

YMCA 175

Oral Histories and Stories

Story teller John Drake

Subject Personal Reflection

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JOHN DRAKE: Oxford University Press one the biggest printing presses in the world started around about 1645. And it's very first edition was wrong. It had the wrong data. Can you imagine that? Yes.

RYAN BARHAM: That's good. Yeah. Yeah,

EMILY WHEELER: You might want to introduce yourself again, just to make sure it's all okay.

RYAN BURHAM: The interview is being done by Ryan Barham and

EMILY WHEELER: Emily Wheeler.

JOHN DRAKE: John Drake is here. Yeah.

EMILY WHEELER: The time is 10am and it is the 25th of June 2019. Okay, so to begin with, we would like to know your history with the YMCA. What was your first job with the service?

JOHN DRAKE: My history and my job are two different things. I'm from Manchester and I wanted to escape from the peer pressure of the Manchester estates. Where I come from the police dogs went around in fives. It was a tough estate. Big estate in Manchester. And I realized as a young man, 14 - 15 years old, that if I hung around the estate, I would finish up like the 17, 18, 19 year olds, probably offending. Okay. So being smart, I decided to escape in the nicest possible way. I couldn't run away. So, what I did in the evenings, I caught a bus - called a boos - down to Manchester and I studied in a huge library called Manchester Central Library, one of the biggest libraries in the world.

And next door was a building called YMCA. Big, big neon red letters. And I looked in and I wanted to become a member because it said outside 16 Table Tennis tables, eight snooker tables, running track, swimming pool, Judo club, fencing club, wrestling club, basketball, seven football teams, eight hockey teams, four or five rugby teams. And I thought that sounds good.

But there was one snag. You had to be 16 to get in. And I was 15. Very tall, but not 16. So, I lied about my age. And went in, and somebody said, *How old are you?* And so, I said 16. *When were you born?* So, I said the 30th of December 1944, which was a lie because I was born on the 30th December 1945. But I lied about my age, so I could get into become a member in 1961. And I was in a palace. Fantastic. No women members, all men, all sports. Right? Fabulous. And that's when I first became a member of the YMCA.

EMILY WHEELER: And what would you say that your next steps were in the YMCA?

JOHN DRAKE: Well first of all my grades of school improved because I was also studying, reading things like that. And then I had a different set of friends, mature friends, because they all thought I was a lot older than I was. I was a very good actor. Got an Oscar. And I kicked around the city center. So as a young lad, I was going into places that most people had to wait until they were 21 to get in to and I very rapidly became streetwise. And then I distanced myself from kids at school, who continued to get arrested, and enjoyed my time as a YMCA member.

And then I - what happened? I left school, went down the YMCA, came home late. And then I decided, if moving from where I lived, to the city center was cool, and a whole different world and I was leaving all the peer group pressure. And this may speak into the

lives of people you know, who can never be the person they want to be because they're always somebody's brother or somebody's uncle, niece or whatever. They're always being pressured by the group drive. I had to make the break. That's why the work of the YMCA is so great because people can make the break. Break away from the very environment that's forcing them to be what they don't want to be.

And so, I decided to move south. And I joined the police force in Surrey, which was a big leap, moving for a northerner, moving south, and that's part of my journey. Then came back in 1965 Emily, not 1860. And then I went to Bible school, because I wanted my life to be useful.

After Bible school, I had to do some real thinking. And I was advised by the opening bat for England, England's test captain, the Reverend David Shepherd, who opened the batting for England, along with Peter May. A phenomenal figure but he was a priest, and you know he said to me? *if you want to be useful Drake, my goodness me, don't go into the church. Go into the youth service. Yeah. You don't want to spend all your time stuck in hymn books etc and worried about the church. Get in there and work with young people.*

So, I thought which youth organizations do I know? *Where are you from?* he said. If you were in London and from the north you get personally all bristley. From Manchester. *Well go back there and see if you can be useful.*

Well, there I was. Bowled out. I went back to Manchester and said to the YMCA I'd like a job. And they said *Nope. No, we don't have any vacancies now. No don't want you.* And then the phone rang. And this Jerry Hubbard, man I mentioned before. He had lost a leg in the war. You wouldn't know. He had two false legs he used to change them, just on the left side. Used to change, you know, because one was hurting and was wounded out and ran the YMCA.

