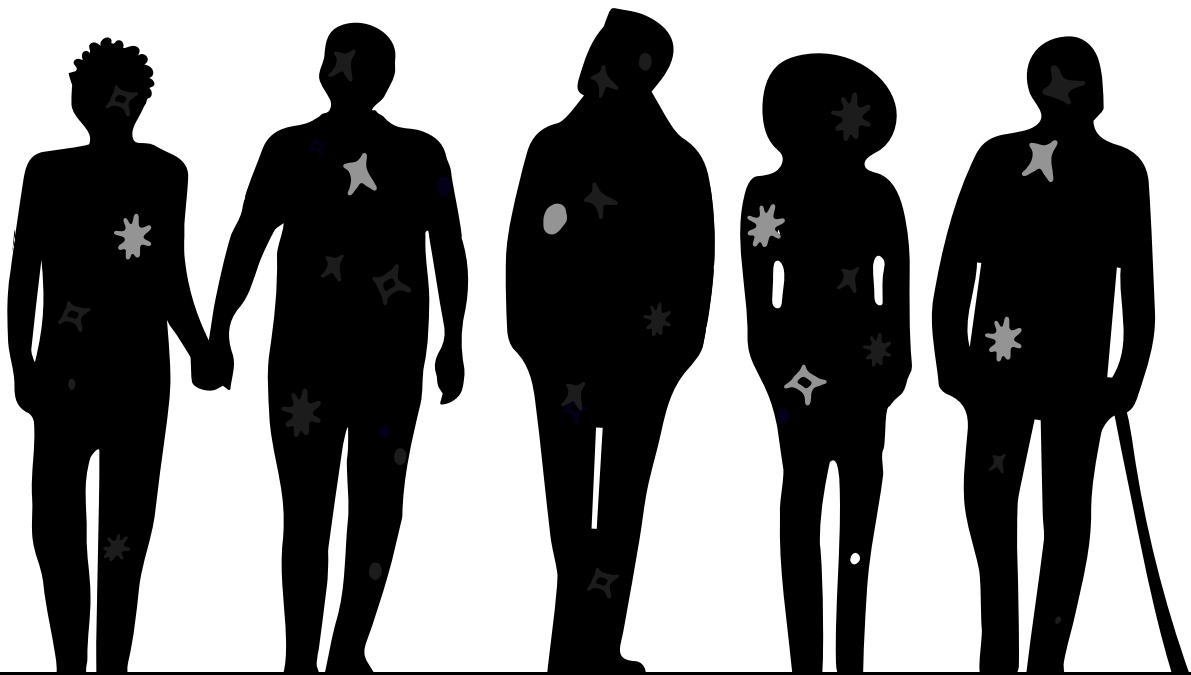


THE COSMIC WE

The Restorative Power of Love
with Felicia Murrell

hosted by:
Dr. Barbara Holmes and Dr. Donald Bryant



from the CENTER FOR ACTION AND CONTEMPLATION

Felicia: One of the ways that spirit began to really open up my insides to hold something larger than myself was to teach me that And was the bridge to our return, and is the way that we turn toward each other. That man really is that stitch, that thread of love. The invitation that's set before us today is to really hold this both and. That we begin to see the polarities, and the binaries, and the dichotomies, that's not going to bring us toward one another.

Barbara: This podcast explores the mystery of relatedness as an organizing principle of the universe and of our lives.

Donny: We are trying to catch a glimpse of connections beyond color, continent, country, or kinship through science, mysticism, spirituality, and the creative arts. I'm Donny Bryant.

Barbara: I'm Barbara Holmes, and this is The Cosmic We. Welcome back to The Cosmic We. We are so delighted today to have Felicia Murrell, she's one of ours, an alum of The Living School. A certified master life coach, a former ordained pastor with over 20 years of church leadership experience. Right now she's also serving the publishing industry as a freelance copy editor. She's the author of Truth Encounters and a brand-new book we'll be talking about today. She once residing in Albuquerque, right in New Mexico, but now lives I believe in Woodbury, Minnesota. Are you a Minnesotan now?

Felicia: I am.

Barbara: I don't know if you know it or not, but Donny and I are ... Were most recently from Minnesota.

