



# QUESTIONS

## for your real life journey

Episode 25: Dr Naar M'fundisi-Holloway

## How do we face change?

### 1. FIND WAYS TO ADAPT (12:28)

Having lived on three continents and been an immigrant most of her life, Naar explains: 'I've had to learn to adapt: to changes in culture and changes in laws and legislation surrounding immigration, to becoming a mom and a wife, or to changing careers.

'It can be tiring, discouraging, lonely and painful to face change. But as a person of faith, I have learnt to lean on God through everything. And I have learnt to adapt to whatever change, leaning on God's strength and God's direction, and trusting that he will order my steps in some way so that I'm able to adapt and live with this change. Finding ways to adapt makes things a lot easier.'

Do you agree that we must accept that change is going to happen and simply find ways to adapt to whatever changes come your way? How do you practically go about finding ways to adapt to change? Does it help you to trust that God will 'order your steps'? Where do you look for guidance or inspiration, other than in God?

### 2. LAY YOUR FILE ON THE ALTAR (19:45)

Explaining what 'God being in control' means for her, Naar explains: 'Say you're in the process of changing your immigration status: That is a fine line there. It could quickly go wrong – but it could be alright. There were moments when I have been about to send my papers to the Home Office and knew that this could be a game changer for me. And the decision was not up to me.

'So before I sent off a package of documents, I'd always go to church, lay that package on the altar and ask the minister to lay their hands on it pray for me. Because each time it felt like a life or death situation, as it affected my ability to stay and continue to study in this country.

'So it was an act of faith: "Lord, I'm bringing this to you. And I know, ultimately, you are in control of my destiny and my future, and whatever decision is going to be made on this."

Have you had any moments in your life when you've had to trust God for a decision to be made, the outcome of which would impact your life in a big way? What made it difficult or easy to do? What was the outcome?



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## How do we move through suffering?

### 3. DEVELOPING EMPATHY (19:45, 24:20)

At one point in her life, Naar was trusting God to provide the funding she needed to continue her PhD, but the money didn't appear. This meant she was excluded from her university: she couldn't use the library or continue being supervised to finish her studies.

'I was in a place where I felt God had abandoned me. God had not heard my prayer: he had left me out in the open to do it on my own. I was really upset, and angry. I felt God didn't care, and forgot about every other miracle and way God had come through for me before then.

'But other friends, who were Christians and knew the pain I was dealing with and the rebellion that I was facing in my heart, helped me through that time. They encouraged me, and spoke life and hope into my head.

The experience helped me have a different mindset, to be a Christian that is empathetic and sympathetic to others, because I know what it is to be on both sides of it.'

Have you ever felt abandoned by God? Did you tell him how you were feeling? Did anyone help you through it? In what ways did the experience change your mindset? Does going through something difficult help you to empathise or sympathise with others?

### 4. PAIN BRINGS AUTHENTICITY (25:58, 28:04)

Naar shares openly about pain she's experienced in her life: caused by the death of close family members, loneliness, rejection, racism, depression, discouragement, bewilderment...

'One thing that reassures me,' says Naar, 'is that God is present in our suffering. The Bible says he heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds... that when we suffer, we are sharing in the sufferings of Christ.

'But I feel sad that as Christians we often try to minimise the fact that people go through suffering. There's this notion that we always have to be happy, and we shouldn't acknowledge our pain or grief because "that's not very Christian." That doing so means your faith is weak.

'I have a different mindset. The more I embrace and accept the fact that I'm in pain, the more genuine I am in the way I relate to God. Crying out from the depths of my soul helps me to navigate suffering. And knowing that no matter what, God is with me, really helps. And it helps me become more authentic in prayer, because I'm constantly bringing that pain before God.'

Have you heard the message that acknowledging pain or grief isn't very 'Christian'? In your experience, does pain bring you closer to God and/or make you more authentic in prayer?



