



**Getting Past Transactional Ministry:
More with Mindie Moore**

June 1, 2023



Transcript

Sara Hayden: I know we've talked around the subject of deconstruction a couple of different times. You have your own definition of deconstruction.

Mindie Moore: Mm-hmm.

Sara: Would you share that with us? What do you mean when you say that?

Mindie: Yeah. So I think it's funny because I've never been able to find one good solid definition of deconstruction. You can't find anything objective about it. People have so many opinions. It's like I might tell you what it is, but then I'm gonna like tell you why the sky is falling or I'm gonna tell you what it is and say everyone has to do this. And so I was just thinking about, you know, what is maybe a more objective way to talk about this very charged subject right now? And so when I think about deconstruction, I think it is really the practice of really taking a survey of the things that you know or believe and then saying what doesn't fit anymore and letting that go. And then what might I carry with me into this new place I'm going? What might be inviting the change or shift?

And I might argue that I kind of hope we're always in a process of this, that it doesn't have to be, it can be like a crisis moment. And I don't wanna ever devalue that because I understand like deconstruction of our faith is usually coupled with relational church hurt or trauma or just complication. So I don't wanna devalue that ever and like how that can be a crisis point. But I do think that that process of asking questions of saying, "Hey, I believed this last week and then I met someone and their story really pushed against that thing I believed, can I change that belief or can that belief grow to hold them and expand?" I just think that God's calling us to do that all the time.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Mindie: Like that's our faith. Our faith should never be this like stagnant straight line, that sounds so boring to me. That's not a faith I'm that interested in. I'm interested in a God that says, "Ask your questions, have your doubts and do it with people around you."

Sara: Ask your questions, have your doubts do it with people around you. I heard you say curiosity as a value.

Mindie: Mm-hmm.

Sara: Do you actually have a list, Mindie, of the foundational pieces that you have built your faith upon? You use the metaphor of Legos. Throwing the Legos on the ground, picking up the pieces and reconfiguring them and leaving some of them on the ground. I'm curious, do you have names for the little blocks in your heart?

Mindie: Yeah, I think I do. I think some of them would be grace. So you know, as a good Methodist, I gotta talk about grace (laughs).

Sara: Yeah.

Mindie: It's a big piece of what we believe in-

Sara: Yeah.

Mindie: ... for your non-Methodist listeners. But truly, grace is a really foundational piece of our theology. And it is why I felt so drawn to the Methodist church. Because when I heard this theology that God approaches us with grace first, we don't have to earn that grace, it felt like all the dissonance in my faith fell in line.

Sara: Hmm.

Mindie: It made sense because I, it had never made sense to me that God was this angry, wrathful, judgey being that I had to just like try to please until I died. (laughs) like that never worked for me. And so hearing this theology of grace, I was like, "That's it. That makes sense." So I would say grace is one of those blocks. I would also say justice is one of those blocks. I think any Christian faith where we're not being compelled to question harmful systems where we're not being compelled to ask why might I have and someone else doesn't? When we're not compelled to have hard conversations about race and inclusion and equity, I just think we're missing something. Because when I read, maybe here's why I love the Bible too. Like when I read the Bible and I see Jesus ministry, I think Jesus was all up in everything that was uncomfortable.

Sara: Yeah.

Mindie: We talk in the American church like, "Oh we can't talk politics, we can't be too controversial." I'm like, Jesus was so controversial. Oh my goodness. Everyone was mad at him all the time. And he was just diving into scripture and who God was and who God was calling him and us to be. And so I do think that justice is one of those huge foundational pieces. And then probably community because I, I know that not everyone can be in church. It's just complicated. It's hard. It might feel like, I mean I've had people walk in the doors and be like, "I don't even know if I could come in this building." I understand and I honor that. I do hope that everyone has people though 'cause I don't think we were made to navigate faith or life or joy or sorrow or any of that by ourselves. So I would say those might be three of the foundational

blocks. I could probably dig a little bit deeper, but it seems like in every season of my adult life that's the thread that's carried forward.

Sara: I hear you saying you found that in the church, those pieces not outside of the church 100%, but you found it outside of the church as well maybe?

Mindie: Yeah, I would say I have found it in the church and I feel really grateful for that. That's not always been the case.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Mindie: I mean there's been seasons where the church has been a pretty lonely place for me. But I would say right now I look around and I think, "Oh it's here." Like those things are here and I feel really grateful for that. But I do see that. I mean I see that in my neighbors. I see that in our community organizations. I, there's this coffee shop down the street that I really love and they have these community dinners, I think it's every Thursday or maybe it's one Thursday a month. And I see it in there. You know, that they've just created this environment where just come, bring a little bit of money and we're gonna feed you and make sure you that you don't eat dinner alone. And so I think it's kind of found everywhere.

Sara: That resonates for me looking at the stories of Jesus's life and ministry. Like he wasn't finding 'em predominantly in the temple-

Mindie: Mm-hmm.