Felicia: Oh, fantastic.

Barbara: That's where we met, he was one of my pastors.

Donny: Oh, wow.

Barbara: What's really interesting about Minnesota ... I don't know where you came from. Well, you came from Albuquerque. You may not have had the same shock response as I did. I was coming from Memphis, Tennessee, and I moved to Minnesota, and people are walking around in burkas and nobody's upset about it. Not only are they not upset but they're talking to me on the street as if they know me. I go to pay for my lunch and it's paid for. It is that Minnesota nice, it was so shocking. Because when you live in the south for a really long time you get used to folks not seeing you, you get used to invisibility. And there's something about Minnesota, boy are you seen.

Felicia: I'm actually really enjoying this Minnesota nice. Just the other day I was at the grocery store buying some things to bake some goodies and send to my children, and people started ... One person asked a question, and then two or three, and before we knew it there's a whole conversation right in the checkout line. And no one is upset that we've paused checking out the groceries to have this conversation about where our kids are in the world, and sending them home bake goods as an effort to say I love you.

Barbara: Amazing. Amazing place. Donny, you want to lead us off?

Donny: Well, Felicia, when I was a Minnesotan, I lived in Blaine, Minnesota, and one of my most dearest friends, actually my best friend, Tim Brewington, is a pastor in Woodbury, Minnesota so right in there ... Your neck of the woods. But Felicia, I got to tell you, I am so excited. This is my first time meeting you. I am recently being introduced to your work. And I got to tell you, it's breathtaking. And I say that not to pump you up. But your journey, your ability to communicate in writing is amazing. And so I want to say thank you for your work.

For our listener, for our audience, I would like you to maybe introduce us to first Felicia before we get into your most recent book, which I want to spend most of our time dialoguing about this work. But I would love for you, Felicia, to introduce yourself to ... For those who don't know Felicia, and for those who are going to go on this journey that I am ... I promise is going to bless you with Felicia. Felicia, tell us a little bit about your origin, your background. How did you make it to Minnesota? Tell us a little bit about your faith journey, your spiritual journey. A little bit about who Felicia is for our audience.

Felicia: Let's see if I can make that succinct. My most succinct way I like to say is that I'm just really a woman that's been transformed by love, and that's the whole of my journey. I am very much a proud product of the south. I was born in Washington, DC, and raised in rural Johnston County, North Carolina. And I was formed in the south. As far as my faith journey goes, I am what you would call a religious mutt. And by that what I mean is, that growing up in the South when we grew up, pastors did not have the benefit of being in the same pulpit every Sunday. In my town, on my mother's side of the family, we went to the United Church of Christ on second and fourth Sunday, and on first and third Sunday we went to the AME Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church with my dad's side of the family.

My town was small enough that my mom's side of the family lived on one side of the hill and my dad's side of the family lived, what we call, down the hill or going down to the house to my dad's side of the family. So I literally was raised pretty much on one street just up and down the hill in this small area. But that meant that I grew up exposed to different ... Those two denominations. And then with my grandmother being in DC, she was in a missionary Baptist church. And my brother and I spent our summers in DC with my grandparents. And then at 11, my mom became, what we would say, a born-again believer. And she very much steeped herself into the Word of Faith movement into Apostolic Pentecostal movement. There was not a day that she was not in somebody's church praying. Which meant that we also were in somebody's church praying. And so that was my background.

When I went away to university, I went to Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, asking for a Word of Faith church and someone recommended a Closer church to me, which I had never been in a Closer church before. So as you can see, I've had this woven fabric of religion, religious denominations, that make up who I am. As an adult, my husband and I were very much in the charismatic, evangelical, non-denominational spaces, which is where we both worked in church leadership for

years and then also pastored and planted a church inside of that. And then as the journey transitioned away from institutional church, we did small home group things for a while. Just gathering people in our home always with that sense of pastoral place to have people come, and commune, and be together in community.

And then eventually went back into church, into the Episcopal faith, as well ... So you can see I really am a religious mess. It was up there that I started discovering Richard Warren's writings that led me into The Living School and into what I needed. I want to say that I am now more interspiritual. But really what I needed was to be able to situate my Christianity, my faith tradition in a larger, more expansive, more cosmic, more inclusive, and affirming way that I had been allowed growing up. And so I think that's what brings me to where I am today.