And phone rang. Gerry said *I've got wonderful nEmily Wheelers.* He just been offered a promotion from Manchester YMCA to Bristol, and he wants you to go back to Bristol where he was from. *Stay here, stay here. What's your name?* Drake. *Oh, go wait outside.* Right. And I waited and I waited. *Oh, you're still here? Well, we might need somebody because I've got to leave. We might need you.*

And they gave me a fantastic title. Guess what my title was? You don't know. I'll tell you. Supernumerary. Oh supernumerary. Now Jake can tell you because she knows her Latin supernumerary means surplus to requirements. What a posey title I had. Guess what my wages were? Go on. Come on Ryan. Be bold. What do you think man?

EMILY WHEELER: £5?

JOHN DRAKE: There's an intelligent answer from Emily.

RYAN BARHAM: Would ever have something like that so back then.

JOHN DRAKE: £7 a week. And I believe all YMCA staff ought to go back to them for a start. So, I started as a supernumerary, doing all types of things. And it was a fast place; 5000 members, swimming pools, running tracks. Bobby Charlton was playing snooker upstairs. I played snooker with George Best, Brian Kid because all the United and the City apprentices. I'm getting religious. Now all the all the City apprentices in the United

apprentices went to the YM. So, they just hung around, and they were nobodies. They were just 16 - 17 year old guys playing snooker.

So, I started firstly, Emily, to answer your question, as a member. And then, like all good members, you see the value of the YMCA, it grows on you. And then I became a helper and then eventually I went forward to try and get some qualification so I could be working. Does that answer the question?

RYAN BARHAM: My question is what was the sort of the main thing that attracted you to work for the YMCA?

JOHN DRAKE: Can I be honest? It may not be politically correct, but if you're worried about being politically correct, during the YMCA, we're here to take risks, where to push the boundaries called innovation. I was, and still am, a Christian. But I was a bit of a screwed-up Christian. Still am. Right?

My father was Roman Catholic at a time when communities were divided. Never mind Brexit post Brexit. This was back in the northern days. My father was brought up a Roman Catholic. He had 22 brothers and sisters. Big tribe. Talk about peer group pressure, and to avoid it. My mother was brought up nothing, just weddings, funerals. And then she got cancer of the brain. She sought help from various religious people, and many of them promised her some form of healing. But it wasn't real. It was promises. It was though well-intended. She came across the group just around the corner from our house in Manchester. Who said *Lottie, we can't guarantee you're going to be healed. Only God works miracles. But we can share with you the promises that Jesus Christ made, that those are coming to him He will never forsake, he will never abandon and that if you believe on Him and trust him, you will have eternal life.*

So, my mother died a Christian. But as she was dying, she said, I want the name of these people who are surrounding her bed. Mrs. ... Mr. Knight, Miss Lilly and Mrs. Lord. What I want you to do is to pray for my son. Me. Gotta be all around. There was nobody else. And they did.

So, I wanted to answer your questions. To work in an organization that had value. Not just about money. Because the biggest money-making cooperation in the world doesn't necessarily produce the happiest people. In life has to have value. But I didn't want to work in a church, to be honest with you, because I'd be accountable to a bishop or a pope. I wanted to walk work in an organization that gave *me* flexibility to be me and to take risks. And so there I was in the YM, and I thought, wow, this is cool. I'm surrounded by some really great women. Coz most of the employees at that time when men who'd served in the war, and I was part of the revolution that brought women into the YMCA. Right? Because I could understand, I was born, I was a creature of my time. But I understood that we need the Bible teaches that God gives his empowerment, his gifting to all people regardless of colour, race, creed, etc. male or female. To as many as received and we gave him the power to be all he wanted them to be to that game, the YMCA because it had a Christian base. And I wanted people to enjoy what I enjoyed through the YM. The problem is people want to get used to going to the church and sometimes the church ain't quite ready for the people. I wanted a value-based organization met my own aspirations.

EMILY WHEELER: What would you say have been your most challenging times throughout all those experiences?

