

Ep 205. The Human Void



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Jody Moore

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I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy*, episode 205, The Human Void.

This podcast is for people who know that living an extraordinary life is not easy or comfortable. It's so much better than that. This is *Better Than Happy*, and I'm your host, Jody Moore.

Hey, everyone, how's it going today? Welcome to episode 205 of the podcast. I'm thrilled to be here and sharing this concept with you today. I want to make sure that you are signed up to come to a webinar with me. I do webinars on occasion, free classes that I offer to the public just to help you guys take what you're hearing here on the podcast to the next level, give you an opportunity to ask me questions.

So I have a couple of those coming up soon. One of them is coping with anxiety. I coach a lot of people who have anxiety and a lot of people who have a child or spouse or someone they love coping with anxiety. So I'm going to offer you some tools on that one. And the other one is when your loved one is questioning the church.

So if you have somebody that you love, again, maybe it's a child, maybe it's a spouse, maybe it's somebody else in your family or even a close friend that's questioning the church and you're struggling to know how to show up and how to handle that situation in the best way that you can, make sure you join me for that webinar.

So, go to jodymoore.com and click on Free Resources and you'll see all the details there about when and how to get signed up. We will be sending out a replay if you're signed up, so get registered. But do also try to get there live because I always offer a bonus on those webinars that you can only get if you're there live. So do your best to make it there live. But if you can't we'll have a replay coming out to everybody who's registered, so check that out.

Today, I want to talk to you about the human void. This is a concept that I've been kind of turning around in my head for a while and I'm going to

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take a stab at teaching it to you here on the podcast for the first time. I haven't taught it to anybody else yet. You're going to hear it first. You're welcome.

So, the idea is that every single one of us, every, I should say, healthy human being on the planet – so sometimes we have mental disease, mental disorder, mental dysfunction where there may be an exception, but otherwise, for everybody who's mentally healthy and operating as the majority of the humans on the planet are, we all have this void that exists within us.

Have you noticed this? Have you noticed it feels like there's something not right? It feels like there's something missing. Okay, so the void can show up in all kinds of ways. Sometimes it looks like the idea that something's wrong with us and it looks like your brain looking for proof or evidence that you're just not quite as good as other people, you're not as pretty, you're not as smart, you're not as successful, you're not as good in some way.

Other times, it looks like the idea that something in our life has gone wrong, and I talk about those two problems a lot, right, that's kind of the brain software episode I did on the things that your brain is looking for. But I find that sometimes it's even more ambiguous. It usually does come back to one of those two problems, but a lot of times, it doesn't consciously even sound like any of that. It's just this empty void that we are trying desperately to fill in some way.

It's unhappiness. It's restlessness. It's overwhelm, frustration, irritation, shame, and guilt. It's all of the negative emotions that sometimes we see a reason for, sometimes we want to give the credit to things going on around us or people going on around us. Of course, it's always our thinking causing it, but sometimes there's an obvious something that's triggered those thoughts.

And other times, there's no explanation even. It's anxiety and you're not even sure why you're anxious. You can't pinpoint what's wrong. It's sadness and depression and nothing has really gone wrong.

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Now, just like always, I want to make a little side note that I do believe that chemical and hormonal imbalances are real things that contribute to some of these issues at times. And if you think you may have a chemical or hormonal imbalance causing anxiety and depression, I highly recommend that you go see a clinical specialist who can help you with that. There's amazing medication and help available today for such things.

But other times, it's not even that. It's just, "I don't know what's wrong, I just feel unhappy, unsatisfied, not content, not fulfilled, not as excited as I thought I would feel at this point in my life, and I'm not sure why." If you can relate to this, or if you have children, I want you to listen up. I'm talking to you.

So, we begin seeing signs of this human void at a very young age in humans. If we were to study the human species, as I do, I would say, from a very young age, the human begins showing signs of the human void, even toddlers. I'm not sure about babies. Maybe it exists for babies. But we know a lot of the crying that we see with infants and babies comes from a sort of physiological discomfort, from hunger or fatigue or being hot or cold or uncomfortable in a diaper or certain clothing.

But my guess is, there's some emotional void happening there too. I'm not really sure of that, it's tough to say, right, with an infant, but definitely with a toddler, as soon as they can even say a few words or make sounds that indicate their approval or dislike of things, we start seeing proof of the human void.

