

393: Finding Peace in Uncertainty with Tim and Aubrey Chavez



Full Episode Transcript

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Jody Moore

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I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy*, episode 393, Finding Peace in Uncertainty with Tim and Aubrey Chavez.

Did you know that you can live a life that's even better than happy? My name is Jody Moore. I'm a master-certified life coach and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. And if you're willing to go with me I can show you how. Let's go.

Het, everybody, welcome to what is a very special episode of this podcast. I am so excited to share this conversation with you. I just recorded it a couple of days ago. I've wanted to do this for so long and it just took a while for us to get our schedules to line up and make everything work. But if you're not familiar with Faith Matters, Faith Matters is an organization that has touched my life for good in the last few years.

I want to share with you what their mission statement is because there are a lot of different organizations out there that either seems to be affiliated with the church or maybe seem to be against the church and it's a little tough to navigate. Is this a group of people that's in the church, out of the church, pro-Christianity, anti-Christianity? It seems like it would be easier to figure out than it is. And I just want to read for you the mission statement of Faith Matters.

And I will preface by saying Faith Matters is who I published my book with and my testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ has grown so much through the organization and through the people that I've met there. It says Faith Matters, 'our goal is to provide a powerful and widely engaging platform for exploring ideas, practices, and initiatives that provide deeper engagement with our faith and our world. All who are involved with Faith Matters share a deep commitment to the restored gospel tradition, and a profound desire to see it thrive and remain vital and relevant to rising generations.

In 1863, Brigham Young voiced a theme repeated often in the early Church, "Our religion embraces all truth, wherever found, in all the works of God and man." Four decades later, Elder B.H. Roberts, an LDS General

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Authority and official Church Historian, issued this provocative challenge to church members. “I believe ‘Mormonism’ affords opportunity for thoughtful disciples who will not be content with merely repeating some of its truths but will develop its truths. The Prophet planted the germ truths of the great dispensation of the fullness of times.

The disciples of Mormonism, growing discontented with the necessarily primitive methods which have hitherto prevailed in sustaining the doctrine, will yet take profounder and broader views of the great doctrines committed to the church; and, departing from mere repetition, will cast them in new formulas until they help to give to the truths received a more forceful expression, and carry it beyond the earlier and cruder stages of its development.”

We believe that we, as a people, have fallen well short of that challenge in the century-plus since Elder Roberts issued it. We believe the restored gospel has an important and prophetic role to play in the world. We believe it’s time, as Terryl Givens has suggested, to foster a new vocabulary for a dispensation in which all things are made new.

So that is the mission statement of Faith Matters. And the only reason I share that is because my guests today, Tim and Aubrey Chavez are on the executive board at Faith Matters and they are probably most well-known as the hosts of the *Faith Matters* podcast. And if you are not subscribed in listening to *Faith Matters* podcast I highly recommend it. They do such an incredible job of just getting me to think about topics that again deepen my understanding of the gospel and my connection to my savior Jesus Christ and to God and they do it in a thought-provoking way.

And Tim and Aubrey as the hosts of that podcast, I often find myself wanting to know more about them. You can tell by the little comments they make that they have an interesting story. And so I asked them if they would let me interview them and sure enough, we discovered they have a beautiful and fascinating story that is inspiring and I can’t wait to share it with you today. So here is my conversation with Tim and Aubrey.

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Jody: Notice I didn't even tell you guys what we're going to be talking about today.

Tim: That's great.

Aubrey: That's true.

Tim: Ready for anything.

Jody: Okay, good, I'm glad to hear.

Tim: Aubrey's been doing Be Bold and just diving into the model.

Aubrey: I have, Jody, I started.

Tim: And it's so much of everyday life.

Aubrey: I started in, I think it was November. And I have just loved it so much. I decided I just wanted to hear more coaching. I just needed to hear so much coaching and it's been as amazing as I expected. And it's like my meditation at church. I just do models all the way through to our church and it's so great, anything that comes up.

Jody: With what the speakers say?

Aubrey: Sometimes. It's great, it's a great context because stuff is kind of constantly coming up. And I just have my notebook, it's been the most productive few months. I feel like it's been therapeutic.

Jody: It's positivity but it also shifts the way you're viewing the world a little bit. A little bit, right?

Aubrey: Totally.

Jody: In an empowering way, as long as you can avoid going to, sometimes we go to judging others or judging ourselves so you've got to

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watch out for that. There's nothing wrong with us having a bunch of crazy thoughts but just knowing that they are just thoughts is the key.

Aubrey: Totally. And I feel what I needed it for is just that I think so often I'm having feelings, I'm having big, huge feelings and I think I know why. And this has just been the best way I've found to really figure out what's going on, what's actually going on. Because I think a lot of times I'm problem-solving the wrong problem.

Jody: Aren't we all? Yes, it's great awareness.

Aubrey: Oh my gosh, it's been so great, I just love it. I love it so much.

Jody: I'm so happy that you do that.

Aubrey: I try not to be annoying. Every time I get together with my family I'm like, "Just don't talk about it. Just give them a half hour and don't talk about it."

Jody: It does feel that way.

Aubrey: It comes up all the time, yeah. It's fun and is fun.

Jody: Yeah. It'll catch on eventually, don't worry. I was that way too. Now, my whole family, they're all trained life coaches.

Aubrey: Really?

Tim: That's awesome.

Aubrey: No problem.

Tim: Very cool.

Jody: Okay, well I am so appreciative of both of you for coming on and I know your time is valuable. Let's get down to business. I'll tell you, the reason I wanted to have you on the show is because I love the *Faith Matters* podcast so much.

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Tim: Thank you.

Jody: You two are amazing. I don't know if people realize how challenging interviewing well actually is.

Tim: Yeah, I assume you're not talking about us but I agree that it's very challenging.

