



Samson Threw Away the Bone:
A Conversation with Brady Radford

August 22, 2024

Transcript



Sara Hayden: Brady Radford, welcome. Thanks for being here.

Brady Radford: Awesome. Thanks so much, Sara, for the invitation. It's a delight to be here this morning, and to share time in conversation with you.

Sara: You have used the analogy of the house, of a, a building structure. I'm wondering if you wouldn't mind kind of unpacking that for us, that analogy of where you sit today.

Brady: Sure. Uh, I'm not sure if you know, but in undergrad, I was originally studying architectural engineering-

Sara: Wow.

Brady: ... when I received the call to ministry. And so, once it really became clear that, um, my dreams of being a famous engineer who's finding a career, like Frank Lloyd Wright-

Sara: Mm.

Brady: ... once that was changed, I said, "Well, maybe God will give me a chance to be a social engineer."

Sara: Wow.

Brady: Who knows? But thinking about the church as a house, in the last pastorate that I served over a period of about six to 10 months, I discerned that God was calling me to step away from parish ministry in the traditional sense. For the last decade, I've been a bivocational minister, serving as both pastor, but also a therapist in practice, primarily with other pastors and their families. So, I really see my ministry now as sort of being parachurch?

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: Having the opportunity to walk with other pastors, to consult with congregations who are going through transitions and other difficulties. It's work that brings meaning and satisfaction at a very high level for me. Yet, sort of coming back to my own story, in my most recent pastorate, I felt like ministry was so circular, and you know, we live on a lectionary cycle that's every three years.

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: And after three years, it was like, "Oh, wait. If we're not careful ... If I'm not careful, I'm going to be in the Twilight Zone here."

Sara: (laughs)

Brady: So there-

Sara: Same dang story-

Brady: Yeah.

Sara: ... with the same people.

Brady: Uh, reliving the three-year cycle. And I think the three-year cycle is important. However, I just felt a sense that I was in a house that's leaning to one side.

Sara: Mm.

Brady: And as I sought to balance things, it became clear to me that maybe you can't balance the house inside of the house, that this experience of being moved outside of the house, traditional church in that way, will give me a chance to look at the leaning house. And with God's help, discover where I may be invited to offer support and resourcing that helps to true things up, that helps to level set the house.

And so, if we can move out of that metaphor-

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: ... for the listener who's saying, "My God, what are they talking about with all the house stuff?"

Sara: (laughs)

Brady: In saying, "Where have we become so comfortable in the traditional expression of church," that things have become so one-sided, that it's not balanced in terms of how we look for God's movement in our midst-

Sara: Yeah, yeah.

Brady: ... how we expect ourselves to partner with God in what God is doing.

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: And so, coming out of the house to ask some new questions, and consider beginning again, just say, "God, what is necessary now? And how do I, from my position as a, a resource to pastoral leaders, help them and help the church ask the next burning question that helps us to level set things in the year of 2024?"

Sara: Mm. I hear you loud and clear saying, like, "Let's not spend the entire show talking about the house metaphor," but I'm so drawn to it (laughs) because the image that is coming to mind for me, Brady, is the movie *Twister* (laughs) when it's like-

Brady: (laughs)

Sara: Or, y- maybe it's *The Wizard of Oz*. It's a conflation of *Twister* and *Wizard of Oz*, where *The Wizard of Oz*, the tornado, the cyclone is coming through the field in Kansas, and Dorothy and her family have to get into the cellar, which is outside of the house – open the door, shut the door, so that what's happening to the house and the fields around them doesn't happen to the people who had been living in the house. And when they emerge, of course, she's in an entirely different world (laughs).

Brady: Mm-hmm.

Sara: She's in Munchkinland when the storm passed. It almost feels as if, if we stay isolated within the church, which I'm not sure is an exact corollary to Christian community?

Brady: Mm-hmm.

Sara: I think I wanna use the word "church" intentionally, not Christian community, beloved community, but in the church as an institution, this storm may be blowing one direction, and the church, the architecture of the church, the body of the building, is leaning in one direction. But it's like, "Well, you're not even looking out the window to see the storm that everyone outside of the house is affected by in that moment," and we're like, "Oh, the house is leaning," (laughs).

