

Why Busy People Need Boring Moments

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- [0 : 0 0] We have been on this series where we are centering around the story of Moses, but having a conversation about what lies beneath.
- ! Hence the amazing iceberg. The whole thing is like 10% of the iceberg is above the water. Most of the iceberg, 90% if you do the math, is below the water.
- I just want to put a plug in. Some of the sermons that we've had coming up from this have been really good. Part of the thing that we're talking about is trying to get deeper and integrate the two parts of the iceberg into one whole.
- So that our spirituality is emotionally healthy, that we are able to bring our full authentic selves, not just this, to our spaces together.
- And this morning, Trevor preached on the same topic and it was fantastic. So, you know, enjoy me. That's great. But also go back and listen to Trevor because it was fantastic.
- [0 : 5 6] And he and I kind of touch on some different aspects of this story and where we're going. So, in my community group about a month ago, maybe two months ago, I brought up that I had been watching the P. Diddy documentary.
- And we got to talking about how much money is too much money. Because what I shared was that it really hit me in the documentary. Like, I knew, I knew the shenanigans. I'm just going to say it that way because it's church. That Diddy had gotten up to. But what really hit me in the gut was how he held people's livelihoods and futures in his grasp.
- Like, Diddy could make threats like, you will never work as an ex again. And suddenly your education and your hard work and the way you provide for your family could be snuffed out like that.
- Because he had so much money and he held all the power. And as we were talking about that, how much was too much money to have, I argued that when you have enough of it to be at least one degree removed from having to live through the consequences of your existence, then you have too much.
- Now, my disclaimer on this is that this is a purely Becky perspective. You are welcome to disagree with me on this. But this is my, this is what I think. So let's just say that you can outsource everything. Someone plants and harvests your food. Someone picks it up from the grocery store and cooks it and stocks it in your house.
- [2 : 2 1] Someone manages your schedule. If you want to do something, it's somebody else's responsibility to move things around to make it happen. Someone drives or flies you to wherever you would like to be. Someone handles the logistics of your life.
- Someone washes the clothes you dirty, cleans the place you live and possibly work and or relax. And you are agree a degree of separation from sustaining yourself or carrying from the consequences of your action.
- To me, that's only a step from there to believing that your actions have no consequences or don't cost anything. If I'm not the one cleaning my clothes, I don't have to worry about what I do to get them dirty or how much work it takes to get them clean again.

If I'm not the one preparing my own food, the idea of her effort preparation becomes a non issue for me. It has no value. It would be a waste of my time. And I can demand the perfection of others to suit my tastes, regardless of what it costs them in the process.

My value for the things that sustain me diminish the more I'm removed from that process and the values for what I actually do becomes inflated.

[3 : 34] And when this happens, then I think you have too much because I think you begin to lose new humanity. Your existential understanding of what connects us and see yourself as more incorruptible than the others in the community around you.

Now, again, so that's all my own opinion, so you can disagree. But that's how I see things. And I think we all in one way or another outsource a lot of things, regardless of how much money we have.

We outsource trendiness and fashion and what society tells standards of beauty are, right? We outsource acceptance and value. Please like and subscribe.

And we outsource spirituality and belief letting a pastor or leader do the work of interpreting sacred texts or listening to God and to tell us what to do in order to be good enough.

For many of us, this is kind of how we deal with the overwhelm of the world, with everything and everywhere that's going on, the overwhelm of the news, of expectations, of responsibilities and even of entertainment choices.

[4 : 43] The constant feed of everything, everywhere, all at once. We outsource what we're supposed to do or be. But the cost of living like this for many of us is significant because we try to project the self image that as best we can fits the outsourced expectations.

The image of the perfect employee, the perfect sibling, the perfect child, the perfect Christian, perfect woman, the perfect father, etc., etc. And more of our energy goes to feed the image, the perception of who we are than anything else.

And we can become more and more dissociated from who we really are, fractured and isolated, even when we're surrounded by others.

It's that iceberg moment like we've been talking about. In too many of us, most of our energy goes to sustaining that visible 10%, and we become less authentic and more removed from ourselves in the process.

We spend so much energy overworking to meet or exceed our outsourced expectations. And we are kept from actually doing the work of freedom or true connection or disrupting the systems of power.

[6 : 06] We have to keep the filter on and only show the good, the acceptable, the right parts of us. And we forget that the goal of faith isn't perfection, the right kind of holiness.

It's about integration, where we are fully integrated and our whole self living life to the full, not living life just to the 10%.