Jody: No, I'm saying that you guys are so good at it and it's something that when you hear people do it you take it for granted, just like what, you're just asking questions. But it's actually really challenging, tell us why?

Aubrey: Well, really I feel this is something, we're still in school for this. Just every interview we're learning something new that we can do better. But I will just say, yeah, that really took me by surprise. I thought I was in general just kind of I could do conversation. But there's something that happens when you turn on the microphone. I think it's mostly, I think anxiety kind of creeps in and you worry, what if they stop speaking when you think they're going to keep speaking and what if I don't have anything to say?

And so it took the first year to just settle down and really be able to be present in a conversation. That's been the hardest thing for me, just to actually listen because if you're really listening then the conversation does flow. But when you're thinking about how you sound or what you're going to say then you sound a little manic which is exactly what happened. So I'm so sorry for anyone who goes back to the beginning of the podcast.

Jody: Don't listen, I'm just kidding.

Aubrey: I hate when people say they're going back and listening to old ones. I'm like, "Oh, you don't have to do that."

Jody: I know, you're like, "Don't listen to those."

Tim: Well, the funny part is we've been experimenting with this new editing tool and it can automatically select your ums, and likes, and remove them.

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And last time we searched for our likes and there were literally 500 likes in a single episode. It was just so embarrassingly.

Aubrey: It's hard to see a real metric.

Tim: I'm definitely learning from Aubrey on this. The key I think really like she said is listening. And I have so much trouble doing that. I'm always just trying to think a step ahead just to make sure there's not dead air. But Aubrey is so interested in what the person is saying that she is truly absorbing it and responding in her absolute most authentic way. So I think that's why she's so good at it.

Aubrey: That's nice.

Jody: That's beautiful, yeah. I mean you have to be doing a little bit of both of course but I can tell also that you both put in so much preparation and time and you study, you read or whatever. So you come to the table prepared with how to pull the gold out of your guest.

Aubrey: That's so kind.

Jody: And I listen to it faithfully. And what always comes up for me almost I should say just about every episode because you two are both great at not inserting yourself into the middle. You always keep it about the expert or the guest that you have on. And you'll drop little nuggets like, well, at one point I had this but let me ask you this question. And I'm always like, "Wait, wait, wait, I want to hear about that."

And because I just appreciate and feel like I know you, I mean I've had the privilege of working with you a little bit as well but even just as a podcast listener we feel like we know you. And I feel like we want to know you as people as well.

Aubrey: Well, that's so fun. That's so fun.

Jody: Tell us your darkest secrets.

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Tim: Okay. Where do we start?

Jody: No. Let's just begin with basic intro, who are you and what led you both to working with *Faith Matters*?

Aubrey: Okay, that's a great place to start. Well, Tim and I sort of grew up together. We met in the first day of seventh grade. So we have a lot of shared history even before we were married and that's really been a gift because we have the same friends and we went through high school together. And did a lot of milestones together. And we both grew up in really healthy happy families that were very committed to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. I would say that was pretty central to both of our families.

And I mean I'll let Tim speak for himself but I feel I grew up in, I had that village experience. I was raised by my neighbors too and it was such a good experience. They brought so many of their gifts and gave them so freely to help me be a good person. I feel I had so many adults in my life who cared how I turned out.

And looking back I feel so grateful for that experience of growing up in the church and in a tight-knit community in a neighborhood where people really cared about me at every stage of my life. Now that we have kids really I appreciate that even more. That's not very common and it really had an effect on who I've become.

Tim: Yeah. And for me, it's similar but maybe a little bit different. I've always struggled a little bit more in geographic community as compared to Aubrey. She definitely connects with neighbors and that's always been a big part of her experience I think and for me, I'm a little bit more introverted. I kind of keep to myself a little bit more. But in high school, like Aubrey said, we had the same group of friends and that group of friends I connected really, really deeply with. And they were like us in a lot of ways. I wouldn't say diversity was our strong point.

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But we had a lot of other strong points which was, for instance, we were all very committed to the gospel and it was a really central part of our lives. And so where some kids have the experience of my friends are pointing me in one direction but in my heart of hearts, my parents, they want me to be in this direction. We were supporting each other in the direction that our parents all want us to be in, very, very strong seminary attending, going to the temple for baptisms all the time. It was a given that we were all going to go on missions, the boys at least. And we all got there.

We supported each other through those years and it was a beautiful – the way I think of it now is sort of a beautiful first half of life experience.

Jody: Nice. And did you both attend BYU?

Aubrey: I went to Utah State.

Jody: That's right, fellow, Aubrey, okay, you went to BYU. Did you guys fall in love in seventh grade or when did that happen?

Tim: It took us a little bit longer.

Jody: It took a little longer.

Tim: I wasn't fall in lovable with in seventh grade.

Jody: You weren't as lovable.

Aubrey: I was, I had awesome bangs and glasses and braces and so I'm not sure.

Jody: You were rocking it.

Aubrey: Right, yeah.

Tim: No, but we dated a little bit in high school. And there were definitely some mutual feelings going on there but at the same time, we took all of the rules very seriously. And so things did not ever get super serious

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because okay, Tim's got to go on his mission. He can't be distracted, which is certainly true. So we went to different colleges, dated other people a little bit but when I got back Aubrey happened to be home for a semester. She had just done a study abroad and was sort of taking a break.

And so of our big group, we were actually the only two people there where we had grown up in high school. And so we started dating and got married actually really quickly, six months after I got home.

Jody: Awesome, alright, so then how do we end up at *Faith Matters*?

Tim: Well, there's a lot that goes into it. I mean my mission is sort of, I think a catalyst for everything that's happened faith-wise in my life. I actually had a very, very difficult time on a mission internally. And externally it went great in terms of relationships with companions and my mission president, being called into leadership positions. I think I was actually without trying to sound arrogant here I was seen as sort of the example missionary. Internally I was in absolute turmoil due to OCD and scrupulosity that I was dealing with.