Barbara: I heard one of my favorite words, cosmic.

Felicia: Yes.

Barbara: So how does considerations of cosmic consciousness, cosmic citizenship play into this contemplative Felicia?

Felicia: Yes. Very much all of it. It allows me the room to acknowledge all that is larger than myself and yet a part of me. I don't just mean humanity, I mean the tree, the bee, the flower, the earth itself, the universe itself, the cosmos, all of it that, that we are all connected together. One of my favorite, favorite ways of thinking of his sacred presence is as a master weaver. And my grandmother, my great-grandmother was a quilter. And I remember her having all these scraps and pieces and the way that she would put a quilt together. But one of the things that sticks out in my mind a lot is big grandma, we call her big grandma ... Big grandma sitting in her chair and she would flip the quilt over on the back where this ... Where the thread, the stitches were on the back. And she had this little tool that she would use to unknot the underbelly of her quilts so that when she gifted them to people they looked as seamless on the bottom as they did on the top.

And she would spend that time just unknotting the little underbelly. Every now and then you would see this little knotted underbelly. And so when I think of the tapestry of the cosmos, of this cosmic consciousness, I think of all of us, every sentient being, as threads that are woven together in that way. And sometimes we get that little knotted underbelly that needs to be picked at a little bit but we're all there together. The energy of us all thrums through and from us all. That's what I think about when I think of cosmic consciousness.

Donny: Wow. When I think about your journey and I think about some of the things that come out in your book ... And maybe this is a great transition. And: The Restorative Power of Love. I mean, just that title right there, The Restorative Power of Love. How did you come up with that title? Of the creativity and the

poetic nature of And: The Restorative Power of Love in an Either/Or World? Could you give us a little bit about how did you come up with that title? And what was the inspiration behind the title for the book?

Felicia:

Thank you for asking that question. I think for me, I have to own the and, that part is mine, and it's part of my journey with spirit actually. I have always had a propensity to be very black or white, very all or nothing, very in or out in my prophetic-seared nature, right? One of the ways that spirit began to really open up my in insides to hold something larger than myself was to teach me that and was the bridge to our return. And is the way that we turn toward each other. That and really is that stitch, that thread of love. And so when I was working on this book, I actually thought the subtitle would be The Thread of Love.

Whitaker House, when the acquisitions editor read the book, she is the one who came up with the title. They wanted to release the book close to Valentine's Day. They said, "This book is just" ... "You can feel love really running all through this book so we want to release it around Valentine's Day." And Amy, the acquisitions editor at Whitaker House came up with the subtitle, The Restorative Power of Love in a Either/ Or World. When she offered it to me I was like "It is really beautiful." The invitation that's set before us today is to really hold this both and, right? And that's the part of that contemplative consciousness that Dr. B was just speaking of. We begin to see the polarities, and the binaries, and the dichotomies. That's not going to bring us toward one another.

I was reading a book by a reverend, Dr. Cindy Lee called ... It's called Unformed: De-Colonizing Our Western Spiritual Formation. In the book she speaks a lot about Taoism because she's an Asian-American. And she talks about how in Taoism you're taught to hold mystery, to hold contradictions, right? That they go together like night and day, like evening and morning. When I read that I thought about our biblical narrative. In the Christian tradition it literally says in Genesis, "Evening and morning were the first day," right? It's both and. It's not light or darkness. Spirit hovered over the deep, over the dark. And so there we find spirit just as we find spirit in light. But somehow, through rational logic or whatever, we parsed and we've made this a separate thing instead of a whole thing. The title for me was really an invitation to return back to the whole.

Barbara:

What's interesting is that you seem to have a broad picture of what it means to be human. I mean, that's not an easy thing to come to. People after decades don't understand why they're here, what their purpose is, and what it means to be human. I mean, I think Tutu says it well when he says, "Humans are generous, hospitable, friendly, caring, and compassionate" but he leaves out that they also fail. They fail supremely. I mean, think about it. If being human is a common ground that we need, can we really find common ground with Marjorie Taylor Brown, with insurrectionists, with climate change deniers, all these folks trying to take us back to the glory days of discrimination? How are you able to be human when others are working so diligently not to be?