And part of that starts with knowing ourselves well. So I listened to this podcast where when a guest comes on the host, after introducing them and their athletes will ask them, what does it mean to be you?

And I have co-opted that. And I've started asking that when I'm able to meet new people and we have time for a conversation. I will ask that question. What does it mean to be you?

And it starts the best conversations. People often respond with a, oh, that's a heart. Oh, that's a great. Mmm, that question. And they don't quite always know how to answer right away.

[7 : 15] But because they're caught off guard, the filter goes down and precious and authentic insights come out. Sometimes good or sweet, but it's always a beautiful thing when somebody is allowing themselves to be known.

So we spent a minute with Moses in all of this. I'll see if I can move this just slightly so my hair doesn't keep making and make noises. Okay. Moses was a Hebrew baby whose enslaved mother tried to save him from slaughter by sending him down a river in a basket.

He ended up being found by the Pharaoh's daughter and brought, she brought him into her household and adopted him. So he ended up being raised in the household of the very Pharaoh that gave the kill order to kill him in his, you know, Hebrew boys his age too.

He grew up as a man of privilege and wealth. Apparently that didn't work. I'm using the contrast. Sorry. He grew up in privilege and wealth, far removed from his Hebrew heritage.

But then as an adult, he killed an Egyptian that was beating in his enslaved Hebrew. And then he had to flee all of his privilege and hide out in the wilderness.

[8 : 28] He spent years, a stranger in a strange land. He lost literally the meaning of the name he gave his firstborn son. And he worked as a shepherd for his father-in-law.

And I think Moses probably had a lot of time to ponder while driving the flock to different places in the wilderness. And I wonder how he would answer the question, what does it mean to be you?

I mean, he could be like, I was this like ruler-ish kind of thing. And then I was also the son of enslaved people. And then I killed that guy.

And now I'm this. Like, that's a lot to integrate into a sense of self. And I wonder if he wished he could go back to being Pharaoh's grandson, Moses. Or if, when he was in the palace, if he wished he could be with his Hebrew people.

I wonder if he thought about, like, owning up to his actions. Or if he just resigned himself to being a fugitive forever. I wonder if he was anxious, always looking over his shoulder.

[9 : 30] Or resentful that he had been reduced to carry for livestock in this nomadic community. Or he was content with the life he had found. Was he present in the simplicity and the hard work?

Or did he allow the relentless mundanity dull the emotions? The sense of fear, the sense of loss. Moses had something given to him by his circumstances that could be transformational.

The gift of solitude. Suddenly, this man who was adopted royalty, who likely grew up surrounded by people, household staff, siblings, court personnel, was living in the wilderness, guiding flocks of sheep and goats to places to find raising.

Lots of walking. Lots of watching. Lots of listening. Often alone. When he was with him, or if he was with others, spaced out around the flock.

The thing like Moses, we can find ourselves in times of solitude by circumstance. Suddenly, we're working from home because of the pandemic. After a breakup, or a loss.

[10 : 41] Or a move to a new place. Or after burnout, or in the middle of a breakdown. These times can often be hard to navigate. And feel overwhelming because solitude is being forced on us.

But they can also be where we learn to know ourselves more deeply. In the Christian tradition, one of the contemplative practices that helps us grow as emotionally healthy people is the intentional practice of solitude.

Instead of it being something forced by circumstance, it's choosing to step out of sync with everything that's happening around you and finding a place quiet. It isn't so much being alone as it is cultivating a place to quiet yourself, to rest, to breathe, to listen, and to be.

It is a place, intentionally as Ruth Haley Barton puts it, to let your soul out. And while this is honestly a very vulnerable place, it's a necessary one.

When we step away from the constant clamor of the quotidian, we cultivate margin. Margin to not only breathe, but to activate the parts of our souls that we need to thrive.

[12 : 03] Almost everyone that I encounter in creative spaces right now has talked about how difficult it has been to create over the past six months to a year. The constant bombardment of injustice and horror and pain make creating something that was akin to breathing to them a difficult thing to assess.

When your brain is in constant high alert, most of the energy is focused on reaction and safety and taking in all the information we need to be okay. And being creative is almost impossible.

And so is curiosity. The same is true when we outsource our sense of self. We are constantly watching to make sure we are perceived in the right way.

Margin is so necessary for us to reconnect with our full selves, to turn off the high alert, and to rebirth the ability to listen, to be creative, to be curious, and to pay attention.

And we see this with Moses in Exodus 3. So I'm going to read Exodus 3, verse 1, 2, to 8 really quickly for us. You can look at it if you want.