I was in a really, really unhealthy place and this is mid-2000s-type time period, far before I think it was common to talk about OCD and scrupulosity definitely was not a word really on anybody's radar at that point.

Jody: Tell people what scrupulosity is, would you?

Tim: Yeah. Scrupulosity is a subset really of OCD, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder in which you become obsessed literally with following the rules. And OCD tends to sort of attack whatever is most important to you. And as a missionary and I think this is probably still true in a lot of missions, obedience and worthiness are emphasized beyond really anything else and it was for me. And I think I had a tendency already to really absorb those types of messages.

And what happens with scrupulosity is that you start to see despite your desire to be absolutely 100% perfect and following the rules, keeping the

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commandments, whatever you want to call it. You see how woefully short you fall and catastrophize that falling short. And so it becomes the type of thing where you're in a constant spiral of sort of wanting to repent and confess, needing sort of external validation. Typically for a missionary, this will come from a mission president where you go into the interview and, "President, you've got to send me home. I have a bad thought type thing."

And the president typically would be like, "Whoa, hold on there." And that was the case for me, was like, "Don't worry about it, you're worthy." And it was just this constant cycle. What you don't realize with OCD is that what it's searching for is certainty all the time and it's not really just scrupulosity, I think it manifests in almost all forms of OCD. And so you get that moment of certainty when you confess but that's actually counter to what an actual treatment plan would be if you went and talked to a professional therapist that specializes in OCD.

What you need to feed the OCD in order to make it smaller is uncertainty. And so getting trapped in that constant cycle of repentance, confession, feeling good, it gets shorter and shorter. You feel great walking out of the mission president's office but by the time you're at your apartment you realize, oh shoot, there is this other aspect of my sin that I forgot to confess. I've got to go back. And it gets really difficult for that reason. My OCD and to be clear, I don't know how much, Jody, you've talked about OCD on your podcast.

Jody: I haven't. I haven't.

Tim: Okay. Well, I'll take the opportunity then because I would imagine that there are lots of people listening that have OCD.

Jody: Or children.

Tim: Definitely. It can manifest in children. For me, it started to manifest as a child but it definitely got worse on my mission. And they say that one, I think it's 1% to 2% of people overall have OCD but based on my anecdotal

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experience, having spoken about it on the podcast and then having friends and family members come to me and talk about it. It seems far more prevalent than that to me just on my personal relationships.

It seems more like five, 10 plus percent of Latter Day Saints seem to struggle with it in some form. And so it's a big deal. And if it's undiagnosed it can be really, really problematic.

Aubrey: Can I just add? It's so easy for it to be undiagnosed because we have, we literally talk about the repentance process which maps exactly over this OCD spiral. And so if you don't – of course, you don't know you're having a different experience than someone else because you've always had your own brain. So it's really easy to fly under the radar and to even get praised for it. Your bishop or your mission president could easily say, "Oh my gosh, you're so pure. You're coming and confessing this thing that most people wouldn't even think twice about. Good for you."

And it's sort of in with such good intentions, they're kind of feeding this OCD and maybe it's keeping it under the radar even longer because we have all this language to explain the experience.

Tim: They've done these studies that show that 40% plus of people with OCD consider suicide at some point in their lives. And so there is this big contrast between the stereotypical funny OCD that you hear about on sitcoms, whatever. It's like, I've got to vacuum, I've got to straighten whatever. And real-life OCD which is very prevalent and can be very, very difficult and damaging when it goes untreated. And I want to be clear too, it's not just scrupulosity. There are many other forms of OCD.

Some of the worst ones are the types that make you believe that you're dangerous in some way. And I know that sounds weird to say it but the people that are listening, that are hearing this I know are saying, "Holy smokes, that could be me." But there is something called violence OCD where you believe that you might be capable of grabbing a weapon and hurting someone. There are different types of sexual OCD where you

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believe that you might be a sexual deviant or that you become a sexual offender of some kind.

And one that I know is difficult for a lot of new parents that have OCD is they could be changing, and I hope this is okay that we're just being totally transparent, Jody.

Jody: Yeah, I think it's valuable, yeah.

Tim: They could be changing a child's diaper and worry that they are having a sexual thought of some kind, oh my gosh, am I a pedophile? And what happens a lot of the time with OCD again is these people are living impeccably worthy lives so that type of a thought is horrendously difficult to deal with. And it can get to the point too where it's difficult to go to a therapist and talk about those things because you could literally have thoughts to the point where if I confess these thoughts to someone are they going to lock me up?

Are they going to take me to a treatment center? I don't know what's going on. And I can tell you what will happen when you go to an OCD therapist and confess your thoughts. They're going to be like, "Yeah, I've heard that one a million times, here is what we're going to do." It's much less scary than you would imagine when you're in the thick of it because again if it's undiagnosed you don't have vocabulary to say, "This is OCD." What you might have vocabulary for as we relate to this person is that's Satan putting thoughts in my head, tempting me maybe in some way, am I going to cave to that?

On the other side, OCD can make you really compulsive in terms of righteous actions or trying to take care of stuff. And so that can be, on that side that can be the spirit saying, "Oh no, I know you saw that stick in the road five miles back. What if a car has to swerve? You didn't take care of that." That was an obstruction that got in their way. They had to swerve into the lane and at the end of the day if there's a head-on collision, it's going to

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be your fault. It's not but that's the spirit according to someone with OCD telling you, you've got to go back.

Aubrey: Or if you forget to say your prayers then someone you love isn't protected or if you don't go to the temple this many times then it's connected to good things that your healthier self would also like to be engaged in but it's coming from this place of total fear.

Tim: That was what was going on for me under the surface on my mission.