Brady: Mm-hmm.

Sara: "Let's push it back in that direction against the storm," and we're not even aware of how large the storm is, and how omnipresent the storm is. So, the question is maybe not, "How do we get the house righted again?"

Brady: Mm.

Sara: ... but, "What the heck is this storm, and what do we need to know about it, and what do we need to be doing in the midst of this situation that is affecting not just church people but people in the world?" Who, theologically, we would say, are "all God's children," all people we should be caring about.

Brady: Now, there is a question. My goodness, my goodness. Let's consider the storm.

Sara: (laughs)

Brady: You know, it draws me to the passage of thinking about Elijah-

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: ... who's, God's not in the storm-

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: ... but God's in that whisper?

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: And yet, God could be in the storm, so-

Sara: (laughs) That's sometimes used as an excuse, right-

Brady: Yeah.

Sara: ... to do nothing about the storm.

Brady: What I take from that, though, is the invitation to be open to considering it all, not just considering life inside of this house.

Sara: Mm.

Brady: Not just getting so consumed with what's happening in the storm outside that we lose all the traditions that have helped us build this house.

Sara: Mm.

Brady: So, to go back to the story you were telling about the family who's down in the cellar?

Sara: Yeah (laughs).

Brady: After the storm, there will be parts that remain.

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: And those parts that remain are pieces that are firmly planted.

Sara: Mm.

Brady: And they become the foundation upon which we build the next house, or the next shelter, if we stay in this place.

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: Not to lose the house metaphor altogether, but-

Sara: Yeah (laughs).

Brady: In the midst of this storm, there will be some things that remain.

Sara: That remain.

Brady: And necessarily so.

Sara: Mm.

Brady: Yet, the question about what's happening in the storm, I think it depends on where we stand.

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: And so, I'm gonna bring this back to the place of, who are we, as beloved children of God, who have come to know God through the story of Jesus Christ, and how do we potentially see God expanding our story through the storm that's at hand?

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: So-

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: ... in 2024, I asked myself, "What do we need in the church now more than ever?"

Sara: Mm.

Brady: And I, I think we need a deeper level of authenticity, and a deeper level of community that is not solely consumed with the idea of creating yesterday, but is open to the slow work of being present with God's Spirit today.

Sara: Mm.

Brady: And discerning how God is calling us to move and take the next faithful step, one day at a time.

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: That's hard-

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Brady: ... for many of us who see the church through the lens of a business model who need to balance budgets and need to have plans, and we have structures which increasingly demand more time and attention. But at the core of it, I'll say-

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: ... the next expression of church will get back to a simpler gathering of community, and invites us to consider not just how God is moving inside the four walls of the church, but how God is already active outside the four walls of the church, in the lives of people who are asking for a deeper level of engagement-

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Brady: ... than just what Sunday morning offers; who are asking for a deeper level of community than just what's offered in a food program or a clothes closet.

Sara: Yeah, yeah.

Brady: But those things that help them answer some of the deeper questions in life. And that leadership not just be resigned to one person, but that leadership be spread out in the community, because it's not just the pastoral leader who's having a deep relationship, but who's inviting the entire community to have a deeper, more discerning relationship.

Sara: I think this is really grounded stuff, and to set aside for a moment the potential and real anxieties for those of us in pastoral ministry around this idea of, like, shoring up the house, and you know, whether or not we even have a door to walk into (laughs).

Brady: Yeah.

Sara: For all this, e- money and time we've spent training for ministry, with real skills to do the work at hand. I know a lot of pastors are understandably frustrated, and leaders of the church who contribute their time and energy in numerous ways, pastoral and other leaders, that the gifts and call that brought us into this ministry, they feel sort of jettisoned or set aside or put in the closet, the owner's closet of the house (laughs)-

Brady: Mm.

Sara: ... and locked.

Brady: Yeah.

Sara: You know? I thought I'd brought that in that was so valuable, but I don't feel like I could use that, because constantly, the house is needing attention (laughs).

Brady: Yeah.