Sara: ... certainly. He was probably more angry there, but he was drawn to it too. I mean he was drawn to certainly even as a teenager, to come back to that space-

Mindie: Mm-hmm.

Sara: ... where everyone had been gathered and to speak into it and to listen into it. But yeah, he's finding in the upper room and you know, on the road. I think that's one of the concepts that we under-utilize and undervalue under practice, we don't practice enough as Christians. The magic that happens on the road, in the upper room, around a table, in a friend's house at rallies and riots and protests. We think it's gonna happen predominantly. Or we act as if in many churches all the magic happens in the sanctuary at 11:00 AM on Sunday.

Mindie: Yeah. And I think there's a lot of tension and invitation for those of us who work in the church. And one thing I've been thinking about a lot lately is how much time do I spend in the church or with church people and how much time do I spend with people who are not part of this community? And this has been the thing that's been like poking at my brain a lot lately. When I spend time with people who aren't in the church, can I be really honest that it's not a transactional relationship, that I'm not trying to get them to come to my church?

Sara: Yeah.

Mindie: And as a person starting a new church community-

Sara: That's the question.

Mindie: ... it's like you want people to come to your church.

Sara: Yeah.

Mindie: "Sorry, spoiler everyone like-"

Sara: Yeah.

Mindie: "... to tell the truth." I'm like, "I need you to come on Sunday 'cause I need this to work."

Sara: Yeah.

Mindie: But it's like that temptation of, no, God has called me to just be in community with people because they're people-

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Mindie: ... not because they're another person in the sea. And so I've just been doing a lot of, I think spiritual reflection on that lately and pushing my own self. Just go and meet people and be in community and it'll figure itself out.

Sara: Hmm. I'm curious, Mindie, if you were to say like the other side of that, like, "We need you here." You know what I mean? Like, "You don't have to come, it's okay for you, not this, not to be your thing." And I wanna, as you said, let that figure itself out and be in relationship and all the things I believe about my church friends, you know, are transferable to my friends that have no interest in being a part of that. And at the same time I think progressive, especially Christians who practice inclusivity, who are leaning on love and grace and the beauty of the variety of human expression, it's hard to say like, "We need you here."

Mindie: Yes.

Sara: You know, "Like we need people in this community to form the kind of community that the world desperately desires."

Mindie: Yeah. So I joke with people at St. Luke's that evangelism is the E word. It freaks us out. I actually gave a sermon on evangelism right before Christmas and I said, I think I started by

saying, "I really hate this word and here's why." And then we unpacked like what it has done to people-

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Mindie: ... and that actually evangelism can mean something really beautiful. And it can be what you said where it's like, "No we need you. Like our lives are better if you're here." And I think we all are looking for some kind of hope.

Sara: Yeah.

Mindie: And it's okay to say, I found a lot of hope in Jesus and the way that Jesus is and the way that Jesus loves. And that's a good thing. Where it gets so sticky is that if your, if you're compelling argument isn't you're going to hell-

Sara: Right.

Mindie: ... what is your compelling argument?

Sara: (laughs).

Mindie: I think that is the work that the progressive inclusive church has to do is figure out, you know, it's not fear-based and I'm so glad it's not-

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Mindie: ... but do we believe that we're doing something that really is compelling?

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Mindie: I mean I think we are, it's why get up every day and do it. But I'm not sure we always know how to communicate that in the most effective way.

Sara: 100% agree. Yeah.

Sara: You have been probably more than a year in your world of beginning this new community.

Mindie: Well we actually launched December 4th.

Sara: Yeah.

Mindie: And today is, yes. March 17th. So we just had our hundredth day in [inaudible 00:31:43].

Sara: Okay. (laughs).

Mindie: ... which is amazing.

Sara: And before that you had like a whole preparatory season for folks, right?

Mindie: We did, yes. So we started our launch academy is what we called it. It was like an eight week training in August.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Mindie: But before that it was a lot of recruiting. It was for my family deciding, you know, we're gonna move and what's that mean and how do we process that? See, yeah. I would say I've been kind of steeping in it for about a year-

Sara: Yeah.

Mindie: ... even though we've only been having services for, you know, a few months.

Sara: Yeah. My impression is being a pastor in a parish, this is a challenging season. It comes with its own pains, difficulties. And then to lay that alongside the call of a church planter (laughs), I feel like that adds its own certain spice to life.

Mindie: (laughs).

Sara: What is it like for you personally? Like what do you worry about and are there moments where you wake up in the middle of the night and are they like when you, you wake up the next day and think, "I was worried about that." Do they seem small? Do they seem huge?

Mindie: (laughs). Well, I feel like I'm really well versed in the spiritual discipline of worrying. How about that?

Sara: Yeah. (laughs). Okay.

Mindie: It's a talent (laughs). Yes. So I do wake up in the middle of the night quite frequently. But you know, I think it's the fact that it's new and it feels fragile.

Sara: Hmm.

Mindie: So that's part of it. It's like, "Is this thing that we're building going to sustain?" And I, I think it will, I'll go on record and say that, how about that? Like-

Sara: Yes.