Felicia:

And that's real, isn't it? It's the hardest thing and yet it's one of the invitations that I think is before us. I'll share this story just because it popped in my mind Dr. B as you said that. My husband Doug was on staff at a church in Nashville, Tennessee, and it was a predominantly large black Pentecostal church there, and I was doing some volunteer work. And this church it ... We had just moved into a new building, we had all this cherry wood, and it was wood furniture, and it was so beautiful and all of that. And one day I'm sitting at a desk in the receptionist area, I'm volunteering, and as I'm looking at the desk I see all these marks and cracks in the desk, right? And our pastor's wife, we ... She had mentioned that they ... It was floor sample and they got a really good deal on it, but I never thought more about it. So from afar it's really ornate, it's elegant, and when you get up close you see all these imperfections in the wood.

And I was young at that point. And like a lot of people in black church, you elevate the pastor's wife, and put the first lady on a pedestal, and all of that. And as I'm sitting here looking at this wood, all of a sudden Spirit starts talking to me about how I put my first lady on a pedestal. I've elevated her beyond her humanity. She can do no wrong, she's next to God. I was beginning to get the invitation to see more than just all the good and all of the imagine but to see her humanity, right? This is a person. And we all are people. We have good and bad but there's so much to it. I can remember growing up into adulthood parroting, I just don't do mess, I don't do mess.

And the reality is, if I become a person that don't do mess I won't do life because part of humanity is that. And so I have to hold that we have some messy, dramatic, very human propensities inside of us, and yet we are all ... Even the Marjorie Taylor's of the world and all those people, we all are also burning bushes. We all radiate the Imago Dei. If I can get past the dung of the mess there's diamond there. And part of and allows me to situate and understand that even though a person is displaying their character defects, their character defects are not their identity. Their identity is child of God, child of God, child of God.

Barbara:

I think one of the things that fascinated me was that one word and. You may be in trouble right now and more is coming. You may be on top of the world right now but look around problems may be coming. I mean, it is so evocative of the openness of the human journey and what have we refused? And That open expansiveness. It sure feels safe not to have an and. You want ors, you want something with periods at the end. What God seems to be doing is inviting us to that ellipse dot, dot, dot, and. And what else for you? You have touched on that so well. I'm still thinking about many of the sections of your book that focus on our ability to be bigger than our culture wants us to be.

Donny:

Felicia, there's this eternal possibility after and. There's a multiplicity of potential outcomes with and. And the invitation is really an invitation to surrender to that possibility. Dr. B when you mentioned the humanity, that she's really almost a student and almost a guide, a spiritual guide to experience true humanity. We're seeing this in this idea or this theme of union and communion, this common oneness, not just with each other but with ... As you spoke about Felicia with all creation, this cosmic union, right, this cosmic we, this cosmic us.

I love, even creatively in your book, how you had the and almost at the top. I didn't know if that was intentional, but I was starting to read and then I went right into the next prose or the next poem, right, and ... Or the next prayer. And that next prayer was so diametrically different from the previous prayer or the previous poem. It was really an experience. It was almost like reading a daily devotional that I just had to sit with, I had to process for a moment. I even think pictorially, even the use of the ampersand there's some wisdom there. It was a different way of presenting the same side of something but showing you that the same side of something has something more to offer.

Felicia: Thank you, Donny, for saying that, that means so much to me. When we were looking at the structure of the book ... I'm a huge fan of devotionals. I keep books on coffee tables and bedside tables. When I have a moment to enter solitude, a lot of times pages, poetry they are there for me. And so I will often take a piece, read a little bit of it, set it back down, and just sit with love inside of the quiet of those words, and those thoughts, and commune there. It seemed very natural to have that flow. Initially I wanted a heart at the top of the page to symbolize love.

And again, Whitaker House, the ampersand just kept ... It was that, it just kept coming forward as the ... Almost a *Visio Divina*, if you will, that it would be right there to linger in but also to break it up. And a friend of mine said, Felicia, this is like jazz how you have a note, and then you revisit, and then something solos, and then you come back, and then it all comes together. It feels like jazz. And so that and became like the through line of ... To keep that harmony going throughout the project. So thank you for seeing how it deepens in the work there that means a lot.