Jody: And that's extremely, I just want to emphasize like you said, how painful and I haven't experienced it so I don't know firsthand but I can only imagine how painful and I do think OCD is one of those diagnoses that we joke about. And we say it all the time and which is probably really inappropriate. And also makes it challenging for someone who really does have OCD to maybe identify with and then get the necessary help. It's not a funny thing at all actually when you're living it.

Tim: Both of those things are true. I think once you've been diagnosed it is a little bit hard to be honest to hear people casually say, "I'm so OCD", or whatever. And that stereotype for whatever reason, OCD has become this funny thing that we just talk about in culture. And that can, I think that you're right, that can totally prevent diagnosis and treatment because it's like, oh no, I don't have OCD, I have this other thing that's going on in my brain and I don't know what it is.

Jody: This dark heavy painful thing.

Tim: Yeah. And I might be the only one. I definitely thought I was uniquely bad, uniquely evil, a unique sinner that could not be redeemed. And I've talked about this a little bit before but my purpose in staying in staying in my mission was to try to offer the salvation that was totally out of reach for me to other people. That was my mentality. I had given up on myself completely.

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There was no chance of me ever getting married, having a family, going to the Celestial Kingdom in the next life but I felt like I had the message that could help other people get there because they weren't as deprived as I was. And so that's why I stayed out and kept doing that.

Jody: So at what point did you realize then and receive your diagnosis?

Tim: It was years after my mission. Once I got out of the mission environment it settled down, I mean maybe 50%, 60% better, that type of thing. It was always bugging me a little bit. What happened was eventually I applied to grad school about four years after, let's see, yeah, four years after graduating BYU.

Jody: And you guys were married at this point?

Tim: Yes. We had been married for five/six years. And I became convinced, so I got into what I thought was my dream school and I was so excited about it. But what happened was I had this little OCD trigger that was you cheated on your application. And what had happened was I had sent my application essays out to a bunch of friends for editing and feedback. And I'd incorporated some of that feedback into my essay, got in and my life was going to change. That's how I felt. And it was the most important thing to me at that time, I'd been working toward this goal for years.

And literally in a single moment it occurred to me like a snap, you cheated on your essay. You shouldn't have used the feedback, the words that other people gave you for those essays. And that absolutely just tore me up. I can't tell you, it sounds so weird, I know. It was totally debilitating to the point where I couldn't think about anything else. I felt that I had to confess. And so it was like my only options here are go to the dean of admissions and say, "Look, here's what happened, I'm so sorry. I'm going to leave this in your hands."

But at the same time, you're not losing your mind. I recognized how weird that would be and so my path it seemed was, well, I just got into my dream

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school but I'm going to have to decline because that's the moral thing to do, that's the right thing to do. And I started talking through this with Aubrey. And she was like, "Yeah. No, you're not doing that."

Jody: What did you think, Aubrey?

Aubrey: We had just through some Googling and a couple of other little things that had come up we had started learning about what OCD was. And started wondering, could this really be part of what's happening? When there's a problem could it really be OCD? But this was the first time where it felt so clear to me that it was actually going to derail our life. I felt understanding OCD a little bit, it was sort of validating for me because in our marriage up to that point, I had always kind of played the role of the devil on his shoulder.

Because he would feel so wracked with guilt about so many things. And I was always caught off guard by it. And so it was really hard for me, I would wonder, maybe I'm just not worthy of the spirit. Maybe he is feeling something that I'm incapable of feeling because I don't feel any guilt about this stuff. But then when I started learning about OCD and recognizing the way that that dynamic could sort of fit into this diagnosis, that gave me a little bit more confidence. What if I'm not doing this wrong? What if this is really OCD's voice, not the spirit?

And then when it got to be that there was a decision to be made that was so important and it seemed so – I could feel myself say, "That's not dishonest. And I can trust that I'm seeing this clearly." It felt really important to just pause for a minute and get help before there was a decision made that we couldn't unmake.

Jody: Undo, yeah.

Aubrey: Yeah. So I think I actually made an appointment for a therapist, an OCD specialist and he went to the appointment.

Jody: He agreed.

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Aubrey: And nothing has ever been the same, yeah. And the gift that when if there's a little silver lining, one amazing thing about OCD is that it actually gets better so fast. As soon as you start doing exposures, you get traction so fast. And I know it's different for everyone but I think there are a lot of mental illnesses that are so defeating because it's just such a long haul and it's so hard to see progress. And even though this will be a lifetime battle you see progress almost immediately. It was so hope giving because there was a change two weeks into therapy you could see that there was a change.

And it became the orientation of our family. So the idea of exposure therapy is that you're sort of doing the opposite of what OCD says. And so our whole, I changed and Tim changed, and it's such a good way to look at your life even if you don't have OCD. Anxiety at its root is this intolerance for uncertainty. And so when you have the orientation that it's good to try something that you're scared of it creates healthier selves for everybody whether or not you have a diagnosis. That was such a huge turning point in our life.

Tim: A lot of the exposures that you do as part of exposure therapy and sort of the work that you do with the therapist will be around sort of accepting uncertainty in all aspects of your life. And that plays in really closely to our faith journey as well because I think one of the reasons we started down this path that would eventually lead us to Faith Matters was that OCD-driven desire for certainty that I had. I first heard about historical issues, problems people have with Joseph Smith or Brigham Young or social issues on a mission.

Up to that point I think I had been fairly insulated in sort of just her mostly the party line and I felt like as a missionary I was ill-equipped to handle some of those challenges. I wanted to be able to do that and I wanted to feel really, really sure in my own testimony so that I could combat those untruths and make sure that I was on the right side of things. That's OCD in a nutshell, just make sure that you're on the right side of things all the time.

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And this is sort of stereotypical faith crisis stuff but at the same time I like to think that it was before faith crisis was cool.

