

## **Expert Interview I** with Dr. Chris Jones, Democratic Candidate for Governor of Arkansas

**Including** | thoughts on not letting technicalities stop you from fulfilling your dreams.

>> *Chris guest curated Strands on August 18, 2022. [Read it here.](#)*

### **Tell us a little bit about yourself and what keeps you busy. How did you end up doing what you're doing today?**

I grew up in Pine Bluff, Arkansas riding dirt bikes, going to church often, spending lots of time in the labs at school, and on the football field. I knew I wanted to work for NASA when I was really young, and I ended up fulfilling that dream. I got multiple degrees from Morehouse and MIT, and after that I held a slew of positions. I've done everything from being a high-school teacher to helping run an organization that helps small businesses get the technological innovations they need. I've worked on gubernatorial campaigns so had a sense of what was required. I have wanted to serve as governor since I was a young child—because of a chance encounter with the governor at that time. I love serving my community, and I know that my educational background, my work experience, and my personality are a perfect fit for the role of governor. I'm constantly kept busy on my campaign because I have made it my goal to reach people. My state has been so underserved and so many people feel like their voices aren't heard, I want to be able to bring their voices to light.

### **What excites you most about what you do?**

The people. I have traveled to every county at least once in the last 7 months and every single place we go, there are people waiting to be heard. They are excited and passionate. Learning about what makes Arkansas tick and getting to meet the people that work so tirelessly behind the scenes has been incredible. I just love the idea of getting to serve them.

## **What beliefs define your approach to work? How would you define your leadership style?**

Faith, hope, and hard work! Those three things truly define who I am and what I stand for. Growing up, my parents pushed me in a lot of ways, and they really instilled in me this sense of having faith in people and God, having enough hope to dream of a better tomorrow, and putting in the hard work to make those dreams a reality. Because of how they taught me these things, my leadership style is very hands on. I'm a scientist so I like to know "the niche" aspects of things, but I also recognize that I am not the master of everything. Part of being a leader is knowing where my strengths are, and knowing where the strengths of those around me lie. That's where having faith is so important. I trust those that I surround myself with to be confident, passionate, and knowledgeable leaders.

## **We are big believers in diversity -- Not only because we believe in equality, but because we also think it's better for business. The Black Lives Matter movement has shaped industry conversations around both global injustice, and also lack of representation in our industry. How do you frame these kinds of conversations, both internally and with clients? Is there an emphasis on action, or are the conversations really more about communication?**

I love the way that the question says "it's better for business", because that couldn't be more true. When I think of my campaign specifically, I think of the diversity on our team. We have a wide variety of women and men, with most of our directors being women, we are racially diverse which reflects Arkansas well, and we have people as young as 15 and those as old as 85 volunteering for us. Arkansas is a diverse state and without that diverse representation, we simply don't reach who we need to. The state government should reflect the people, and I try to do that as much as I can even just on my campaign. As a Black man, I didn't grow up seeing anyone like me in positions of power, and to think that I have the opportunity to be the first Black governor of Arkansas blows me away. As good as this opportunity is, though, I recognize the need for a larger conversation about why I am the first. I try to foster



conversations where people can be heard and where people can listen, because we need more of that, especially in politics.

**Switching gears a bit, how do you find time to balance personal interests with your career? Do you believe work/life balance is possible? Anything you've implemented that you recommend that others try?**

Not only do I think work/life balance is possible, I think it's crucial. My wife is one of the most impressive people I know, and she works the night shift in an ER. On top of that, we have three beautiful daughters and I'm running for governor. It's hard to make time for each other but they are a large part of the reason I do what I do in the first place. I squeeze in time for them as often as I can, even if it is by swinging by for an hour to give them hugs and ask about their days while I am between stops on my Walk A Mile tour. I love sitting down with my girls and helping them with homework, although I can't say that they feel the same about that (joking tone of course). As for implementation, my family prioritizes spending time together, and Jerrilyn (my wife) and I have regular date nights.

**What's your media diet? Where do you find inspiration?**

I try to consume media from as many sources as possible. My inspiration comes from people – I love being out and meeting and connecting with people – and from reading the Bible.

**As you know, we believe there is so much value in having a wide range of teachers. What's the best piece of advice/knowledge you've stolen, and who/where'd you steal it from?**

Fight hard to become the person God created you to be and then help others do this same.