Barbara: I mean, you also expose our process as spiritual leaders who are writing. It gave me permission as a writer to not punish myself for thinking something and then evolving. And so now I got a book out and it says, "You know what? I think this. But I have now grown in the last four months and I don't think that anymore." It helped me to say, "Okay, I sent that book out, and would you all like to talk about it because I'm not there anymore?"

Felicia: I have to actually credit Glennon Doyle. There was a time that she mentioned the biblical parable where ... I think it's when a woman is caught in adultery, and they bring her out, and they're trying to crucify her. But that's not what she landed on. What she landed on was Jesus writing in sand. And she said, "There's a reason that Jesus wrote in sand because then he could take his finger and wipe it away." Even from my first book, *Truth Encounters*, which is a memoir slash inner healing. In part of my church leadership, I trained people on inner healing ministry teams. That first book is really a memoir of some personal things from my own life and then an inner healing invitation for the person reading it, right? And there's some very definitive things that I state in this book that I no longer ascribe to today, I no longer believe in those things today, right?

I could go back and edit the book and put a new one out on Amazon or whatever, but the beauty is ... Like Father Richard Rohr always teaches us, I get to include and transcend. I can include the part of my journey that believe those things because now

I get to show how I journeyed with love. How in my own embrace of love, my own homecoming love invited me to see more clearly, to see as love sees, to see ... To think differently which is all repentance is, right, to change our mind for the better. And so if I were to embrace that then I create really a lie or persona that I've always had it together. And I still do not have it together, I'm still on a journey. But and allows me to journey and continue to journey without feeling like I have to fragment or cut off anything that I once believed or once was or any of that, it's all me.

Donny: Felicia, I'm so glad you used that text from John 8, the woman caught in the act of adultery. As you were speaking, and as I was reading your book, it reminded me that and is inclusive, and that particular story is a story about inclusion. I love the fact that you sent ... You focused on the sand. When Jesus wrote in the sand, we really don't know ... We can speculate what he wrote. The fact that you bring out is that it wasn't written in stone. Sand, right, is not permanent. Let's suggest that Jesus was writing her crime that she was accused of and all ... Which is part of the Roman tradition, and he was writing the sentence death. And it was not written in stone.

Okay, let's suggest that Jesus, as some historians suggest, that he was writing the crimes, and the participation in adultery, that maybe even some of the older ones there were actually with the woman early in the day. Let's suggest that he wrote their names and it was not written in stone. And so as they walked one by one away Jesus said, "Where are your accusers?" And she said, "They are gone." And he said, "Neither do I accuse you because it's not written in stone." I just think that's such a beautiful story because it represents so well what you're trying to communicate, the inclusion of the story of love and the inclusiveness of love.

Felicia: Now, Pastor Donny, when you preach that I need to know so I can come and be a part of the congregation. I have my wadded hanky, I will be there.

Barbara: I'm ready for it.

Felicia: I am ready for it too.

Barbara: The issue though seems to be with regard to allowing love to heal all, it seems like the simplest possible thing. But the wounds that we have inflicted upon one another don't heal that easily. They can because God is God. But you mentioned in an article how to heal an open wound. You reminded us of the aftermath of George Floyd, how everybody rushed to the tables of corporate power. Suddenly there are black chefs sitting on the judging side of the television show Chopped. Aunt Jemima is off the pancake box. All this is happening suddenly. And then there's this hiatus. And after the hiatus things begin to go backward. There is something about rushing to forgiveness, rushing the healing that makes it almost impossible for it to stick. I mean, what do you think about that from that article you wrote?

Felicia: I am reminded of the origin of our beginnings which is Africa. I've also learned that this is true in Asia as well. When a person dies in Africa, the body is there, right? Even when I was growing up, you might have anywhere between seven to 13 days between a person dying and the actual funeral. There was going to be a wake, and people was

going to come and sit in the homes together, and they would be wailing together and lament together. And how crying and memory, there was time spent. And I'm thinking now, even in Judaism, they sit shiva. There's this time that is spent in grief, in lament, and acknowledgment before you move on. I don't think in our society, partly because ... Part of a masculine forward, dominant, patriarchal society, the energy is that you fixed, right? You resolved, you bring it to a resolution. And now in convenience, we want to get to fixed and resolution as quickly as possible.