Sara: I- calling somebody to fix this technical thing when we really know, we're not even sure that the house is going to be standing, or needs to be standing. We might become a nomadic people instead. If we become a nomadic people and I unlock that closet of the things that drew me into this work in the first place, I have the capacity to take that with us. We need to be clear what it is, because we're not going to be able to take everything, and we're in a time, 2024, when a large portion of the world's population is on the move for a variety of very significant reasons. We can't just take everything with us and expect it to plug into the right places.

Brady: Hm.

Sara: But to be clear about, there's something that brought us into this work, into the gospel work, into the story of Jesus, and Jesus' intersection with our own lives and community, that is sufficient for the present time. How do we let some of these systems within the house, appliances (laughs), die?

Brady: Yeah. There's a real art of letting go that has to happen here.

Sara: Yeah. Yeah.

Brady: Many of us, the rucksacks, the backpacks that we brought into ministry with us, those need a refreshing like never before. And in that repacking of the ministry backpack, if you will-

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: ... there's some letting go that has to happen.

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: I recently saw a clip from one of the most noted preachers ever in the Bahamian culture-

Sara: Mm.

Brady: ... Dr. Myles Munroe, and he tells the story of Samson defeating thousands of warriors with the jawbone of an animal.

Sara: Samson is an interesting ... Yeah, please.

Brady: Not getting all the way into the story, but he says the most amazing thing. He says, "And after the battle, Samson threw away the bone."

Sara: Mm.

Brady: He said, "The tool that got him through, when that moment was over-

Sara: Wow.

Brady: ... he released that tool."

Sara: Wow.

Brady: And he said, "How many of us, when we find that we have a tool that works, we look for opportunities to use that tool-

Sara: Oh, my gosh.

Brady: ... over and over and over again?"

Sara: Oh, my goodness.

Brady: So, the idea that the tools we brought into ministry are in a place of needing to be refreshed or changed, really means that we have to sit with the grief of letting go, letting go of some of the things that have served us tremendously well in ministry for the last decade or two decades.

Sara: That's faith.

Brady: Yeah. It is a supreme call of faith to believe that the One who supplied my gifts that have led me this far continues to have gifts available to me.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Brady: But it's hard to receive-

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Brady: ... if my hands are clenched and I'm holding on to the only things I've always known.

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: And so, this leads me to another piece of sharing from Susan Stabile, who has a powerful reflection on the work of the people. I use this when training transitional ministers, but she reminds us that ours is a faith of living, dying, and rising, and that we don't believe the resurrection is real because there was sort of a death-

Sara: Hm.

Brady: ... or we sort of let it go. We believe the resurrection is real because when we were at the complete end of our rope, when all that seems like it could be lost was lost, we discovered that God said, "That was not the end."

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: "This is not the end." And so, that's an awfully vulnerable place.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Brady: Yet, it's a powerful place for the heart and mind that is able to engage in a season like this.

Sara: Mm. Those themes of utter emptiness, the process of emptying, of filling up, being so vulnerable that the only power we have is God's power, which is more powerful and true than our own machinations of power. As you said, uh, Susan Stabile said, "At the heart of the cross, at the heart of our story, these momentous occasions in our story, it is a deep and encouraging perspective." Feeling like, I'm not sure, looking around, at the tools humans are creating right now that there's a lot I want to take with me (laughs). A lot of the systems we are creating are, in the words of the Nap Bishop, Tricia Hersey, "are trash" (laughs).

Brady: Mm.

Sara: A lot of the things that we have created are trash, and going back to that rucksack, as you said, what am I going to put in? Yeah.

Brady: Well, let's talk about this, then.

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: A lot of the systems that we are creating, maybe if we're honest about it, these are systems that we're creating to secure our insecurities.

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: And so, you ask yourself, "Hey, what would be the difference if we are creating out of fear versus creating out of love?"

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: If we're creating out of fear, we're creating based on what we don't want to happen. If we're creating out of love, then we're creating with a completely different set of possibilities and parameters.

Sara: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Brady: So, there's also a school of thought that says, "Whatever you're doing, you're creating. You're either creating out of intention, or you're creating out of happenstance." And if we're creating out of happenstance, is it surprising what we get?