[13 : 21] I do not have it on the screen because I do not plan enough ahead. Sorry. I do not plan enough. Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of Gath.

There, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in the flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that although the bush was on fire, it did not burn up.

So Moses thought, I'll go over and see that strange sight and figure out why this bush did not burn up. When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, Moses, Moses.

And Moses said, Here I am. Do not come any closer, God said. Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. And then he said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.

At this, Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God. The Lord said, I have indeed seen the misery of my people of Egypt. I have heard the crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.

[14 : 41] So I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and to bring them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land so evil.

So in Exodus three, Moses is doing what he always does. He's taking the flock to a place where they can feed. And he goes by this safer place where he sees a bush.

It's burning, but the bush isn't being consumed. Moses notices this and he thinks to himself, that's strange. Oh, I'm going to go investigate. So he stops the flock.

And if you know anything about sheep and goats, that is not a quick and easy task. But he stops the flock and goes to check it out. He didn't have to.

He could have not noticed it. He could have dismissed it as something burning over there and thought, maybe I miss saw it. He could have been like, I really have got to get these sheep and goats where they need to go.

[15 : 42] I'll come check it out later. But no, from Moses's place of solitude, he allowed himself to be curious. And in that place, he encountered God.

And in a way that was so intimate, Moses hid his face from God. And it was in this place of intimacy that God reintegrated Moses to who he was.

He reintegrated Moses to his heritage and his ancestry. God said, I am the God of love father of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

This lineage and heritage that have been yours that he had taken away. God reintegrated Moses to that place. It was a place of knowing and being known.

And then God recreate, reconnected Moses to his mission of restoration and freedom. By talking about the oppression of the Hebrew people, especially by the hands of the slave, um, slave drivers and the need for deliverance.

[16 : 51] And in this, he showed Moses that though the very act that Moses did that made him a fugitive was not life giving. I mean, he actually murdered somebody. But the call of his soul to justice and freedom was important and beautiful and in line with the divine.

Because here's the thing, the other gift of margin is to some, it's that place where we get to learn again, what it is that we are meant to be.

For the past seven years, I've been having some significant vocal issues. And about two years ago, I went to an ENT and took a quick look. He'd stuck something down my nose and looked at my vocal cords and said, Oh, you have acid reflux.

And I was like, Nope, no, I don't. I don't have any hanging. I don't have any heartburn. I don't have acid reflux. And she said, No, no, you really do. And they very much inflamed the vocal cords. We need to deal with this.

So she prescribed medication and gave me a list of foods to remove from my diet. And what I found in that process was that I had been in a constant state of discomfort that I had normalized.

[18 : 04] And when I removed these certain foods and I took the medication and began to recognize what was actually happening in my body.

Margin does that. It gives us this chance to step out of our tip of the iceberg wives and listen differently. To hear what we've accepted as normal.

To move away from the outsourcing of how we're supposed to be. And lean back towards hearing ourselves. Trusting ourselves. Trusting our bodies.

Being able to listen to our bodies and our hearts. And assess in a way what we've been told that we should think we're doing or become.

It allows us space to be open to God. And to discern what they are calling us to. We can begin asking ourselves the question.

[19 : 03] What does it mean to be me? And allow God to speak into that. Cultivating margin also changes the way we show up in our community.

When I am present with me. It opens the door for me to be present with others. I can approach others with authenticity and vulnerability. And listen for what it means to be them.

And create space for that. Cultivating margins in communities. Lure is less prescriptive and more restorative. It's where we have the ability to be together.

And to stop maintaining the tip of the iceberg. But to bring our whole selves into communion with God and with each other. And this too is a journey.

Because not all of us are there yet. And a lot of us carry the weight of past communities. Promising acceptance and delivering judgment and exclusion. But if we do the work.

[20 : 05] We can find ourselves not only learning to trust ourselves more. But learning how to trust the community. Coming vulnerable and open. Ready to listen.

To be curious. To discern to God. Now. I'm going to be honest. When I was asked to do this sermon. I was scheduled on to do this sermon.

The one about making space. About solitude and quieting oneself to listen. And I was a little annoyed. I have the trifecta of things that makes this difficult.

I am an extrovert. I have ADHD. And I am an Enneagram 7. So solitude is anathema to me. Migraine never shuts off. Like I literally, I was telling my dad.

I have one time that I remember in my adult life. That I, I remember that I was not thinking about. And just one time.

[21 : 02] Like my brain is always, always running. And I thrive around people. I thrive in conversations and, and interactions. And I don't thrive so much when I have too much alone time.