# QUESTIONS for your real life journey

## How do we receive joy?

### 5. BEING MULTIFACETED AND CURIOUS (40:11, 43:01)

'Many things make me happy,' says Naar: 'I naturally seek out things that make me laugh. I delight in being in the house of the Lord. Watching my daughter grow brings me joy. Visiting my home country and reconnecting with my roots and my people... being a foodie... music, dancing, having a good conversation, being around people...'

'I'm glad that I'm so multifaceted as a person, because the absence of one thing doesn't mean that I can't receive joy in other ways.'

'I've also got a great sense of adventure. I like to explore I like to pursue things and am very curious as a person. That's enabled me to pursue and find joy wherever I am.'

Do you have a range of things that bring you joy? Do you agree that being multifaceted makes it easier to seek out joy? Do you think people who are curious, adventurous or exploratory tend to be more joyful?

### 6. BEING THE TRUE YOU (43:01)

'The fact that I'm a Black African woman who is a Christian, has lived in the West most of my life and speaks six languages is now something I am so proud of. It brings me joy because this multi-layered dimension of my identity and self-worth has really enriched my life, and makes me who I am.'

'I now love the fact I have this complex social identity: accepting this about myself has been a journey, which doesn't happen in one day, but I'm a better person for it. Because wherever I am, I can just bring my authentic self and not my fake self.'

In which situations, or around which people, does the fake 'you' come out? When does the truly authentic you appear instead? What motivates you to hide your real identity? How could you love yourself more?



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## How do we mature in service?

### 7. AT HIS FEET (51:58)

Naar says 'we mature in service by being in the presence of God.' She explains that she recently preached on the story of Mary and Martha:

'Mary sat there at the feet of Jesus, which was culturally revolutionary for a woman to do. She realised that the Liberator was in the house and she did not have to be strapped down by cultural limitations and taboos.

'Martha also knew she had the Liberator in the house, but her mind was still constrained by the expectations of her culture.

'What the story taught me was that it is not wrong to engage in acts of service for God. That is required of us. *But it's the order in which we do things that's important.* We cannot be so focused on activities, even if they're in the name of the Lord, if it's at the expense of being at the feet of Jesus. Because daily activities will wear you down. People can be ungrateful and unappreciative. So if you're wrapped up in your act of service *without privileging being in the presence of God* it can be so discouraging.

'But being at the feet of Jesus means we are reenergized, revitalized, encouraged. It gives us the fuel to get back to those places of service where it can be tough. We have to be connected to the presence of God in order to receive that strength, that encouragement, that fuel that will energise us.

In what ways do you relate to the character of Martha, who was constrained by the expectations of her culture? How could you be more like Mary and serve out of a habit of sitting at the feet of Jesus? What might 'sitting at the feet of Jesus' look like for you in 2022?



# QUESTIONS for your real life journey

## Act: HOME (23:05)

The hero's journey in literature goes through four stages similar to the four questions: she or he is forced to leave all they know, and after periods of dramatic tension (suffering) and release (joy) they then return home, having grown wiser during the journey. Often this journey starts and ends with the hero leaving and returning home.

### Home security

Naar talks about living in three continents and yet she still feels that Zambia is her real 'home' – when she gets off a plane there she feels somehow connected in a tangible way with the land.

- Where do you feel most at home? In your own home? At a friend's house or church? Elsewhere?
- How does that place make you feel? What characteristics of that place (or the people in it) make you feel like that?
- Draw this place, and/or try to describe what 'home' means to you in three words.

### Home exchange

The Bible uses the image of home to describe how God will live with his people in the future:

'I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." (Revelation 21:3-4)

- What do you think will be the greatest aspects of sharing your home with our heavenly Father?
- What do you think will be the best new thing about that home (something you don't currently have in your earthly home)?
- Draw something that represents this future home, and/or try to describe it in three words.

### Home improvements

The Bible also talks about our hearts being a place where Christ makes his home.

'Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong.' (Ephesians 3:17)

- Are you a good host? Is your heart a welcoming home for Jesus?
- What are the positive things about you that Jesus loves about you?
- How could you make your heart even more welcoming to Jesus? Come up with three suggestions. Pick one and take action on it tomorrow.