Delaney Burns.

**Caroline** [00:00:09] And I'm Caroline Maltese. Pull up your Adirondack chair.

**Delaney** [00:00:13] Or grab your favorite snack from the tween.

**Caroline** [00:00:14] And come chat with us and some friends about experiences that have shaped our values to promote social change and

**Both** [00:00:19] Live the mission.

**Caroline** [00:00:25] Hey, Delaney.

**Delaney** [00:00:26] Hi, Caroline.

**Caroline** [00:00:27] What is going on? A lot. A lot.

**Delaney** [00:00:34] Let's get this podcast started. What do you think?

**Caroline** [00:00:36] Yeah, I think so. Have you had a good week?

**Delaney** [00:00:39] Yeah. Week has gone good.

**Delaney** [00:00:40] A little bit exhausting, but good to have some priorities shifted and some new things on the horizon.

**Caroline** [00:00:46] True. A high point of my week is that I just got Dukin today and it was two dollars for my whole ice latte.

**Delaney** [00:00:54] Very nice.

**Caroline** [00:00:55] So that's a high.

**Delaney** [00:00:57] That is a highlight. We love to see it. So what are we going to be talking about today on our podcast? The value of commitment.

**Caroline** [00:01:06] Commitment. Man, I just picture like the SpongeBob Hands in the Rainbow.

**Delaney** [00:01:11] Oh, my goodness. As promised, we are going to be talking about the social change model of leadership. And the first value in that model that we're going to be chatting about is the value of commitment. And this is something that implies a passion and an intensity for a period of time. So we're thinking about how we can be engaged with things at a high level and stay engaged with those things that are meaningful to us.

**Caroline** [00:01:40] So today we are having Kyle O'Dell come on on because he's been committed to John Carroll for a long time now, as I'm sure he will tell us the exact number of years. But it's

been a long time and he's committed to so many different things at John Carroll. He's really been pioneering all of these different efforts for the freshmen to really keep them engaged over this challenging period and turn the events that have previously taken place into something meaningful that can still be conducted online. And he's committed to making sure that, yeah, that people are getting the resources that they need, even though it might be a little bit more difficult now.

**Delaney** [00:02:17] Yeah, and I think something also to note about him is, although he has committed to some different things, he is committed to those things at that high level with a passion like we are talking about and how this is defined. And I think that he is working with incoming students, but he also does a really good job of modeling the way for us older students as well. And we can tell that he ultimately has the best outlook on it. And he really wants the best for us in our John Carroll careers and is looking out for us in and how we can take away meaningful insights in what we're doing.

**Caroline** [00:02:56] Let's bring on Kyle, shall we?

**Delaney** [00:02:59] We Shall.

**Caroline** [00:03:02] Kyle!

**Delaney** [00:03:02] How are you doing? Welcome to Living the Mission.

**Caroline** [00:03:04] Welcome, Kyle.

**Kyle** [00:03:06] Thank you. Happy to be here.

**Caroline** [00:03:08] So we just wanted to, you know, chat a little bit and just ask you how you're doing. And then if you want to just like, briefly introduce yourself, that would be great.

**Kyle** [00:03:18] Sure. My name is Kyle O'Dell. I'm in my 17th year at John Carroll University. I currently serve John Carroll as the Senior Director of Student Engagement and the Director of Undergraduate Leadership Education. So in short form, I help manage all of the aspects of John Carroll that are fun, I like to say. And then during the school year, I also coordinate all the leadership formation, training, education. So I have a great job. I have been married to my wife since we graduated college together. I have a son and a daughter. I love to hike. I love to cook. I love to read. I like coffee. And I have a pug named Harvey.

**Delaney** [00:04:05] Very nice. Thank you.

**Caroline** [00:04:06] I was a very thorough introduction. I love it.

**Delaney** [00:04:09] Yeah.

**Caroline** [00:04:11] So to kick us off here, we're just we're going to start this little tradition where we ask all of our guests this question. So we would like to know, what is your favorite snack from the tween?

**Kyle** [00:04:22] So I love beverages. Like I love when people stop by my office and they have like a beverage for me. I love Diet Coke from the tween and I like Starbucks bottled Frappuccinos. So those make me very, very happy when I get one or if I'm gifted one.

**Delaney** [00:04:39] Noted, I think I might have a class with you next semester! OK. So we are going to be talking about the value of commitment today. So this is the first one that we are going to be looking at in the social change model of leadership. And we just wanted to start by getting your insight on what you think commitment means.

**Kyle** [00:05:00] So I think to rewind a little bit about commitment. The first thing that someone needs to do is realize what their priorities are and realize what their top values are, how those are expressed, and identify what those priorities are. And then I always say that your actions communicate what those priorities are to other people. So for me, commitment would be that you are dedicating enough time and energy to the things that are your priorities. And of course, there's the concept of things that you agree to, you follow through on. Which is also kind of responsibility, but I think commitment really plays through the most when you are looking at your priorities and making sure that you are attending to those.