So I started doing research reading books, getting on the internet and in order to be able to defend the faith better than previously I've been able to do but found that as I did the research my own questions and doubts were increasing. And eventually, after several years of sort of quietly doing this, it got to the point where I felt I wasn't being honest with Aubrey by not telling her about my doubts.

And I finally decided I need to tell her because potentially I'm not even the man that she married in the temple, going through these covenants based on the fact that we both have these testimonies that aren't just faith potentially, they're knowledge. And that was not where I was anymore. I was, sort of everything's up in the air. I don't know if the truth is true. I told Aubrey that but I was terrified what her response was going to be. We had built our lives on those testimonies and we had two kids when I'd brought it up and I thought literally is she going to take the kids?

Am I blowing up my family with her knowing sort of what her family stands on these things, where my family stands? It was terrifying. And I want Aubrey to just talk about what she felt when I said that but to her credit she never gave me a moment of actual doubt about those things. She grabbed my hand and said, "Whatever it is we're going to figure this out together." And that's literally what we've done ever since, yeah.

Jody: Were you surprised by it?

Aubrey: Yes. In fact, yeah, I was, yeah, I totally, yeah, I was so shocked because it's always so hard to hear Tim talk about that, his thoughts before he told me because if that's what was going to happen. I think that was our worldview, it was God, and then family. And so this was messing with the God piece and I can see how he was going to walk through, is she going to think the right thing to do is 'choose God' and split the family up?

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And it's really painful to think about but because it wasn't real for us yet it was easy to talk like that's the priority that the church was going to take in our life before we had any doubts. And we hadn't experienced this piece of our faith together yet and so it was a big huge unknowable thing when he had to bring it up first and so it took so much courage. And I think it was clear when he brought it up the very first time, it was so clear that he was coming from this place of just wanting to be really honest. And I could see that there was so much pain behind it.

And so because he approached it with all this humility and I could see he was going out on a limb and doing something so hard. I think that that really cracked my heart open. The only thing I could feel was just I felt a lot of fear but also just so much love. And it was easy to just hold a minute for I don't understand this but I can see that there's so much pain.

And my own faith sort of started deconstructing because I really leaned on his strength. I had my own questions that I was so afraid of that I had done everything I could to just not ever have to look at them. I feel I was kind of I had been building a dam to keep the questions back.

Jody: Sort of afraid of them, of looking at them?

Aubrey: So afraid of them. And I thought it was wrong, I thought there was some kind of moral thing going on if you chose to look at your doubts. And so I think I really relied on Tim's strength to keep that dam intact because he seemed so sure. And so if there was something about polygamy or his diversity that felt really destabilizing to me I could look at Tim and be like, I don't know, I trust him. I know him. He knows so that's going to help keep the dam strong. And so it was sort of I had an instant problem because all of that strength was withdrawn in a moment. I just had nothing left.

It felt like I was sort of forced to start really looking at my own questions. And it's so interesting, Jody, to look back because I didn't have the model or any of these tools. But it is so clear when I look back at this era in our life I can tell you the thought that was dominating our life and that was that we

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don't know that the church is true and we should. And that took over our lives and so we became totally obsessed with answering that question which makes sense.

I mean that created so much scarcity and fear and this feeling of being two selves, going to church and being one self and then going home and being real. And I sort of started losing the feeling of belonging not just because I didn't know the church was [inaudible] but also because I couldn't show up as myself at church. I expected that if people knew what I really thought that they would push me away. And so I withdrew and I didn't feel like I could bring up any real questions.

And I became kind of cynical because not in a mean-spirited way but just because my thought was I needed to find out if the truth was true. So literally everything that came up in church, I wasn't asking, does this serve me? I was asking, is that a fact? Everything that came up in church. And so I felt totally isolated and I felt like a fraud and I felt like I couldn't connect with God at church anymore and I couldn't connect with my community at church anymore because I didn't have the one single answer.

And over the years I think what happened very slowly, I mean this would have saved us just so much pain, understanding the way that thought was keeping us stuck in this feeling and in this result of feeling like we don't belong. But I think what we learned very slowly is that what we thought that thought was going to produce was this feeling that we could connect with God and with our community. So I thought that those were totally connected. If I know the church is true then I will be able to find God at church.

And I mean we weren't doing this but I think this would have just saved us years of slow and really dirty pain. That's still the result I want. I want to show up to church and feel connected to my community and I want to feel like I can connect to my higher self and to God at church. And so that means that I have to learn people's names and I have to engage in a way

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that makes me feel connected. And that hasn't come from a place of abundance and trust.

And I think that the thought that had to change was just that I belong because I'm here. And when I slowly stepped into I belong because I am here and that's all it takes then all of a sudden I could just feel at peace being there in my community and being there with all of our traditions. And suddenly all of those channels just opened right back up and I realized it actually for me didn't have anything to do with truth claims. I was never going to get to a place where I could prove that and so I didn't need to.

There was totally a way to get to that same result of feeling peace in my community and with God in that exact place without having a sure thing answer. And in a way, OCD was totally the precursor. That really did prime [inaudible], why do we consider certainty such a value? Everything revolved around certainty and when that started breaking down as we learned about OCD, we were doing the exact same thing in the church too.

And I remember really specifically hearing a podcast with Terryl Givens. It was the first time I'd ever heard Terryl speak. And I remember him using this analogy of a pencil and he said that "God will never compel you to believe. There will always be compelling reasons to believe and there will always be compelling reasons not to believe." And he talked about a pencil and how every time you drop a pencil it's going to fall. And so you're compelled to believe in gravity. Every single time the same thing's going to happen so you don't really have agency there. It's just that's the thing that happens.

I remember that just blowing my mind and realizing that that is faith. I'm never going to get to a place even if I have a vision, there's just nothing that could actually make my faith a fact. And so I felt eventually we just had to sort of set that aside. And that's kind of paradoxical. It's uncomfortable still but it produced the result that I wanted in the beginning. I feel so much love for the people that I gather with to worship. And I feel like I have more

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access to God when I just set that aside and stopped obsessing about what is a fact here and just chose to engage.