My three-year-old feels conflicted a lot. I can tell. And she's wrestling already with figuring out who she is and where she fits in this family and wanting to be independent and unique on one hand, and yet wanting to be included and attached and close on the other hand. It's like she's not even sure what's going on. She's not even sure why she's unhappy and uncomfortable from one moment to the next, but she is at times. And at other times, she's very happy.

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So we see this at a young age, and then as we grow older, the void starts manifesting in different ways in terms of our behavior, the way we show up, the way we think, and the way we feel. But the void still drives, I think, our discontent. So the way my toddler behaves and the way a teenager behaves is going to look different on the outside but similar thing happening on the inside. Notice that even we, as adults, have these toddler-like reactions happening internally, these internal tantrums or feelings of, “It’s not fair,” and not wanting to miss out or feel deprived or less than the people around us, insecurity, fear, and at the same time, a desire to be independent and unique.

So I think the void itself doesn’t change, but as we mature and grow up, it manifests in different ways within us. So, the first reason I bring this up that I want you to consider today is if you are a parent, I want you to keep in mind that your children have this human void within them. They’re supposed to. All of them do. Like I said, except in the case of mental illness, everyone has this. And this is why being a parent is so challenging, because as a parent, we want nothing more than to make our kids happy.

And yet, we can’t possibly fill the void. The void exists except in fleeting moments, which we’ll talk about again in just a moment. So, I don’t know if you’ve ever had this experience like I have, but I’ve noticed something that my kids want or something that I think they would like, and so maybe I take them somewhere like, let’s say, to the movies for example.

In our family, we enjoy going to the movies. And there’s a theatre near our house that’s fine that we go to sometimes, but then there’s a theatre that’s downtown that’s about 15 or 20 minutes away. It takes a little longer to get there but it’s one of those nice theatres with the reclining seats and you get to reserve your seat online so you don’t have to get there early and line up. And that’s the theatre that we really like going to.

Of course, it often costs a little bit more to go to that theatre, depending on what theatre within there we go to and what movie, and it’s more time, a little bit more effort to get there. But sometimes, we’ll, on a special occasion, go to a movie at the nice theatre downtown. And if I’m feeling

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really generous and I really want to spoil my kids then we'll go to the fancy movie theatre and we'll buy treats at the movie theatre and a drink and spend over \$100 total to get to the movie and buy treats.

And my kids love it. My husband and I enjoy it as well. But as soon as we are done with the movie and we are on the way home, what happens next? Take a guess. Somebody wants something. Somebody wants to drive-thru McDonalds or somebody wants to stop at a certain store and get something or somebody wants to invite a friend over when we get home or somebody wants to know why we can't go to this other thing.

And for years, I would get frustrated thinking, "Oh my goodness, we just spent \$100 and went to a movie. Why can't you just be satisfied and content and happy?" This is what my brain thinks is, after the movie we should all be driving home and the kids should be smiling saying, "Thanks, mom and dad, that was amazing. I feel content now. I don't want for anything more."

Right, I mean it seems logical, this is what my brain thought. And yet, so rarely did that happen. There was something more they wanted. I see this happen on an individual basis with my different children as well, right? One of them wants to do one thing and one wants to do another, or we accommodate one child and then the other one's upset. And the constant trying to satisfy your children or make them happy or change circumstances so that they will feel better doesn't work because do you know why? There's that void.

There's the void within them that they think is going to be filled by us. And we kind of want to fill it for them. We don't want to see them unhappy. But when that doesn't work, then we're left frustrated and wondering what's gone wrong. So, what I've been reminding myself lately, especially as I have two children who are shortly becoming teenagers and I notice the void is showing up in little bit stronger ways – as opposed to a toddler tantrum, it's more of a grownup type tantrum.

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It's them being mad at me. It's them saying things that I want to interpret as hurtful. It's them not speaking to me for a while because they're upset about something. So I try to remind myself, this is just the void. They want me to fill that void.

As children, it's natural and normal to expect that our parents will fill the void for us. Our parents cannot do it. Even the best parents, even the kindest most patient most loving parents will never be able to fill the void because the void is supposed to be there. The void serves a purpose.