JOHN DRAKE: Text. Tweeting. (laughter)

I'll tell you the truth. It was a beautiful sunlight night. My son, who is called Fergus, and I ran and came upon a crowd. He was waiting to get in. And I said to him, Do you want a job? He looked at me and said I've got a job. He was at West London YMCA, he was at Ealing YMCA at the time. Yeah. Do you want a job and no, got a job. Don't ask me how I knew Emily, Ryan. What was calling him to become my successor to take over from me. He was so thick he didn't hear it. But I tell you, I knew God had put a call on that man's life.

What was the question?

EMILY WHEELER: What would you say have been your most challenging times throughout all those experiences?

JOHN DRAKE: Getting it wrong. You live with your failures. When you throw the wrong person; when you strike every police; when you arrest the wrong person. And when people commit suicide on your watch. And you say can you do more? You don't appreciate that somebody's act of kindness is the act of a predator.

My time was there's only one staff member there who remained there during my whole time of 30 odd years. Name was Julio. So, she was there before I came, and she left just after. And between us we had well over 1 million bed nights. Now I know how risky it is looking after my grandchild for one night. But if you get do the maths, and go 100 residents, multiplied by 365 multiplied by 30, that's over 1 million bed nights. Probably, 3 million eggs. Right? Another way to look at it, the restaurant, so on the largest restaurants in the city at the time.

So, you had a lot of people, but you have lots of stories. Everybody's got their own story and challenges sometimes come in different ways will we have enough funding? Will we make payroll? Will I be able to not take my salary this month in order that the cleaners would get that? Would we refuse a contract because the contract was not godly? Would you throw somebody out because they knew they were dealing in drugs and we're going to affect the other 99 residents sleeping there. So those are the you know, I go to bed at night and sometimes I don't think of the YM but other times I do think of it as well. Because everywhere you go, you've seen them.

I've had personal challenges. But, yeah...

RYAN BARHAM: And so, on the flip side of that, what has been some of the most rewarding times whilst working at the YMCA?

JOHN DRAKE: Seeing people's lives change. Seeing people come to Christ. Seeing people move into ministry. If you look at some of the largest churches in our city, John Nolan. You know, Soldier? Yeah, I employed John. Nobody else would. I employed John Nolan. Steve Marston, I gave him a job. Right. Okay. Joanna Thorn used to work for me. Susie Knights used to work for me. So, you don't always get it right.

When you see, and they're all over the country, all over the world in mission services something. You gave them a grounding that God loved the world, even the unlovable in the world. And you spell faith R.I.S.K. Right? You've got to go. You've got to pioneer. You got to be prepared to fail, but you fail gloriously. But you fail because you are doing the right things and then you learn from your failure and do the right things, right. So, it was always a mission. The YMCA was never for me an organization. It was always a mission. I always had the eternal view in mind that these people, where are they going to live when their body dies? So, it's seeing that fruit. I'm not particularly impressed with the buildings. You know, whether it's John Drake House or whether it's my place. You know, I've closed

YMCAs. I've closed big YMCAs, big buildings. Buildings are just like cars - they take you on the journey, but they're not the end in itself. Make sense?

I struggle with that because - and this sounds almost, almost rude. People would say *wow John, wasn't it great that they named the building after you; the Queen gave you a gong or something*. Or that Prince Charles came here, and we had a hoot of a time and all the so called highlights. But you know all that tosh you know. What matters is life being changed to know that you are where the creator of the universe wants you to be, gives me a buzz. Because my identity is not that I'm English, British, European, white, male, whatever.

My identity is the fact that I am loved of God. And that gives me status and an affirmation way above all the bishops and all the others, because those things will fade. It's who's my dad that gives me the buzz. And when I see these, now younger people getting old and they've still got the flame, they've still got the focus, they're carrying the baton, then part of me lives in them. And that's what thrills me. Because I've seen lots of people with lots of guns and lots of money and they're pretty miserable people. So, I'm not impressed with the world's toys. Because that's what they are. That make sense?

RYAN BARHAM: Um, the next question is an interesting one.

JOHN DRAKE: The rest were boring?

RYAN BARHAM: It's about the ... So, this is there was times Yeah. It's about the so when we were preparing for 175. One of the things that we were intrigued by was the story about the bomb in London.

JOHN DRAKE: I didn't plant it, that was my brother. I'll take a lie detector test, gov'nor. I did nothing. Nothing (**laughs**)

RYAN BARHAM: We were just very, very interested to see what you what you know about that and your story about that.