Jody: And I think because our culture has some somewhat unique qualities to it and we develop our own sort of language just like when we pray we all repeat the same phrases. And when we share our testimony we say, "I know this church is true." But just throwing out things like that I think it sends that message like you said that you should know this is true, that's what we do here. We say that "I know this is true."

And what I appreciate so much about the work that you two do now and the work that Faith Matters is, tries to just evolve us to that next level of some days I don't know if it's true. And certain parts of it I really am not sure about. But overall I do have a relationship with God and Jesus Christ and I love how this community and this church make my life better and I want to bring something to this community. But that language of I know this is true like you said, it's not like gravity. We know gravity is real. We don't know that God is real.

You can have a very strong manifestation and feeling and confirmation of that, I'm not trying to deny that. But that again anything that leads to believing that you should have certainty as extreme as OCD or just more like your experience, Aubrey, of doubts, actually fuels the doubt, fuels the problem. It's so crazy, right?

Aubrey: That's so true.

Tim: Yeah. I think that's right. And yeah, well, first of all, Jody, I'll say that when I ask for the food to nourish and strengthen our bodies I really mean it. I'm very authentic.

Jody: My son was like, "Wait, we're eating Cheetos." I think that God's like, give me something to work with here.

Tim: But I think yeah, for us also I mean during this whole journey that's now been a, I guess, 12-year journey, one of the things that we've come to

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rely on as sort of a mental framework is the idea that everyone's faith, it's a different journey for everybody but there are sort of common stages that people pass through as they work through challenges to their faith.

There is a famous framework by James Fowler, the stages of the faith framework that I think is really helpful but maybe our favorite and there are several different ones. Jared Halverson talked at [inaudible] conference about one that he calls creation [inaudible] atonement which is really beautiful. One of my personal favorites is by our friend named Brian McLaren. He's a former evangelical pastor, a Christian sort of thought leader who's written tons of just amazing stuff and our favorite book of his is called Faith After Doubt.

He's also a podcaster, he's done stuff with the Center for Action and Contemplation with Richard Rohr which is all just really incredible. But his framework in Faith After Doubt has four stages and they're called simplicity, complexity, perplexity and harmony. And in simplicity basically, you see the world in black and white, it's very clear, there's not really any difficult challenging questions to address. If somebody sees it the other way, nothing they're thinking is really valid, it's pretty clear cut.

In complexity, you start to recognize that there are difficult questions but you're going to do all of the difficult work to respond in a really perfect way to those questions. So in our Latter-Day Saint context, a lot of people struggle with polygamy. And in complexity the answer would be okay, I'm going to read everything about polygamy and I'm going to make it make sense and I'm going to show why that this was 100% inspired and perfect and it's everything that I would hope for it to be.

After complexity, a lot of people get into a stage called perplexity where you realize that you haven't been able to answer and this is where I was sort of when I started confessing to Aubrey what I was feeling. I haven't been able to answer those questions sufficiently. I'm recognizing that the questions are there but my answers aren't good enough. And so you start to throw

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stuff out. And you can even get into a real stage of cynicism. So perplexity, meaning, the questions are all that matter. There are no answers.

And if somebody thinks they have the answers then they're just delusional, nobody can figure this stuff out.

Jody: Or they haven't read enough, they don't know enough.

Tim: Or they haven't read enough, yeah, totally. And that stage is really probably the most painful stage. It definitely is the most painful stage because that's where like Aubrey's talking about, you can really start to feel alienated from your community beyond just the questions about your own beliefs. You definitely start to feel like you don't fit in. I think at church there is a lot of air time given to people in stage one and stage two and that's not necessarily a bad thing. We have talked about this on our podcast too.

The world and the church need all four stages and they all bring unique gifts. But the stage three people can be really upset when they hear the stage one and stage two type of thing. And it can definitely make you feel marginalized. The final stage for Brian is harmony where you sort of recognize that you may not have all the answers. You may not ever get to the answers but there's something bigger going on here that is worth holding onto.

And Brian the way that he puts it is, faith before doubt expresses itself in the form of correct beliefs. Faith after doubt expresses itself in love. That final statement he's actually getting from a verse in the new international version of Galatians. I think it's Galatians 1:5 if I'm not mistaken that says, 'The only thing that matters is faith expressing itself in love'. And we all set up base camp in a given stage but we move into other stages all the time. And so there are definitely parts of my life where I'm a stage one type of person and parts of my life where I'm a stage three person.

And depending on the week at church I might be there rolling my eyes and feeling a little cynical and another week I might feel pretty sure about

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something. And another week I might say, “I have no idea but look at all these beautiful people that I’m connecting with.” And I guess, my hope is that regardless of whatever turns out to be true and I definitely have a system of belief and a belief in the divine and the belief that the church is the wonderful vehicle for us to connect with the divine.

I guess my hope is that my faith is that type of faith that is expressing itself in love.

Jody: I want to ask both of you to answer this question individually because there are a lot of communities or religions or places where you can feel close to God. Why do you choose to stay in the LDS church?

Aubrey: That became a question that we were talking about every day after dinner. It was just that became the consuming thing, why this, if it’s not the one and only true, which I felt we had sort of accepted that we were never going to get a perfect answer there. And I think kind of the answer that I came to was that it’s because we’re here, this is just where I was plopped down. And that used to be really disturbing to me that I couldn’t justify it, I couldn’t convince myself that had I not been born into the church that I would have found it and joined.

And so I felt that meant, well, I guess I should leave then. If I don’t feel sure it’s the only thing worth doing then I should leave. And I think over the years, I started just really challenging that idea. And so what feels true to me now is that I am here and this is something Thomas McConkie has shared on our podcast a little bit and kind of helped coached us through. But the fact that we were born here and this is our mother tongue gives us such a capacity to help the church grow in a way that feels healthy and that actually serves us and helps us to connect to God.