I'm not sure what the purpose is. I'm going to come back to that in a moment, but as a parent, I know that I can keep changing circumstances and I will never fill that void for them, unfortunately.

Now, again, as we get older, sometimes when our parents don't do a good job of filling it, we start looking to other people outside of us to fill it. Maybe we want our friends to fill it. And that situation, by the way, is not unique to children or adolescents. I coach a lot of adults who are wondering why their friends aren't behaving differently, why their friends aren't acting differently.

We look to these people to show up a certain way to try to fill that void within us, and even though it happens on occasion, we notice it's still not quite right. There's something missing. We start dating at some point and we have this boyfriend or girlfriend who we think they're going to be the ones to fill the void and all the stories of romanticism and love that we've been taught over and over again validate the idea that once I meet my better half, once I meet my other half, I'm going to feel complete and finally this void will be filled.

And maybe temporarily, you do get some relief from that void as you're falling in love. But ultimately at some point, your spouse can't fill the void either. And we see this same pattern that we experienced with our parents where we're conflicted because we love this person, but at the same time, something's not right. And we're pretty sure that maybe they're doing something wrong because this void, it's still there. There's still something missing. There's still this emptiness I can't fill.

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Sometimes, as we get older, we even look to our children to fill it in some way. If you find yourself thinking, “I wish my children loved me more. I wish they liked me more. I wish they wanted me in their life more.” That’s you looking to your child to fill the void.

Many people look to their work, their job to fill the void, “Maybe if I was doing something that I loved more, if I were doing something I was passionate about, if I were more successful, if my boss appreciated me more, if I got paid more, maybe that would fill the void.”

So hopefully something I’ve touched on here you can relate to and you know what I’m talking about when I describe the human void. Now, here’s the other thing that happens that’s pretty cool is, if you pay attention, if you’re looking for it, and if you’re open to it, then you can have many, many moments of not being aware of the void.

It’s like the void kind of goes to sleep. It’s sort of dormant, if you will. I’ve found, for me, it mostly happens in small precious moments; you know those moments when you realize that, for just a minute, you’re not wanting for anything. You’re not wanting for anything to be more or different than it is for just a moment, a small fleeting moment.

I was thinking about some of these moments as I was preparing this episode. I was thinking about being at the lake with my family. I had a lot of these kinds of moments at Coeur d’Alene Lake growing up as a child when we used to spend time there. And so I think that’s why it’s easy for me today, as an adult, when I go to the lake, to feel those moments again; to just feel like, “Everything is right.” Just for a moment though, right?

My family and I were at the lake the other night and it was just our four kids and my husband and I. And oftentimes, when we go to the lake, we go with friends, which I love to do too. But it was kind of nice on this evening that it was just our immediate family. And what was even nicer was that the two little kids both fell asleep. They just both decided to nap at the same time.

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And so for just a little while, it was just the two older kids. For just a little while, they were getting along really well, they weren't arguing or bickering or trying to one-up one another, they were just laughing together enjoying one another. And then my husband and I got to be there and spend some time together. And something about the little kids being asleep meant there was, like, a little more room for just some ordinary conversation.

And I just had this moment of, like, "Oh, everything is right, right now. Everything is good." Now, it only lasts a moment because then a breeze kicks up. And I'm like, "Oh, it's a little cold, wouldn't it be nicer if there weren't so many clouds and the sun was a little stronger," or something else like this happens.

I catch a glimpse of my legs in a swimsuit and think, "Oh, wouldn't it be nicer if I had a little bit less body fat." That's what the brain does; back to the void, right? But in those fleeting moments, there's that, "Oh yeah, everything right now is really nice, is really good."

I had this experience also when my husband sent me a picture. I was out of town somewhere for work. I don't remember where I was. But anyway, he text me a picture of my five-year-old son on the fishing boat with his grandpa; his grandpa, who I know, loves to fish and my five-year-old with the biggest grin on his face. And then you can see my husband's hand in the corner of the picture holding the fish that my five-year-old had caught because my five-year-old didn't want to touch the fish, it's slimy and gross.

But he was so happy and my father-in-law, his grandpa, in the background was so happy. And for just a moment, I was like, "Yep, everything is right, right there in that picture." My heart just felt so content for just a moment. We have moments like this all the time.

