

TALKING THE WALK

A lot more questions

Episode 40 | Major Heather Poxon

While the ‘four choices, four questions’ format of *The All Terrain Podcast* is there to help us get to know the guests better, ultimately the four questions are there to help us get to know *ourselves* better: to reflect on our own discipleship journeys and to help us think intentionally about the way we are following Jesus.

And, perhaps because we’ve reached the end of another season, this urge to reflect seems to become all the more pertinent.

So in this article about the 40th episode of [The All Terrain Podcast](#) – in which host Jo Taylor meets Territorial Environmental Officer Major Heather Poxon – I’m going to repurpose some of the wisdom Heather shares into questions we can ask ourselves.

Does following Jesus feel like an adventure to you?

Heather’s parents were Salvation Army officers, which meant moving whenever their appointments changed.

‘Every time I moved, it was an adventure. I loved it. I actually really enjoy change. I know some people who, because they moved a lot in their childhood, don’t want to move any more. But for some reason, I enjoyed the challenge. I’ve always been excited about new relationships and new opportunities.’

Heather does concede she is now discovering some of the benefits of being able to settle in one place. But she still gets ‘itchy feet’ after a few years.

‘It’s a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don’t keep your feet, there’s no knowing where you might be swept off to.’ – J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings

☰ *What kind of disciple are you? A nomad or a settler? A traveller, someone who is on a permanent adventure? Or a tourist, someone who leaves home only for temporary excursions?*

☰ *What are the pros and cons of each? Which kind of disciple do you think Jesus has in mind?*



Are you willing to choose discomfort to make a difference?

Heather went to Rwanda just after the genocide. There she listened to people sharing their traumatic experiences.

'Fifty per cent of the children had seen a family member being killed: You think what that does to them in their souls. At the same time, you feel so powerless, helpless, and you cry out to God, because there is not much else you can do. I mean, you can do some practical things – you can listen and you can counsel – but in terms of what would bring the most healing, you can't tell somebody else they have to forgive. So you just cry out to God, "How did you allow this injustice to happen?"

'And so I came back from Rwanda with a lot more questions for God. There aren't easy answers. Sometimes, we are called to cry out without understanding why this happens.'

- ☰ *I can't imagine how uncomfortable Heather felt listening to one traumatic story after another and knowing there was little she could do to change anything. Why do you think she did it?*
- ☰ *Are there any evils going on in the world today that you avoid finding out about because doing so might make you uncomfortable? How might you change as a disciple if you did choose to listen?*

How much do you connect with creation?

'If I'm outside, I don't listen to music: I want to listen to the birds. If I'm walking through a forest, I love to stop and be completely still for at least ten minutes. At first everything's very quiet. Then, gradually, the birds don't realise you're still there, and all the squirrels start shouting at each other. And it's just alive, and fantastic and beautiful.

'The other day my family went to this lovely area by a church where you can sit and have some lunch. A group of people turned up who had decided to bring a radio with them. And the music was really blaring out and they were really enjoying the music. But I thought, "you're missing the birds!"

- ☰ *Are you the kind of person who takes their own soundtrack along when they visit a beautiful beach, forest or mountain? What do you think motivates that choice? How might that choice impact others sharing that space?*
- ☰ *Likewise, in your journey with Jesus, do you find it easy or difficult to be simply still with God and as part of his creation? How might doing so grow you?*

Do you let people find their own faith?

Although Heather's parents brought her up hoping she might know and love Jesus, they gave her the space when she was older to find her own expression of faith.

'When it was time for me to say, "No, this has got to be my faith," they let me go. And I'm ever indebted to them for that, because I made it my own. I had to leave the fold to explore what faith and God meant for me. And I think because they let me go, I came back.'

- ☰ *What were you taught about God as a child? Did your parents or church leaders give you the space to make your own decisions when you grew up? How did that affect your journey?*
- ☰ *How much would you say that your faith is your own faith? Do you have personal stories of how God has shown up in your life? In what ways would you like to explore your faith further?*

Does your spiritual growth just happen?

Heather explains she would have regular evaluations in the early years of her ministry as an officer. The question she always found hardest to answer was, 'How have you grown spiritually?'

'I really struggled with that question: How do you measure spiritual growth? Does it mean you now pray for longer? Or preach better sermons? Do you visit people more?'

'After a while, I thought, "I'm not going to stress about it. I'm just going to say that I continue to talk with God as best as I possibly can." And I think that as you keep in touch with the Lord, and as you commune with Him in the everyday sufferings, joys and challenges, he grows you spiritually.'

'It's like when you observe someone who's got a real lovely gift and that person can't always see it in themselves. I think it's the same with your spiritual maturity. I think it just happens. And maybe it's for other people to say how you've grown spiritually, rather than yourself?'

- ☰ *How do you know when you've grown spiritually? Do you have a way of measuring it?*
- ☰ *Do you think maturing in service happens simply as a result of talking to God about your everyday sufferings, joys and challenges? What else is important?*
- ☰ *Who are your spiritual encouragers: the people who point out when you've said or done something that shows a maturing in humble service for others?*

Do you need a hardware upgrade or a change of heart?

Heather talks about 'hearts and hardware' as two essential components people need to make a positive impact to the environment.

'You have to have both of those together. If you're just enthusiastic about the environment but don't do anything practically, then we are still going to carry on seeing a warming world with all the implications that has. But if you just do the hardware – if you just put solar panels up and sort out your insulation and things like that – then you have resistance from people who don't really get *why* we're doing it.'

☰ *When it comes to your walk with Jesus, which is lacking right now? Your heart (your passion for him and his purposes) or your hardware (your practical actions in the world to make a difference)? How could you ask to pray with you to invite God to restore what is most lacking?*

Which leads to one final, important question.

☰ *Who's travelling with you?*

TALKING THE WALK is a blog series reflecting on episodes of [The All Terrain Podcast](#), written by Matt Little.

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