The balance to the masculine, again, not either or but both and, the balance to that is the feminine part. And the feminine energy to that is one of welcoming, it's one of setting the table, it's one of comfort, and nurturing, and coming to mama's bosom for care. And it's the one where you allow. I think of this picture often in my head ... Something that Spirit has really taught me is ... Often when I'm upset I clench my teeth and so my posture is one of very clenched. If you think about fists being clenched together ... And I can do this with my hands, ball them in the fist and my nails are driven into the palm by hand and I'm clenched. When I live clenched, when I'm armored up in that way, nothing can get in. Love can't get in, mercy can't get in, tenderness can't get in, and I can't give anything out, right? And if I live completely open and exposed, everything falls off, it all falls off.

What Spirit has offered to me is a posture of surrender that looks like cupped hands. When I hold myself in this way, I'm holding myself, Doug, my husband, my kids, life, people, situations, grief, people's responses, everything very loosely. Loosely enough that I'm not attached to it. And I'm not clenched to it selfishly and holding it from doing what it needs to do. But also, I'm holding it tenderly enough that I can see it and hold it with compassion and care so that it doesn't just fall away. There's intention and attention in my posture, not just a careless, reckless whatever. And so I see surrender like this. It is with intention and attention that I'm not clenching it selfishly or armored up, and I'm not holding it so open that it's loose and reckless, and with disdain, there's intention and there's attention, right? I care here.

And so when I think about all the things from George Floyd to how people rush to be white saviors and heroes, right ... Every villain needs a savior and a hero in that triad. When I think about how people rush to be heroes, I think almost with a loose recklessness. And I think, and the way we come back to some type of circular communal intention is to hold it more like cupped hands so that what needs to fall off can. But we're also holding it with care and intention in a way that allows us to sit with it long enough to let these things hit the air, to wail, to grieve, to acknowledge, and then together masculine, and feminine, non-binary, human can, the earth, all of it together. All of it together now adding their voices to this.

Barbara: You talk a bit about having to have very deep relationships. I think you're referring to the product of love, love takes you deep. But our culture, it's always been melting pot. Is there a possibility of deep relationships if we all have to give up that which is essential about who we are to become something else more homogenized?

Felicia: I absolutely love that question Dr. B. I feel like Dr. Bayo Akomolafe is doing such challenging work in this area right now. I want to imagine a possibility, a world where

melting pot is not how we define ourselves, right? When I think about, even that, the idea of a melting pot, one of the things that comes to mind is how America got there was not necessarily with diversity in mind. When you think of a melting pot I think of people that came through Ellis Island. And they came through Ellis Island as Polish, Hungarian, Jewish, Italian, Irish, British, Scottish, all of that. And then they come through Ellis Island and now they're just white. Or, first they were Caucasian but now they're white. And so they have melted those distinct cultures and heritages into just being white people, right?

But when you add the diversity of those of us who did not come through Ellis Island, I think it creates an invitation for us to consider ourselves more as a salad than a melting pot. I don't think assimilation, homogenization is the way that we get there. I keep going back to biodiversity. How we have uniqueness and distinction of personhood, that particularity, that we can have unity and particularity. Look at the fish, look at the birds, look at ... There's just too much in the cosmos that is so diverse that the invitation can't be that we all just melt into this one thing and lose the distinctions of who we are. I don't think that's the invitation.

Barbara: Right. And the invitation to this smoothing out of culture is only given to some not all. And along with that whiteness comes privilege. I mean, this is amazing. I love what you said. Privilege is when I get to change the narrative because the truth offends me. Privilege is when I demand an account of all the productive ways you've shown up for injustice. When I'm wrinkled, by the way, you peacefully protest injustice. This privilege thing is when I value my opinion above seeking to understand what led to your actions. Do you want to say more about that?