JOHN DRAKE: Okay, first of all you have to get the landscape the context, not just look at the pixel. Meaning to see the whole screen. London Central YMCA was like nothing on earth. Okay. Maximum capacity 1188 residents. Not members. Residents. Brand new building; four towers. One tower, the hotel tower, one night, no breakfast. Guess how much? 1976? 1976? One night's accommodation? I'm just saying. Yeah, you wouldn't know. 72 pounds and

RYAN BURHAM: 1976

EMILY WHEELER: 72 pounds?

JOHN DRAKE: Yes. It was always full. Always full because it was the YMCA. And most countries they don't say YMCA they say income which spells YMCA/YM A (?). Yeah, because some people don't want to use the Christian bit, particularly in Arab countries. Because of the income that was in one tower and the other three towers were for our people who were paying less rates because some of our people were on benefits. So, you can have about 1000 residents, okay?

Every night the fire alarms would go off because there were smoke detectors in every room and in every end of the corridor. There was a little kitchen and people would fry, their sausages and fry their bacon and being young people, as you know from your own

experience, they never take the fat out of the tray under the griller. So eventually you come along, fire alarms. I had to run up the stairs. 15 stories up on B tower. My wife and I, and our lovely little baby Fergus, lived in a penthouse on the top of a tower. All the other staff went home. We had 7000 members working out in the gym, and the programs downstairs.

EMILY WHEELER: So how would they afford 72 pounds a night?

JOHN DRAKE: Good question.

RYAN BARHAM: More than the average weekly wage, right?

JOHN DRAKE: But we're living in the west end. We're living where British people feel in a minority because it's an international city. There are little pockets of New York and Washington, where, if you're a local person, darling, you can't afford to live there. Okay, you can't afford to shop at Harrods all the time. Right? With me? Okay. So, this was an international city where Papa would say *you got the YMCA. Stay in YMCA till I call you.* And tell you a lovely story.

Now, this may seem slightly racist, okay, but you got to remember it's the 70s. Every time you saw a person from the Arabia, the Arab Mediterranean, you call them Mustapha. Yeah, it's just what used to call Jock, all the Scotch people Jock and you know that's a nickname. It was like a nickname; wasn't derogatory, right? And people from Ipswich we have a different term.

Anyway, there is this guy who's a really cool dude, tight jeans etc. You know hairy chest gold medallion. This is way before Tom Jones. And there he is in the reception, chandeliers in reception fabulous pool. Now called the St Charles Hotel. Google it. And he's dressed in the full Arab kit and he's got his worry beads. I said, Mustapha. What's up? *Mr. JOHN. Mr. JOHN, so good to see you, Mr. JOHN. My father coming.* So, I said, well, what's the problem? He said *He maybe send me back. Maybe send me back. I need to stay and you won't tell him about the Playboy Club? You won't tell him that you know? And tell him I go to the mosque.* I said Do you know where the mosque is? *No. Where is it? Tell him I go to the mosque. I study the Quran. I'm a good boy. Yeah, but tell him if you see him I must perfect my English. My English is very bad.* He was speaking in a cockney accent and I must say that you've gone back into your Arabic dialect. He said *no John. I'm just practicing again in case I lose it I could speak to my father.*

Anyway, this dad appears and I am saying Salaam. Salaam Alaikum. Comes back in his tight jeans and big smile. Teeth look like Simon Cowls. *Kushtie, John, Kushtie.* So, what happened? You're changed? *BMW. This is my father's giving me permission to stay another year. Okay. And of course, I need transport.*

One day the YMCAs in London decide to have a sports event. Okay. And Wimbledon, Hornsey, Ealing, they all get together. And it was at Wimbledon YMCA. And there's this guy playing for London Central's our YMCA, five-a-side, and it gets whacked. So, he's by the side of the pitch. And I'm venting his foot with cold water. My wife, Barbara, is, you know, putting the bandage on.

You alright? You alright? *Yeah.* Anyway, can you manage? And there's this Dolly bird with him?

How you getting back? You can come back in the van with us. *No, no, she can drive in the car.* Fantastic. Anyway, end of story.