Sara: Mm.

Brady: We get rules that inform the way we behave and practice together based off of one experience that we hope to never experience again.

Sara: Wow. Yeah.

Brady: You know? We could look at our polity book and ask, "Each time that there are new (laughs) rules-

Sara: (laughs)

Brady: ... added to our polity, are those rules added because something has happened that we hope-

Sara: Some kind of anxiety.

Brady: ... to never happen again?" Yeah.

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: So, is that securing our insecurity, or is this-

Sara: Yes.

Brady: Uh, you know, I love in the opening lines of our polity book, it says, "All of these rules, this entire polity, presupposes a level of friendship and of fellowship." And so, at least at the start of the book, I don't want any polity buffs to get on me here, but-

Sara: Yeah, don't come after us (laughs).

Brady: ... at least at the start of the book, there is, there's the intention of what we believe is possible-

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: ... with God's help-

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: ... and the Spirit's guidance.

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: I guess I long for the opportunity to experiment, to explore, with an expression of faith community that lives on the edge of possibility.

Sara: Mm.

<<BREAK BETWEEN EPISODES>>

Sara: At the beginning of our conversation, you used the phrase, "social engineering."

Brady: Mm-hmm.

Sara: You had come into the university with this interest in architectural engineering, and when you received the call into ministry in that moment, looking back, years later, you think about, "Maybe God will help me with the social engineering, engineering around communities and people." I'd love to delve into that with you, because you have spent a lot of time and intention slowing us down-

Brady: Mm.

Sara: ... and enabling us. I'm speaking in particular, just serving on leadership boards with you, paying attention to one another, doing the work that's in front of us with intention, possibility, and the right amount of confidence-

Brady: Mm-hmm.

Sara: ... that God will see us forward. I'd like to talk about some of the granular aspects, just literally what's happening in our bodies when we slow down in the words that you speak, or some of your intentionality around getting a group of people to, like, take the agenda and put it

aside for a second, and to name what is happening in this, say, thirty minute start of our advisory board meeting (laughs).

Brady: Mm.

Sara: You know, you often are asked, I think rightly, to be the person that sets the tone for something, as a group of people endeavor to make decisions together and move forward. What kind of tone do you want to set, and how do you set it? What's at stake for you in those moments?

Brady: So, to come back to the point around securing our insecurities, I think it's part of our human nature that our fears are a part of us, and they don't have to be our enemies.

Sara: Mm.

Brady: I mean, they can be our friend in the sense of, our nervous system, when it is activated, it is doing its job to help us reach the goal of survival.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Brady: In our hunter-gatherer phase of evolution, it did just that. It kept us alert to the dangers that were around us. In today's time, I think the, the more often we slow down and we become aware in our bodies, there's really only 18 inches that I hope to help people to travel. When I say "18 inches," for most people, we say there's 18 inches from your head to your heart, and to do the work of aligning head and heart means that there is a piece that pervades our work, whether we're on leadership boards, whether we're in session, whether we're in a one-on-one Stephen's ministry conversation, our mental agendas about accomplishing tasks and reaching goals, while suited and necessary, can sometimes be in the driver's seat.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Brady: And by inviting groups to just take a moment of pause, it's connecting the intellectual agenda with the Spirit center at our heart, you know, speaking from the heart, engaging from the heart. So that centering, that being grounded, being connected, truly embodying the sense of safety, belonging, and dignity, that's a part of what I believe is possible when God's Spirit is in the mix. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, there is peace, there is a sense of assurance that we don't have to have the final answer in order to take the next faithful step.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Brady: And the measure of what's the next faithful step is found in, I'm sure my fears are not sitting alone in the driver's seat. I'm checking in with my heart to be clear about what's happening in my body, my breathing, my heart rate, but also, where I sense God leading me internally, in the moment.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Brady: In some rooms, that means asking the question that no one else is asking, or pulling the thread that no one else is pulling.

Sara: Wow. You shared a story a few weeks ago, when we were together in Indianapolis, that, uh, has sat with me and made me laugh, and it touched me deeply as well. You're going to be all right, Brady Radford, is the name of the story in my mind.