Mindie: ... it feels like it has momentum and a lot of good things are happening, but it also is a different weight of responsibility. I went from preaching like five times a year to preaching most weeks and, and thankfully the way that we're set up just for some context is we are a multi-site. So I work with the senior pastor at St. Luke's and we write together. Like I, it's not a solo sport, which I'm so, so grateful for. But it is like, "Okay, you're the person communicating on a regular basis and you are the person helping build some roadmaps for people on their theology." And it's just a responsibility I don't hold lightly.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Mindie: So I think about that a lot. I also think, you know, I hold this value of safety really high. So do people feel safe when they come here? And I think sometimes I have to hold that and then I have to remember that I can't tend to every single person's trauma. And that like how we tend to our own trauma is our own work. And I'm an enneagram too. I dunno if you'll talk about the enneagram a lot on this show, but-

Sara: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Mindie: I love the enneagram. But it's a, a shadow side is remembering like you can't fix everything for everyone. Like you can come, you can offer what God's put on your heart and then you've gotta let God do what God does with it.

Sara: Yeah. I'm curious what feels urgent to you about our faith and practice and is there a question or practice that you wanna leave our listeners with who I think a lot of folks try to sort things through as people of faith who come to this podcast and are curious-

Mindie: Mm-hmm.

Sara: ... and curious about how their faith unfolds, curious about the pieces that they decide to pick up and carry forward?

Mindie: I think what feels urgent to me about our faith now, so the churchy term for this would be holistic discipleship, (laughs), which is gonna lose like everyone. But what I call it is who are you at the grocery store?

Sara: Hmm.

Mindie: So that's the thing that feels the most urgent to me is we can fill churches. I mean people are sort of starting to come back post COVID like, I don't know, you can draw a crowd, you can sing a song, you can talk about things, you can go to your Bible study, all that's great. But like, if it doesn't translate in how you interact with your cashier, if it doesn't translate with who you are in your kid's soccer field or in the carpool line-

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Mindie: ... that's a place.

Sara: Yeah.

Mindie: If it doesn't impact who you are in the workplace, like it just doesn't matter. I have become so convicted about that lately that Jesus does not call us to say the right things or even maybe believe all the right things. But I think Jesus calls us to live in a way that is really transformative for us and for other people. And when I look at the big "C" Church in our country and especially the white American church, I just think we're missing it in a lot of places. And it is harming a lot of people in our legislature. It is harming a lot of people in our schools. It's harming a lot of people in just so many areas of our society. And I think if we just lived out what Jesus said, to love the poor, to protect the marginalized, to show up and humbly enter other people's stories, our world would just look so different.

Sara: That's so powerful. Is there an invitation in that? Like if someone is listening today and they feel open to an invitation, to a new type of practice or a question, what would you pose to them?

Mindie: I think I would just suggest the practice of presence. I try to be careful when I talk about spiritual practices and not be too prescriptive because I'm a full on feeler.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Mindie: So, you know, I'm like, "How can I feel Jesus presence with me?" Great (laughs). And you know, my husband is like a full on thinker so he's like, "I would like to think about this idea of who God is and how God works." (laughs). So I don't wanna be too prescriptive with it. But I do think that there is a beauty in just sharing presence with people who challenge us, who are different than us, who we may think we know about and we really don't. And so I would just encourage people to maybe take that step and at least have those conversations. Um, put yourself in a position where you're the listener. Put yourself in a position where you can learn maybe even just like where you have proximity to people. One of the things... This is a very simple way to do this.

Sara: Yeah.

Mindie: We live on this street that doesn't get a lot of cars, but it, it's basically a direct path to this walking trail in Indianapolis, the Monon. And so we get so many people walking down our street and so what we did this summer when we moved in is we realized like, "Oh, we could talk to people." So we put our two Adirondack chairs out in our side yard, 'cause we're in a corner lot and we just sit out there after dinner and our kids play and we just talk to people. And you know, my husband's super introvert. He doesn't have to talk a lot. It's just being present and seeing what happens that I think has opened a lot of doors. So I don't, don't think this has to be like super complicated or serious or dramatic. You know, we talk about presence. We're like,

"Oh, I have to go to like the community meeting or, or do something really scary." You don't, you just have to, I think be open to people and, and God will do something with that.

Sara: You have a beautiful way of understanding how many different perspectives there are, period. Acknowledging them and offering a generous, gentle way forward. I see that in your preaching. I, I hear that in this conversation of love for people and their stories and experiences and because of that love, a gentle and strong invitation forward. So I'm grateful for your friendship.

Mindie: Thank you. Oh no, this is great. I love what y'all are doing with these stories and this podcast. And creating new faith communities is really hard, it's great, but it also feels like no one else is doing it. So I, even looking through the website, I was like, "People are doing this. It's not just me. This is great." So I just appreciate what you all are holding and, and the community you're creating.

Sara: Oh, right back at you.