Four years, three years later, Barbara, my wife, and I are walking through the back streets of Perius in Greece, right? We're lost, away from the harbour. And this tiny little Fiat 500 comes along, piles of dust and this bloke jumps out and says *Mr. Jonna Mr Jonna*. And I think is this candid camera and waiting for that book? You know. Jeremy somebody. Anyway, coming out real quickly he said *Oh, no, how are you going. So good to see you.* That's another you know, gorgeous woman. She had an atomic bra on, with 99.7% fallout. So, how do you get in that little Fiat 500? Barbara is looking at me and I'm looking at Barbara, who is this?

So, I'll take you out tonight we'll go out to this. No, we're at the hotel, it's blah, blah, blah. *Which hotel?* Tell him the hotel and looks at us like its muck. It was Thompson; three stars. Next day he takes us out and we go into this to taverna, but it's smoky. It's naturally Greek, right? We walk in and the music stops. And the headwaiter looks around, sees this guy walks across this table, (claps his hands) and this table just clears that like something out of, you know, a film, you know, like gangster movie.

And I'm looking at Barbara thinking are we going to be kidnapped? And then he takes off his jacket and click his watch. Right? It was a Rolex Sea Captain and I remember who it was. And I go Oh hello. Barbara sees me relaxing goes phew. So, we have this fantastic food. And he says to me, *you know John* - because I don't do a Greek accent very well - *you know John, being at the YMCA were the best days of my life.* So, I said why? He says *there are three families in Greece who own Greece - Papandopoulos, Classcredis then there is my own family. My father sent me to London to learn the language and to study. I was nobody. I lost 20,000 pounds a week in the Playboy Club. You know John, there are no clocks in the Playboy Club and there's no exit sign. All the food is free.* I said I know. They want you to stay there you Wally. He said *yeah, I lost 20,000 a week. But I was free. I was nobody. Now, I am my father's son. All that he has, all the shipping and all the aircraft lines, will be mine. All mine. When I go to London, special flight, special security less I am kidnapped. Even the women I sleep with, especially checked. The best John, the best for me.*

So, I said to this woman, he went off somewhere, well, what are you doing here? *I'm from Birmingham. I came out as a nanny to his young kid.* From Birmingham with a Liverpool extraction. *I mean, I'm not stupid. I could see the writing on the wall. So, I mean, this is me summer job and I want to look again. It's good money, you know. I mean everything looks so real.* It's not this is not you know. So, he came back, and she smiled. and he said, *you know she has to go the end of the summer. You know, my wife has already been decided. I don't know who it is, but it'd be a family marriage, but my mistress has also decided but when I was at YM John, Mr. JOHN when I was in, it was so good. You bandage my leg and you didn't care who I was and you didn't know who I was.* And that was where 72 pounds a night meant nothing. And if there's hundreds and hundreds of people who want the safe place. For, for them to tell you stories that would write a book. But one night, I was just lying on bed on the top of A tower and there was boom and thought not good. Rolled over and then sniffed automatically and different bells went off, and each floor has a different, like a church bell is slightly different. So, you knew where your fire was, or your incident, right? But all of them were going off and they weren't intermittent. And so, I put my head out my balcony window - fancy having a balcony on the West End - and I could see smoke coming out of one of the top vents on the tall tower. Then the phone rang and it was reception. *Mr. Drake, we've been hit. It's our turn Mr Drake.* I remember the casualness of it. It was. It's our turn, because

Barbara and I had laid in bed night after night listening to the bombs going off along Oxford Street as the IRA set their bombs off. The fire engines coming from the Soho station, Shaftsbury Avenue actually on the Camden. So, you knew which engine we've got down to find out. You knew which engines from which stations were coming, because it was night after night after night.

But this time it was and I had to, I was the duty boss. And so, I said Barbara, throw any clothes on, doesn't matter what clothes and grabbed my son Fergus. And the bell was right next to his room; he was still asleep. Snored right. And went down for four blocks. I went into this shop and I could see thousands, not thousands, hundreds of hundreds of people spiralling down and I thought this is a death trap. So, I pushed my way back, holding my son, said Barbara, you just hold on to me Don't mess. I don't care if your shoes come off. Hold on to me right along the corridor. And got to B Tower exit 21. I knew that was most people would be going that way. So, this will be the least crowded, went down and I was praying God please may nobody have chained up the fire exit at the bottom. Got down. Nobody had locked it. And I knew that my wife and child, she was heavily pregnant at the time, December the 17th 1978.