Brady: (laughs)

Sara: (laughs)

Brady: Yes. You know, as I talk about the 18 inches between head and heart, one of the things that strikes me is that as ministry leaders, so often, we are preparing words for other people. We write prayers and we write blessings and we construct liturgy on a weekly basis, and, uh, sometimes we forget to ask God's presence and guidance in preparing words for ourselves.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Brady: So literally, in conversation with one of my clients, they asked, "Will you be candid with me, Brady? How do you manage certain moments?"

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Brady: I said to my client, I said, "You know, sometimes I have to say to myself, in the midst of a distressing moment, 'You're going to be all right, Brady Radford.'"

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Brady: "You're going to be all right, Brady Radford." And literally, that helps me get out of the fears that I'm writing in my head, get closer to the peace that I know in my heart, and it helps me regulate my nervous system. "You're going to be all right, Brady Radford (laughs)". And, and the story goes that as I was wrapping up service with that client, and ending our time together after a few months, she said, "You know, one of the things I'm taking with me is the reminder to just say, 'You're going to be all right, Brady Radford.'"

Sara: (laughs)

Brady: And she said, "What's crazy about it is that when I use that technique, I say your name. I don't say my name. I say to myself, 'You're going to be all right, Brady Radford.'"

Sara: (laughs)

Brady: And I said, "Well-

Sara: That's what I do too (laughs).

Brady: (laughs) I said, "Maybe we have a little bit more work to do, because I certainly want you to be able to say your name in that moment, just to remind yourself that you have the resources to care for yourself, and to prepare those words too." You're gonna be all right, Sara Hayden.

Sara: Yeah. Yeah.

Brady: You're gonna be all right. And that reminder, as simple as it seems, may be the bridge that, you know, helps us get over some troubling waters.

Sara: Yes. Yes.

Brady: Yeah, thanks for the reminder of that story, Sara.

Sara: Oh, it's-

Brady: Oh, it's-

Sara: It's so evocative, and it so goes to that 18 inches between our thoughts and our heart. It's very mindful. Anyone who studied mindfulness, practices mindfulness-

Brady: Mm-hmm.

Sara: ... "Wherever you go, there you are," in the words of Jon Kabat-Zinn, and the present is the only moment that we really have.

Brady: Yes.

Sara: And yet, we do live our lives considering the future, and the past, sometimes more than being in the present, and the ability to engineer these moments-

Brady: Mm-hmm.

Sara: ... of gathering, where human beings are in one another's proximity in the present moment is a radical thing and a transformative thing. Just inviting, in these moments, you as a listener, our listeners listening to this conversation you and I are having, of a moment when you have intentionally observed silence-

Brady: Mm-hmm.

Sara: ... with a group of human beings, or sat with someone, or had someone sit with you as tears fell down your face. I remember that moment in clinical pastoral education-

Brady: Mm-hmm.

Sara: ... sixteen years ago. My number one goal for that year was, like, to not cry in front of anyone (laughs).

Brady: (laughs)

Sara: 'Cause in my mind-

Brady: Mm.

Sara: ... I was like, "That's the power draining out of me (laughs)."

Brady: Mm.

Sara: You know? I was just, like, so threatened, deeply threatened, by that vulnerability. And of course, it happened a couple months in.

Brady: Mm.

Sara: And I remember my amazing facilitator just saying, like ... I was explaining my tears, and she's like, "Can you let us sit with you as the tears fall?"

Brady: Mm-hmm.

Sara: And something in God's Spirit enabled me to do that 'cause it wasn't my own will, and I sat in that moment. Maybe it was, probably, ninety seconds, maybe three minutes, with the five people who, I think, knew me differently because I allowed myself in that moment to be present.

Brady: Mm.

Sara: I didn't have to explain why I was crying, but knew that I felt love and acceptance in that moment. That, to me, was one of those times when transformation happens. But, you know, I look back to that, of course, fifteen years, sixteen years later, and think, "That was a pivotal moment in my life, in my journey to be a greater conduit of love."