And that feels like such a powerful reason. I don’t think that I have to justify that I would have found it. I think I can look around and say, “I actually just really appreciate that I started here.” And so I have these shared traditions with my immediate family and my extended family and my deep-back

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ancestral family and that's good enough. In fact, I think maybe it gives me, it means that I have some responsibility here because if I can't give to this community and then I'm not sure who else I'm expecting to.

And so I think mostly at the end of the day that idea that this is where I belong that's the thing that actually connects me to God which is all I wanted in the first place. I want a sacred place where I can find God. And what I'm learning is that I can do that here. I can do that here, maybe it's a little bit of all of those reasons and it took a long time to realize that those are good enough reasons. Those are great reasons. Those are maybe the only reasons that actually even work.

Jody: I love that. My sister, Natalie Clay does couples coaching and one of the things she's constantly saying is that we think that you should stay in a marriage for certain reasons. It used to be shameful to leave your marriage. Now the new shame is staying in your marriage if things aren't perfect if there's infidelity if there's whatever. The way she's constantly coaching is whatever your reason is if you like the reason. People say, "Don't just stay for the kids." Well, if you want to just stay for the kids you can. There's no right reason.

There's no fairytale because you're in love in this magical way forever and your reason can change too and your reason can adapt over time. But I love what you're saying about it doesn't have to be this grandiose reason. If it's a reason that you like and it feels good to you there's probably no perfect reason and there's definitely no perfect community. Tim, how would you answer that question?

Tim: Yeah. Well, I guess I'd say first of all I do think that the Latter Day tradition has some real gems and things that it does just as good or better than anybody. I can think, we do community just as well or better than anybody. We have this amazing sort of first half of life framework that again I credit with a lot of my, you know, whatever success I've had in family or work or whatever, I was raised in this really beautiful way that taught me the value of hard work and honesty and diligence and uprightness.

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And some of those things, yeah, we talk about they went a little haywire but I also give a huge amount of credit to my upbringing in church for a lot of those things. At the same time, I now believe that all religious traditions and wisdom traditions have their own gems that it would be good for all of us to explore to the extent possible.

One of my favorite podcasts that we did was with Michael Wilcox who's sort of a long-time teacher and writer in the church and he talks about this analogy of a compass, the kind that draws circles, not the kind that points north or south. And it's two feet and what he calls them are the fixed foot and the searching foot. So you've got one that's kind of got that needle and it's stuck in a place and then the other one, the point is for it to draw increasingly broad circles and gathering whatever wisdom we can from anywhere we can.

And I think my reason for keeping that foot fixed like Aubrey said is part of it is this is who I am. It's my mother tongue and it's where I can do the best and have the most impact. But also I think there's for the most growth we do need depth and we need breadth. Latter Day Saintism is where I get my depth. I don't think the best model is probably to jump around and honeymoon in a bunch of different traditions and see only the good things.

Once you go deep, you see the problems and you're able to sort of work through the problems which is really growth-inducing for you and everybody else that's involved. And the depth can get you the gems from all of those other amazing and beautiful traditions that we don't emphasize as much that we could and that we can learn from.

Jody: That's beautiful.

Aubrey: Can I just add? The problem's actually been a good thing. I mean that was such a paradigm shift that has been fruitful for us because when we started all of this we thought that the problems were – that was a red flag. It was the thing that was saying you've got to cut and run. And having this new paradigm, that the point is that you should be in tension. You need

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the tension for growth. Then when you run up against something that makes you uncomfortable it does feel like a gift. It's an opportunity to stretch.

And if you talk about forgiveness and teach about and sing about forgiveness but have never actually had to do the soul-stretching work of offering forgiveness to someone who genuinely hurt you, do you really know anything about that value? And I really think Tim's right, we've got to be in the rumble somewhere and it's easy to walk away when it gets like when you feel the tension and it's too uncomfortable. But I really think that's where all the benefit is, it's where the rubber actually hits the road and you experience real growth which I really think is what goes hand in hand with the connection that we're always seeking.

Tim: One analogy that Aubrey and I have been talking about over the past couple of years is a rock tumbler. She actually got me one for my birthday and it's been super fun. But if you think about us as these unpolished rough stones that we want to eventually make polished and beautiful, well, there are a couple of things required in that rock tumbler. Number one is other rocks in there, that can be the church experience and being there rubbing shoulders with other people and it could be leaders or just peers or whatever.

But if you go to church week in, week out and accepting, and participating in callings and dealing with people in your neighborhood, things are going to happen and it's going to be tough. And each one of those tough things is going to clip off one of your rough edges. But the other really important piece of the tumbler is the container itself. That's what's keeping everybody together enough for those rocks to bump up against each other and eventually create these smooth and beautiful stones.

So without that church piece, we're not contained enough, like Aubrey said, there's not enough tension to keep us together and cause that friction that's going to help us become who we want to be eventually.

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Jody: That's so beautiful, yeah, the friction and the challenge is an important part of it. I think about this with families too. There is that primary song where they sing, God gave us families to help us become who he wants us to be and I always laugh a little because I'm like, "Yeah, it's going to help you become who he wants you to be, to be in a family." There's just no way around it.

I guess we're almost out of time but I want to make sure and just connect the dots on how you found the Turnbull's and the Faith Matters Foundation. And what I see the two of you doing and this is my assumption based on the little bit I know but is that you've turned your experience and a lot of which was very challenging into now you're contributing and you're contributing to being part of the solution. I am sure it's served you but it's the best way.

When you said, Aubrey, "If I would have known the model and known all this we could have saved years." But my thought is that that would have been such a shame because we would have missed out on you two doing the work that you're doing now and it was necessary. So will you just kind of close the loop on how you ended up at *Faith Matters*?