I banged on a barrister's door and said look after my wife. And they saw what was going on. And I went back into the building to evacuate the 1100 people. Mission is again an incredible story. Nobody downstairs. YMCA had ground level, then the gymnasium three floors down below that car parking below that more car parking and the bomb had been set off by the IRA between two huge pillars to support the rest of the building. I mean, they would widen this and they set it off there. And it echoed and a car there and she was okay. But when the fire engines found that she was comatose and couldn't hear a thing. The ground floor 30 floors below ground, two floors above the car parking was a disco. You're too young to remember discos but it was called Matchmakers. And it was for Jewish people who wanted to meet Jewish people, and they thought the bomb had been planted by the Palestinian Liberation Organization. So, they were coming up. Other people were coming down.

Police arrived, I went back in. People were streaming down. December; freezing cold and we had a distribution, sure the YMCA has one if a bomb goes off or there is a fire where is your rallying point and where you accommodate people. So, we sent Bedford Hotel, Ivanhoe Hotel, and another hotel, and we distributed people go and every hotel had this. If an emergency was to happen, we take that as theirs. We always have the backline.

And we cleared this is a single room with an en suite. And sorry. I knocked on one room. Opened the door. And this little bloke said *Mr. John what's the matter*. I said. Yeah, out. Moosh. Leave. Bomb. He says *every night we have a fire*. Then he sniffed and he turned and he shouted into the room. This is a single room. Seven people left. I don't know how what he was making, charging ten bob each.

Now me and a man dressed in green, check them out, all thousand rooms, or 280 rooms because some of them were twins, and then we sat down by the side of reception but this time it's cold the building is emptied and I knew my wife and kid was safe.

I was exhausted. I said, We'll phone upstairs and the police have a wagon, like our YMCA wagon. Right? And it's for beverages for on site. People need a cup of tea and all that. Okay. So, I said do you fancy a sandwich. He says *I can't go*. I said do you fancy a sandwich. So, he says, *Yeah, yeah. Cup of tea and a sandwich*. He is an Irishman.

Why can't you go? He says *they'll arrest me. So why would they arrest me? This is because I'm Irish. And the IRA have done this. Right*. Then he said, *I hate the IRA more than any*

other man on earth. So, why is that then Seamus? Small guy, green uniform because all the engineers wore green. I used to be a merchant seaman in the British Navy under the Red Ensign, and my ship docked Liverpool, so I went home to see my wife and two little girls in Belfast. And, the IRA, took me to one side. They took me into a field and put a hood over my head and they were about shoot me. My uncle pleaded for me, pleaded for me. So, what they did John, they gave me a beating and a beating so, so vicious went on forever. And then they threw me outside the hospital in Belfast. Took me three months to recover. And when I recovered, the IRA met me at the door. They took me in a taxi, a black taxi to the ferry and said 'Get on it. Never come back' To Liverpool Street. I was at Liverpool where it docked, and I was an alcoholic. I was busted. Every bone in my body hurt and the only people on the streets who care to me was the Salvation Army. They looked after me. Just came to London to escape. The YMCA gave me a job. So, I hate the IRA more than any other man in this building. Now you are the first people to know that. Sorry for the story.

RYAN BARHAM: Thank you very much for that story.

EMILY WHEELER: So, we're doing this for the 175th anniversary for YMCA and we would just like to ask and just like today, like what impact to the organization on your life?

JOHN DRAKE : Yeah, not a lot. I think it's what you call. First of all, for me being working with the YMCA for the YMCA, in the YMCA I consider a privilege. The YMCA is, has the ability to be flexible enough to mould with each generation. It's organic. I like its structure, because nobody in London can tell your CEO what to do. You can be responsible for your own responsibilities. Right?

And that's got a huge risk because some YMCAs are into stuff, which is nothing at all to do with the kingdom of God. They're into themselves. They're into making money. They're into basketball. By the way, the YMCA invented basketball, and volleyball. When they actually invented, we gave it its rules and everything. Chap called Naismith, a Canadian, did in Springfield, Massachusetts.