Brady: Mm-hmm.

Sara: And it ne- was literally, you know, from afar, you see a person crying in a room and people sitting with them, that person allowing them to see them cry?

Brady: Mm.

Sara: That's all it was, but it was truly transformational for me. It was six people in a trailer adjacent to Emory University Hospital, where the pastoral care-

Brady: Wesley Woods.

Sara: Wesley Woods. Yeah, you know that.

Brady: Yeah.

Sara: Those were the ingredients in the rucksack, right? It wasn't, uh, anything more than human bodies and intention, and the distance from the heart to the head.

Brady: Yeah. I just want to say to the pastor who's listening to this podcast, you are so much more than what you do.

Sara: Mm.

Brady: And the story Sara's just told is a story of being, being in the moment, being present. We are human beings, not human doings, and as such, the story that God is writing in our lives and through our lives is as much about being present in the moment as it is about preaching powerful sermons, running great stewardship campaigns, having vision programs into the next decade or more. There are small, powerful moments every day which are invitations for us to, to be with God before we do anything for God's sake.

Sara: Mm.

Brady: That our God is an invitational God, and I give thanks that each and every day, there are opportunities and invitations that help us know ourselves differently, if we are willing to respond to the invitation.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Brady: Those moments, I believe, become gifts in our stories, because they invite us to see ourselves differently.

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: You can take a look at your calendar, you can take a look at your email inbox, and some of those things reinforce the way you already know yourself. But how is God inviting you to know yourself differently?

Sara: Mm.

Brady: And where will the invitation come from? When will be the day when you say "Yes" to the invitation-

Sara: Mm.

Brady: ... to know more of your own story, and to see it in a different way?

Sara: Mm.

Brady: I don't think it reduces who you are. I think it just expands who you are, and today, we're in need of some leaders who are open to expanding in that kind of way. So, thanks so much for listening, and being a part of the laborers who help to till God's field. You're doing holy work.

Sara: Mm. Brady, I'm wondering if you can help us with this predicament of the leaders whose inboxes are filled, and who have that session meeting for Presbyterians (laughs), y- leadership board team meeting with an agenda that needs to be submitted by a certain time. You know, the, the awareness of a different sort of timeline, and have done a truly good job of being on top of those tasks, and are, you know, maybe experiencing real anxieties about, it's easier for me to just respond to the email than to have the board member call me and say, "Didn't you get my email, you know, three days ago?" (laughs) "I need a response." That urgency, that they're living in that same urgency, right? But you're inviting us into a different kind of rhythm and posture and allegiance.

Brady: Mm-hmm.

Sara: What are the words that you speak? I know you've lived this as someone with these ... and you exist in this, right, of the tension between the fierce urgency of the now, and the fullness of time and relationship. What do you say (laughs) to your leader? I mean, 'cause I think you could ignore it and say, "I'm so sorry I didn't get your email, blah, blah, blah, blah. Let me respond right now." Or, it could become a moment where the pastoral leader as spiritual leader, or the educator as a social engineer, or the business owner as a person of faith living their life, can offer a different perspective. What ways can you imagine us letting someone in on that practice of saying, "Well, the reason I didn't respond immediately ..." without it seeming like our fears take hold of, like, what they would say in response?

Brady: Yeah. The key word there for me is our fears.

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: It's not a response-

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Brady: ... as much as it is a posture out of which this response comes.

Sara: Okay.

Brady: And so, I'll say a few hallmarks of the postures, a commitment to do less better. I mean, what if, to the pastoral leader, what if you just, for the next two days, pray over, meditated on this thought of, "How do we do less better?" Or, "How do I ..." because I'm committed to the idea my, that my first ministry is to my family, that God has called me first as a husband and a father, and a man of family. So, my commitment lies there, and that God has invited me to share the gifts that God has given me with the church, be it in pastoral ministry or private practice with pastors.

But it begins with, I have to preserve myself for my first ministry. For me, that's family. And then secondly, as it relates to being in pastoral ministry, how do I help us find a rhythm that is not ridden with anxiety, but it is grounded in, we're taking one faithful step after the other? And so, for the sake of that inbox, the first question is, "Hey, how do we get off this email treadmill of every email means I'm in another cycle of expectation with the sender of that email?"