Felicia: Even as you read that I'm thinking of ... Just recently, the governor in Texas took out a full-page ad for the young African-American man who ... He's not a man he's a boy, he's a teenager, who has dreadlocks. It wasn't the governor. I'm sorry, it was the superintendent. The superintendent essentially said in his ad that to live in America is to conform. That, essentially, if you're going to live in America it is to conform. Whose values and ideals are we conforming to? What are you asking of us that I can't wear my hair in the state that it naturally grows? When I think of privilege I think of you not having to consider something because you don't have to. And there's a lot of that that's going on.

I'm often asked to speak on issues of race in largely white spaces. I was once asked the question, is there ever a time that you don't have to consider your race? And I answered very honestly, "No, I always" ... "There's never not a time that I don't have to." And when the ideas about unity are all about whiteness or transcending to a pure white light or something of that kind, I think immediately, with a little snark, that it's easy to get to that place if you already have less melanin in your skin. You're not having to consider other things. And because you don't have to consider those things it allows you to make that statement. What I think the invitation before us is to consider how do we hold and, right? I'm not asking you to not be white, that's not what I'm asking. I'm asking for room and space to define myself for myself as myself. For the freedom to exist in my own skin, and to live my own experience, and to not have it demeaned, diminished, or just because it's not your experience.

Donny: Felicia, thank you for just opening that door. There's a prayer, I call it a prayer, in your book ... When you talk about the restorative power of love it's for all of us. What I understand you're trying to help us to see as you're ... As you are helping us teshuvah, to return back to our original state of wholeness, of seeing, and love is that vehicle. There's this prayer that speaks to that, it's a prayer of surrender. I think it's on page 286. And I would like to read this prayer, it's a very brief prayer. But the prayer speaks to this awakening.

And the prayer starts out like this, "Dearest love, thy kingdom come my kingdom go. Spirit teach me to lay aside every falsehood that keeps me from walking in truth, and to release every agenda that contradicts your kingdom of love, including nationalism and selfishness. I surrender my life of a life for your life that it might flow freely out of me to the world around me. May we remember the least of these, not in the system of hierarchy or counting or measuring, nor with pity, but for their full humanity. May we learn to be in awe of the person before us, the one beside us, in the way we vote, in the way we make room, in the way we live, and move, and have our being. Where love leads may we follow. Amen."

Powerful, Felicia. It speaks to what you're talking about. That even if I'm a person who's in a community of privilege, even if I was ... Love is the vehicle that invites me to be able to experience what you experience, to live in a compassionate way, to express more empathy, right? And even if I was not taught that or never saw that, that true love is the vehicle that restores that way of seeing that original wholeness in the world. And that prayer, as a devotional, helps me to be able to process that, to contemplate that, right? To become one with that, to be in tune with that. Thank you for that prayer, Felicia.

Barbara: I assume that for most of your life you've been following the leading of the Spirit even though you've been in eclectic places, different faith attestations. Everybody's got a little bit of truth. The more variety I think the better, I'm more likely to get more of it. I'm just wondering, love led you to lead congregations as a pastor. Did love lead you to move on?

Felicia: Thank you for asking that question. I will tell you what love did, let me start there. 2012, I will never forget this because it was so transformative for me. I was watching a preacher on a TV. It is someone that I've watched often, had quoted quite often, studied all of his teachings, all of that. And as I'm watching this man ... I don't even know what he was saying but I was into it, I was watching it. And as I'm watching, I heard Spirit, not audibly but just really loud inside my being say, "Do you believe that?" I went "Huh." And I kept watching. I just acted like I didn't hear it and I kept watching. And I'm watching and I'm watching.

And a few minutes later I heard it again. "Do you believe that?" And I'm like Samuel, right? So the second time I pause and I go "Well, do you believe that?" And I felt like Spirit said to me, "I believe that it's true to him on his journey right now." And I was like "Okay." I paused the video that I'm watching. I have to go walk. I have to move some energy I've got to process this. And as I'm walking and that's swirling in my mind like wait, what am I believing? All of a sudden questions blurred my mind. Who

taught him that? How did he come to believe that? Where did his ideas come from? Just things I've never processed or thought before.