I don't really enjoy leaning into focusing on deep feelings. And working through negative emotions. I just, I just want to get back to equilibrium. Want to get there.

I've been in my lifetime and in ministry. Forced to do silent retreats more than once. And none of them were good memories. I just, I don't do that well.

I'm not easily quiet without anything to do. But then Tana says, well, it seems like that's exactly why you should be preaching. And especially in my life right now, I have some really serious job uncertainty.

And also like a very smart person. I went back to school. So I'm like working in school and internship. And then, you know, so I feel like my life is very full of my life. My life is very full and constantly moving.

[22 : 09] But in the midst of that, I recognize the importance of marching. And I recognize that that ends up getting to look differently for each of us. Right? We often teach solitude and quiet as this very, like honored thing that introverts know how to do and they do really well and spend time being quiet and journaling.

And those of us who don't fall on that side of the spectrum feel like we're missing it if we don't be well. But there are different ways of doing solitude and quiet that can work with who we are.

And part of learning to know ourselves is figuring out how to do this. So how do I do this? How do I remove myself from the flow and find respite so that I can have room to breathe and room to listen?

I try to do this in ways that work for me. Sometimes I take myself out to eat. And while I will like read a book while I'm waiting for food to come, when the food comes, I just eat.

And that gives me a chance to take her time, to retakes, to savor, to do something without like to observe what's going on around me, not just turning my mind to something else.

[23 : 29] Or if I'm working in the garden, choosing to do that without music or a podcast or an audio book so that I can feel my hands in the soil, that I can smell the flowers, that I can hear when the mosquito is coming so I can spot it away.

Or, this one is a big thing for me. I make sure every day off, that is like my true day off, I take a nap. Because rest is such an important part of margin.

And thankfully I don't have kids that I have to worry about, so me and the floofs can take a nap and it is lovely. This extended holiday weekend. I spent a lot of times at the sewing machine, just taking time to watch fabric go free.

And slowly but slowly, adorable little hedgehogs and cute little foxes start in their tank. I'll show you pictures later if you want, I didn't put them on the stage because I did plan ahead.

But when you take the time to create margin, you make space for yourself to listen and to breathe and to not have to accomplish something in that moment.

[24 : 42] For me it also is, I take a mental health day once a month. It's my sick leave, I can have it. I also pay the five minute belly rub floof tax that Thursday requires of me every morning before I get out of bed.

So instead of being like, oh, I gotta go, I gotta go, I can do this. And all of these things help my brain move from constant alertness to breathing room.

And my body from the need to move it, move it to rest. And my soul from what I should, what I must, what I need to just being present.

I think our will right now is overwhelming. The constant everything, everywhere being on fire or in a crisis can suck the margin out of us because the need is so great.

And maybe that's part of the point. If everything is relentless and we continue to be pulled in all directions, we're never going to be a threat to systems of horror or oppression.

[25 : 46] Like Moses, we can have good instincts towards justice, but do something impulsive that ultimately doesn't make the difference we've got to put. Could it be that by finding margin, by stepping outside of the flow, by spending time listening and learning ourselves, that finding that moment of quiet, we're already disrupting the systems of power, the ways that we have seated our system, ourselves to, to the world.

And in that space, listening for God and where and how and when they are moving and hearing that invitation to come. Maybe that can change everything.

Question becomes how. How in the middle of life, as we notice, do we cultivate solitude and market? I can't answer that for you.

But I want you to think about it, to ponder it. Maybe you start by just the small steps of getting your favorite drink and settle into a comfortable chair and ask yourself, what does it mean to be me?

And take note of how your body responds when you ask yourself this question. What emotions you feel, where there is tension and where there is release.

[27 : 10] Whatever it is, I encourage you to try it, to practice being present and paying attention. And take note of how your body responds. Taking little steps towards the stillness of listening, towards quiet and knowing, towards being in the wholeness.

And when you do, I encourage you to look and see where I am to survive. Sorry. Sorry. Sorry. Sorry. Sorry.

Lord, we thank you. Thank you for the stories of people who missed it and then you still found them. We thank you for the ways that you are encouraging us to go deeper, to see what hides behind the projection and image of the neon.

Thank you for the things that you are asking us and calling us towards a healthy curiosity and creativity and vulnerability through grace.

We thank you that you have created us to be a people who have room to rest. Lord, show us this week the ways that we can take a step back or a step out of the mainstream of how everything's gone and just teach us how to cultivate space to know and be more.

[28 : 34] It's a medicine night. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.