Whenever one of my kids snuggles up to me, my little kids snuggle up to me a lot and I like that. It's sweet. I have that moment with them. But especially when one of my older kids, because it happens less frequently with them, just kind of comes up, sits by me on the couch, grabs onto my arm and lays their head on my shoulder – for just a moment, before I get

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uncomfortable and before I start thinking about all the things I should get up and go do and whatever else my brain offers me, for just a moment, there's that feeling of, like, everything is right, the void is gone, just temporarily, just fleeting for a moment.

When my older son, who isn't super verbal, he's more a quiet guy, and often, if I ask him what's going on in his life or what happened with his day or whatever, he doesn't have much to say. But every now and then he offers up a story about something that happened, an interaction with one of his friends or something in his class that happened that struck him as funny or struck him as interesting, and in that moment, I'm not aware of the void. The void is quiet.

That's the stuff, right? That's what this life is really about. It's those moments where you're not aware of the void – it's quiet. It feels filled up for just a moment – that make life really magical, really amazing.

I have this moment sometimes when I'm driving up to my house. There's a long road that goes up a hill and it's surrounded by trees and so the road is shaded and it feels like you're driving through the forest. And I always think, "Wow, what a beautiful world we live in and what a beautiful neighborhood I live in." And in that moment, for just a moment, everything is right. The void is gone.

I have this experience sometimes in the middle of my exercise class at Orangetheory Fitness. They play loud music, which I like when I'm exercising. And there's a series of exercises you do there and a portion of the class is usually on the treadmill. And every now and then, my treadmill is set at the exact tempo of the song that's playing and it's a song I really like and the song is loud and I'm jogging exactly to the beat of the song and my heart rate is up and I'm burning some calories, but it feels good.

And it's that fleeting moment when I'm, like, feeling alive, feeling whole, feeling complete, not feeling the void. I always feel this way too when I bear my testimony in church. I like to bear my testimony. I have to tell myself, "You don't need to get up every month, Jody, just sit down and enjoy and

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have your testimony in your heart.” Because speaking verbally and sharing my experiences with others is a way that I connect and feel the spirit. And so when I get up and I share my testimony, in that three minutes that I’m up there speaking, the void is quiet. I’m not aware of it. Everything feels right and everything feels good as I feel the spirit in that way.

So, think about what those moments are for you. When are the moments when the void is quiet? It’s fleeting maybe, it’s not really long, but what are those little moments and can you start being on the lookout for more of them, just small moments throughout your day?

I think learning to quiet the void and not have to get rid of it altogether but learning to look for the small moments of it is what this life is about. I do also think the void is supposed to be there. I think remembering that makes it not so scary and it makes it not so painful.

So know that it’s supposed to be there for me and for you and it’s supposed to be there for your child and your spouse and your friends and everybody else. And our job isn’t so solve for the void or take it away, but just to manage it for ourselves and to know that everybody else is wrestling with it as well.

Be open to those small moments right now that we’re not aware of. That is what we call happiness, my friends. Happiness is the balance between accepting the void and then knowing it’s not real and having moments where it’s quiet.

I think this void is probably temporary, but I don’t know, I think it’s a part of our human experience. I think maybe it’s a homesickness for whatever we felt and experienced before we came to this Earth. I wonder if the Savior experienced this same kind of void. My guess is that he must have because he experienced all of the things that we experience. He felt all of the same emotions we feel, right?

But I think that because the Savior so understood the big picture, he always had eternal perspective that he wasn’t afraid of that void. He understood

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that it was a temporary state. The void that we experience here creates the classroom of life that we're here to have.

And I don't know what it will feel like to pass into the next life, but I do believe it will feel different than this. Meanwhile, keep in mind, all of this is rigged in your favor.

Alright, thanks for joining me today, you guys. I hope this concept helps you to view yourself and your life and the people in it differently, with a little more compassion, a little more peace. I will see you next Friday on another episode. If you're not subscribed to the podcast, make sure you hit subscribe so that you don't miss a beat. I'll see you then, take care, bye-bye.

If you have a question about something you've heard me talk about on this podcast or anything else going on in your life, I want to invite you to a free public call, Ask Jody Anything. I will teach you the main coaching tool I use with all of my clients and the way to solve any problem in your life, and we will plug in real life examples.

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