Aubrey: Yeah, Tim, do you want to talk about how you found Bill?

Tim: Well, so like Aubrey said, we were huge fans of Terry Givens, once we heard those initial interviews with him we thought, man, here's a thinker. And then we realized that Fiona's equally incredible, who we can really relate to and that is open about these faith challenges but still is doing so much within the context of faith. And so we followed their work over the years and eventually, a podcast came out called *Conversations with Terry Givens*.

And we were immediate huge fans and looked behind the scenes who was behind this podcast, and it was the Faith Matters Foundation that was founded by the Turnbull's and they connected with Terry and started this podcast. And so we just reached out and said, "Hey, we love what you're

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doing, can we help in any way?” And we started just meeting with them, offering whatever we could sort of on the social media side, on the marketing side. And eventually, they asked to sort of sub on a couple of podcast interviews.

And then we realized that people seemed to be really hungry for this type of content and work. But we weren't being quite consistent enough as an organization in getting the content out there. And so Aubrey and I kind of said, “Hey, we'd love to just host more often if that's helpful.” And what can I say? It's spiraled out of control since then. It's been about I think three years since we've been doing it. So the podcast, *Conversations with Terryl Givens* morphed into the *Faith Matters* podcast.

So Aubrey and I host, Terryl still hosts on occasion but he's also a guest, our executive director that joined this past year, Zach Davis hosts on occasion. And we hope to bring lots of different voices and perspectives. We hope that again within sort of the context of faith, and we hope that faith is the kind that's expressing itself in love, that we're being totally open, that we can have all different types of conversations and voices. And what's awesome is that Aubrey and I think, we're just asking the questions that we have.

We're reading the books that we want to read and talking to the people we want to talk to. And we hope that it's authentic for that reason because it's something we really care about.

Aubrey: That has sort of become a spiritual practice. For so many years we spent trying to not ask the wrong question or not ask the question that we didn't already have an answer to. And our experience doing the podcast but also just kind of the years before the podcast has taught us that just leaning into the uncertainty of a question that doesn't have an answer. There is something that is incredibly vulnerable about that that I feel opens up a channel to connect you to God.

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And the podcast has been such a gift for us because it's practice, every week just mining a new topic for what's the genuine question, what's the question I'm afraid of asking? What's the whole truth about why I'm afraid of asking this question? And I just love having to be a little bit accountable for that process and having to do that in every single interview. And I mean this is such a fluid journey. We're still totally on this journey together but that's been a real gift to just practice doing that in each other's presence.

That's a hard thing to do I think in a marriage where your lives are so intertwined but it's been a gift to do it every week together. Just what's the real question here? And let's just ask it even though we have no idea what the answer is. And maybe it's going to lead to another question that's even bigger. And I think what it's taught me is that you can have peace in all of that uncertainty and I always think of the scripture about peace surpasses all understanding in the Bible.

And the way that I understood that forever was that it was peace so big you just can't even comprehend. But the only way I can hear it now is that it's not logical. It's not logical that you could feel peace with all of this uncertainty swirling around but that's what this has taught me. Leaning into the questions and not avoiding them, just diving right in and just asking the scary thing. Somehow there is peace there when that is the method. When you choose that and just it forces you to see your relationship with God as a trusting relationship as opposed to one that depends on anything.

And I feel like that is the way into peace surpasses all understanding and not just with faith, but with anything in our life. When you can embrace and stop resisting uncertainty, that's the doorway into peace. And it took us so many years to finally start experimenting with that. But it has been, there is nothing deeper than the kind of peace that can't be disturbed because it's in the uncertainty. It's the kind of peace that you feel when you're calling. And it feels like it takes such intention daily, I mean hourly.

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It's a thing we have to constantly try to choose but being able to do these interviews together and practice that every week has been a really good way to make sure it stays central in our life.

Jody: Well, I just want to end with sharing with you, I recently was talking to a woman who shared with me that she's an active member of the church but has some questions and like you said, likes to gain tools and knowledge from all different sources. And she was recently called to be the Relief Society teacher in her ward. And she said, "I told the bishop I'd be happy to take that calling but just so you know when I teach I will probably at times say, "This part I'm not sure I agree with or I'm not sure if I believe in this part.""

And I was bracing myself for what her bishop might have said. And what he said is, "That's great."

Tim: Wow. That's so cool.

Jody: And it just made me think about the work that you two are doing and that we're all trying to do. It's getting out there, it's working. We're evolving. And we're not trying to shake anybody's testimony but we're just trying to make the organization of a church a safe place for people at whatever stage they may be at. And I think it's working.

Aubrey: Yeah, I think so too.

Tim: Thank you, Jody.

Aubrey: Yeah, thank you so much, [crosstalk] you.

Tim: Yeah, you know Jody how highly we think of you and your work. And it's been so fun to collaborate and work more together. So hopefully we can keep doing that.

Jody: Let's keep doing it, let's start our own podcast, a third one. We all need another one, right?

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Tim: Right, exactly.

Jody: Well, you can hear more from Tim and Aubrey at Faith Matters. Anywhere else we should send them?

Tim: Yeah, the *Faith Matters* podcast, it's all on all the normal places and the website is faithmatters.org.

Jody: Alright, thanks, you guys.

Aubrey: Thanks, Jody.

Tim: Thanks, Jody.

Hey there, if you enjoy this podcast or even if you just find that it sort of piques your curiosity, or it makes you think, you're going to love the book that I wrote. It's called *Better Than Happy: Connecting with Divinity Through Conscious Thinking*. And it's available now at Amazon in print or kindle version. Or if you want me to read it to you, head over to audible and grab the audio version. And why not grab a copy for your sister, your best friend, or your mom while you're there too. Just saying.