The YMCA can be misunderstood. But anybody who's innovating and at the edge will make mistakes, we'll get it wrong, we'll also get it right. Probably won't get the credit for it. But at the end of the day, the person who is marking the scorecard knows the truth and that one is God. You know, it's it gives me, the YMCA gave me an expression for Christian service. And significance. But at the YMCA, when the YMCA becomes an end in itself, or when your church becomes an end in itself, or your political party becomes the end in itself, and it has lost the reason for why it exists, then that organization should cease. Right? It's what it's here for which is to establish the kingdom of God on earth means values and how we act in a godly way. Does that make sense?

RYAN BARHAM: It does thank you. So, what impact do you think you yourself specifically have had on YMCA?

JOHN DRAKE: Me, myself? I can't measure that. And I think there's a real danger in getting pre-occupied with self. As somebody said about somebody else if, if that person was aware of how God has used them, they'd never get outside of the church because the doors aren't big enough to get their head through. Right? You cannot measure what God has done through an act of kindness. You can't measure how God said out of your innermost being show for flow rivers of living water. You've no idea who else is going to drink that river. You've no idea who else is going to be in that river. All you can be that river. And if you start the cult of personality, then God won't allow it. You know?

So, people said, John, why don't you write a book? Well, you know, you blow your nose in Norfolk, everybody else catches a cold. You write a book, and everybody else will identify who you're talking about. And I don't want to use other people's story as my publicity fodder. Does that make sense?

EMILY WHEELER: So, can you think of anything that the YMCA should do to improve their service areas?

JOHN DRAKE: Now that's a bit dangerous. Right? Because it could be seen as if I'm being hyper critical of, of, of, of the present regime. Right? But if you were to say, John, supposing I won the lottery and had all the money in the world. I would say that I would go to the churches in Norwich, Norfolk, in their natural clusters, and I would ask them What is God calling you to do? What's your mission statement? Okay? And I would look and say Where are the gaps? Where are collectively the body of Christ not reaching. Okay, how can we serve in your name? How can we do things that you can't do because you're the church? Right?

So that we would be belong to the church, we'd be an agent, handmaiden to the church. I don't want the YMCA to play spiritual adultery and start being church. I want it to be a handmaiden to the church. Now that gives diversity. It also gives connectivity, because there is a lot of talent in the church that is not being given expression.

You know, what's the difference between a terrorist and a worship leader? You can negotiate with a terrorist right? There's so much talent. And those rows that have got giftings, they should be out and empowered by the church but get out into the community become sovereign

RYAN BARHAM: Thank you. Finally...

JOHN DRAKE: Emily, did you like how I avoided the question?

RYAN BARHAM

So, just following on from that, what the last thing, what would you say makes the YMCA stand out as a whole then?

JOHN DRAKE: It's not an entertainment factory. Right, I'll wish you well. I will Plot your future. Being busy to ... Jeremiah James Coleman in 1856 was moving his mill from Stoke Holy Cross to Cairo. He was also getting married. And that was a big thing. They had time for the YMCA, along with cousins, Hardy.

No, Jason's Jesus didn't come into the city until 1874 and there was a young man called Thomas Jarold and they allowed one of the drapery assists, one of their assistance, Samuel Truman, to become the first Norwich YMCA paid work.

So, we started 1856. We didn't move into St. Giles' until 1885. So part of our history, but there were times when YMCA had people waiting to go into it six o'clock in the morning New Testament Greek lessons, and they were queuing round the block. Because in those days, all the workers from the shoe factories wanted to improve themselves, because they realized that through education was the way to prosperity.

I got lots of stories like that, you know, so you've got to prompt me because the YMCA has adapted and grown, and because we've always dealt with dodgy geezers. Because we dealt

with the people that nobody else would deal with. Other people will make it happen with the staff that you call the nuts and bolts staff.

You know, the receptor, they're the smile on the front of the building. They're the ones who give you a first impression. You never get a second chance to make a first impression. So, you look after your frontline staff. My cleaners were my frontline staff. They did far more than all social workers ever could and ever will. Because they were normal women who treated these guys regardless of the criminality or mental state, the same way they treat their own children. You know and that's vital.