**Caroline** [00:05:49] Mm hmm. Awesome. Can you tell us about a time when it was hard for you to stay committed? Right now obviously, like commitment seems a little bit more challenging. And so I think a lot of people are going through things where, you know, they committed at one point, but now they're finding it a little bit trickier. Can you relate to that at all?

**Kyle** [00:06:08] So, you know, if I think back to when I was an undergraduate student at Bowling Green, I was a founding member of a fraternity there, which most people don't know that. Probably end of my junior year start of my senior year I just was not feeling it. I felt like I'd probably gotten the most out of it that I was going to get. And there were all these other new members with a lot of energy. And then I just reminded myself what do I have to offer as an older member of this fraternity, as someone who started it? So I start to view myself in a different way and view my involvement and connection and commitment in a different way. And it allowed me to feel more, you know, kind of energized and engaged in the group again. But I just had to give myself a chance to redefine my role. And I think a lot of students go through that in a life span of an organization. That is like two thirds of the way through, they start to have other priorities or some other commitments on top of that. And if someone were just there to coach them a little bit or give them some advice, you know, redefine your role in that community and that organization. And that's probably a good thing because you're at a different point than when you joined, and then you'll get more out of it. And you'll also be a valuable resource to that group still.

**Caroline** [00:07:33] I think that that's super important because I think that a lot of people are feeling that and a lot of people would like label that right now as like they're feeling burnt out, especially maybe like a seniors can relate to it a little bit. We've done this semester of online learning and, you know, we can see the finish line and now we're just feeling a little bit burnt out. So redefining your role, I think that that's really good advice. Is there anything else that you would say, maybe like for John Carroll students now that are sort of feeling that that sense of burnout or maybe just like a lack of enthusiasm for things? Is there anything else that you would sort of like, give them as a strategy or some, like, life advice or anything like that?

**Kyle** [00:08:11] You know, so. One of the biggest things I say about leadership is it's not just about having a position. So we tend to think that the officers or the executive board of a group are the

people who need to do all the work and have like a high level of commitment. But for general members of a group to figure out what they can contribute, I think that is so key because they often have really good ideas and their voices aren't necessarily sought out or they don't even think to speak up because they don't think they have a lot to offer. And we're talking about this right now and like the programming board and the student government about how to make people feel connected and to feel engaged and to like go beyond that even to this concept of commitment. I just think that there needs to be probably more communication. We are all also really craving physical like face to face, like contact and communication. So how can we think of ways to do that creatively if it's outside or, you know, even in different cities outside of Cleveland, you know, having alumni maybe host some events for the new students so they can kind of renew their commitment to John Carroll. I think that that is a big piece of it. I think another thing is setting goals. I think that some students come into John Carroll with goals and they don't really remember what they are or they're afraid to change them and they lose sight a little bit. So I know it is very hard to stay committed if you don't feel like you have a purpose or a point for what you're doing. One blessing of John Carroll is we provide students with a lot of opportunities to reflect. So right now might be a great time for juniors specifically, you know, fall semester junior to think about what are my goals and what what am I trying to accomplish in my last four semesters here? And really, it's not even too late for seniors to think about what are my goals, because the goal of John Carroll is that you are done at some point with the degree and that first decision you make postgraduation is not for a lifetime. So that's why it's important to realize what are your priorities and use those to kind of direct your decision making on your path as you leave the John Carroll community physically. So, yes, kind of that goal setting, I think, is even more important right now, recognizing what your priorities are and starting to look at the activities or actions that you can do at this point. Because I do think some people are feeling like that sense of despair or that sense of like they're so casual or blasé about things. But there's a lot of life happening still. It's just you might need to think a little less traditionally or you might need to reach out to someone who you don't necessarily work with or, you know, have a relationship with who might give you a different perspective.

**Delaney** [00:11:13] And I think what you're saying about there being an end goal and getting to the end of our time, at John Carroll is important. And I think that that also makes me reflect on the idea of how I'm going to take this with me. And I think that's what we are trying to show people through this too, how we can live it out. And that kind of ties into the last question we wanted to ask you in terms of how do you still live out the value of commitment? How do you without that value and take the John Carroll mission with you?