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: I'm aware-

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: ... of the items that are on my agenda for the day, and I'm committed to eat the frog, if anybody knows that term-

Sara: (laughs)

Brady: ... from Brian Tracy, to do the big three things at the start of my day-

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: ... as a part of measuring faithfulness in my own life, and where there is room ... You know, I have the opportunity to get to the rest, but I cannot be all things for all people.

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: I need to confess that, and as much as we like reading that in Paul's writings, it may not be a sustainable strategy. And so, what if the frustration, and what if the early feelings of burnout, what if those are not just negative signs, but they're also part of the Spirit speaking to me to say, "This rhythm is unmanageable."

Sara: Yes.

Brady: And maybe it means getting some one-on-one help.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Brady: Not just with Brady, but someone like Brady. Maybe it means having a coach, but we have to begin to change the expectations of the pastoral leader, because it's been previously said, "The pastor has as many job descriptions as they have members."

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Brady: And that's too much to bear.

Sara: That's right. I like how you didn't tie that up, and you offer that support, because we know deep down, those expectations not only are untenable, but they also, we know, maybe this is the greater pain point, that they keep the best things locked away, because those surface level things reach us in such a persistent manner.

Brady: Yeah.

Sara: Even Martin Luther, who had the, uh, advantage of not living in a time of AI or social media said, some of you have heard this story, "I have so much to do today, I'll spend the first five hours in prayer."

Brady: Yeah.

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: That's the kind of rhythm I'm talking about.

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: Sara, I would also say, this is not an answer, this is an observation-

Sara: Yeah, yeah.

Brady: ... from where I sit, I'm concerned about the private negotiations that we make as pastors in order to keep up the public rhythms of ministry. And what I mean by that is, when you are managing a full plate, there are many ways that each minister restructures things to try to get it all done. But over time, the restructuring and negotiations that we make with ourselves, and the restructuring that we do with our family, those things catch up with us. Whether it's writing Saturday night sermons, whether it's looking over the agenda just before

the meeting, all of those negotiations, over time, it sort of feels like survival strategy, survival strategy, survival strategy-

Sara: Mm.

Brady: ... over and over again.

Sara: Yeah.

Brady: And the antidote to survival is not thriving, but the opposite of survival is creating. Our best creation, our co-creation, our best work with God, can't come out of a posture of continued survival-strategy-negotiated existence. So, we have to change the course. Yeah.

Sara: Yeah, we're invited by God to change the course, right? All these stories, in our own tradition of people's recalling in the faith these moments where God said, "Don't take something with you."

Brady: Mm-hmm.

Sara: "Rely on what is present when you arrive, on the people there. You only need the clothes on your back. You only need the companions you're with." That's a radical thing, but I do trust in that promise that the good, deep down, that we need most of all is already with us. We can together tap into it and come out from that sense of abundance, rather than the constant drive to access the pie-in-the-sky when we die (laughs) or-

Brady: Mm. I'm with you. It's an invitation to an end that's not predetermined. I mean, that's the work of faith.

Sara: Mm.

Brady: Taking the next faithful step doesn't mean that we know where the final step will end, but we're committing to take one step at a time.

Sara: Mm.

Brady: I think, as clergy leaders, that the people in the pews may be more prepared for this than we think.

Sara: Mm.

Brady: So, when I say, "Doing less better," when I say, "Inviting people to potentially deeper level of engagement with what's happening outside the church, not just what's happening inside the church," that people in pews may be more primed for that conversation than we give them credit for.

Sara: Wow. Yeah.

Brady: Because post-COVID, most of our members don't have one pastor. They have a compilation of pastors. They're consuming religious instruction from multiple resources today.

Sara: Brady, thank you so much for your time and intention, offering your wisdom. Just really, really enjoyed our conversation today, and we'll be thinking it about it and feeling it in the days to come.

Brady: Sure thing, Sara. Thank you so much for the opportunity, and to your listeners, uh, just trust that they're in continued good hands with all that you share with them.