**Kyle** [00:11:45] Sure. So, you know, John Carroll is an interesting time in terms of we've had a lot of people take early retirement. We've had people who have found positions other schools, and my like, not seniority is not the right word, but like my years of experience, I've quickly risen in the ranks in terms of, I'm probably like at the top 25 percent now in terms of longevity. So for me, it's like amidst this time of so much change, it is really like strengthened my commitment to making John Carroll a good place for students, to being supportive of my colleagues, to make sure our alumni feel engaged and valued. So amidst this time of trouble, it has really helped me to double down on, I think this is important and this is a place I love and I want to make it a positive experience for other people. So sometimes adversity makes people like shrink or shy away from things. But I'm I really can say in the past six months or so that I've felt my resolve like grow in terms of wanting to make things work for our students. So they have a good experience, because ultimately my when I talk with leadership students, the end goal is that when you leave John Carroll, you are able to identify opportunities where you can have an impact that are a good fit for

your values and your skills and your priorities. So, that has not changed. That will not change. That's how I really view my work from like both a thousand feet and like five feet. So, yeah. So I just through this time of challenge, I just feel like my resolve has grown even stronger. Just to provide some stability for a school now that I'm one of the people who've been there for a while.

**Caroline** [00:13:30] Awesome, and I think that you raised like some really good points and some takeaways would be like managing expectations and like making sure that your commitments are in line with your goals and not being afraid to, like, really buckle down and like do the hard things and making it through those hard times. And that will make you so much stronger and you'll be able to grow from that. And I think that that's one of the things like a John Carroll student's outlook is a little bit different compared to some other students. It's like the way that we are able to persist through those challenging times.

**Kyle** [00:14:03] I also want to say it's also OK for your commitments to change. And I think sometimes our students are very nervous or scared about that, that they are waiting for someone to say it's OK for you not to do this anymore because they don't want to feel like they're quitting or letting people down. But the reality is we grow and we change over time. So we, I think I'd rather have students be honest and say this just isn't a priority for me because I've discovered these two new cool things that really are a good match for me, than to have, you know, students who are not very engaged, not very connected like bringing the group down. But it's hard to tell yourself it's OK to stop doing something. But that is an important part of commitment to recognizing when it's not one for you anymore and that it's actually doing a disservice to the people who it is, their passions. I think I love when students come to the place where they themselves say, I think I'm just going to step out and let other people have a chance to do cool things because it's more important to them.

**Caroline** [00:15:09] Mm hmm. Way better than being, like, strung along or stringing other people along where you don't have the passion anymore.

**Delaney** [00:15:16] Right. And I think the idea of passion that you are talking about and part of the reason why we chose you for this value as well is because we can see the passion that you bring to John Carroll. And I think that that's what we want to have when we are committed to things and we want people to recognize that. And, you know, be able to say when they are committed to things and when they aren't. And ultimately, we want people to be doing what they're passionate about and staying committed in that way.

**Kyle** [00:15:40] Yeah, I tell students all the time when you leave here, you should be a much better version of yourself than when you arrived. And if that is not the case, then it's like a failure on both sides, both the student and the institution, that there was some kind of mismatch or gap that wasn't filled or fulfilled by both participants. But yeah, it's I, I read scholarship applications. It is not impressive to see someone who did 20 things. It's impressive to see someone who has done two things at the depth where they can talk about the impact that they've had. They get to talk about their passion and why they do something. That is so much more impressive to see students who have that that concept of commitment and follow through and understanding why it's important to plant roots and plant seeds so you can see results.

**Delaney** [00:16:28] Well, that's a guy who lives the mission..

**Kyle** [00:16:33] I have many shirts that say that on the back.

**Caroline** [00:16:37] Thanks so much, Kyle. We appreciate your insight. You had some really valuable things to say that I think that are that students need to hear more often, that they need to hear that it's OK to let some things go if you're not, like, totally into it anymore and, you know, refocus that energy on stuff that you can stay committed to, that you can put all of your energy into. I think that that's one thing that, you know, some students, like, need to hear because that's not always told. So we really appreciate your insights.

**Delaney** [00:17:03] Yes. And ultimately being driven to what makes us passionate and like you said, what can make us a better version of ourself when we are leaving this university.

**Kyle** [00:17:12] Yeah. I love hearing alumni ten years down the road, talk about all the stuff that they've learned and they finally start to understand what John Carroll was all about. And it just kind of fuels their passion even more, postgraduation, which is really cool to see.

**Delaney** [00:17:26] Thanks, for chatting with us!

**Kyle** [00:17:34] Thank's for having me!

**Caroline** [00:17:34] Thanks so much Kyle!

**Delaney** [00:17:35] You for gathering with us here on Living the Mission.

**Caroline** [00:17:37] We hope that you continue to journey with us as we learn how to be socially responsible members of our community.

**Delaney** [00:17:43] In the meantime, connect with CSSA on all your favorite platforms.

**Caroline** [00:17:46] Instagram,.

**Delaney** [00:17:47] Twitter,.

**Caroline** [00:17:48] Facebook,.

**Both** [00:17:49] See you next time!