As I'm swirling in my head, I'm walking to move my body trying to align these centers and Spirit says, "Felicia, I need you to hand to me everything you believe to be true about me, everything you believe to be true about God, and I'll hand back to you what is true. Big T Truth. That was the invitation. And I just said, "Lord, I hand this to you." Thinking, one time thing in my mind this is going to be yeah. Of course, we all know it does not go that way. As I'm sitting with Spirit come my yes. From the beginning of that moment, it's a demarcation line for me.

I was in a religious setting that belief that we were to be history-makers and world changers. We were to make the name of Jesus famous. We were to do all these things, grand things, grand things. Inside of grand, what we don't realize in the purpose and destiny messages of grandness, we start having this little personal ambition, right, that really becomes more about us than it does about other people, about humanity, about caring for people. In the handing over, I needed to hand hand down ... Hand over everything that was attached, that I had attached to my identity. I had to yield it, I had to surrender it, I had to be stripped of it. I needed to be stripped of it. I needed to say yes to the letting go.

I needed to not be Pastor Felicia, I needed to not be the inner healing trainer, I needed to not be the pastoral counselor, I needed to not be the itinerant minister traveling here and there. I needed to not, I just be. I needed to know I am without the apostrophe of any function, any title, any role, I needed to just be. And in I am, in that place of being with Spirit and the solitude of sitting and letting love love me. And embrace love, not in my head with a knowing but experiencing the fullness of love. What I realized is that I could never be in a church that was not affirming, that was not inclusive, that was anti-anything.

When I started handing things, the one thing that I felt Spirit tell me so clearly was, Jesus is more for something than he is against it. And we have Protestants and fundamentalists that are protesting and always against this, against ... What are you for? What are you saying yes to? And I needed to hear the yes. And I needed to let go of parenting everybody else's ideas and words and let Spirit give me a new language and create a clean heart within me, right? I just needed a blank slate. I cannot tell you Dr. B that it was love that led me to lead the institutional church, but I don't know that I would've gotten to a more cosmic Christ consciousness, a more expansive and wider frame, and a interspiritual frame staying there.

A lot of my invitations now are still in the Christian faith tradition. And I understand that for some people that's their box, that's their language, and I have no problem with it, it does not rattle me. I can talk God language, I can talk Buddhist language, I can talk universe language. I see the sacred presence of divine love everywhere, anywhere, I'm not rattled by it, right? But I could not have gotten to the place where I'm not rattled by it ... I would still, in some ways, be trying to insist that people come back to Christianity, come back to whatever instead of saying, "It is what it is, it is as it is, it what it should be." How are you in relationship with Spirit? And what is that for

you? How do you define it without trying to cast my image and my ideas onto other people?

Barbara: I think that takes us right back to your end. You're inviting people. Love is inviting people into a journey. There are ellipses, there are ampersands but very few periods. I loved this conversation. Would you like to take us out this afternoon with a reading, one of your favorite readings? I'd like to hear your words in your voice.

Felicia: I would be honored to do that. I'm actually going to go to the end. This is page 289 in the copy that I'm reading from. There is in every person an inward sea. And in that sea there is an island. And on that island there is an altar. And standing guard before that altar is the angel with the flaming sword. Nothing can get by that angel to be placed upon that altar unless it has the mark of your inner authority. Nothing passes the angel with the flaming sword to be placed upon your altar unless it be a part of the fluid area of your consent. This is your crucial link with the eternal. Those are the words of power [inaudible 00:51:37].

Be kind dear world. To yourself and to others, be kind. While we push, and prod, and force our way into power and prestige our hearts are crying for the tender, compassionate touch of the feminine. When the scale shift too far into a patriarchal land the use of excessive violence explodes. Let the feminine grace within remind you to be soft when life says, "Muscle up and be hard." Return to the center dear one. Be centered beloved. It's not one or the other it's both and. And the unforced rhythms of grace, and the bridge to our return, and the thread of love that binds us to one another and to the world, and peace be with you. Asé.

Barbara: Asé. Thank you, Felicia.

Felicia: Thank you.

Barbara: It's been a joy.

Donny: Thank you, Felicia.

Felicia: Thank you so much.

Donny: Thank you for listening. We'd like to leave you with a few reflections from this episode. Dr. B, as we reflect on our conversation it's important for us to really highlight and remind our listeners that Felicia is one of our own from The Living School who's producing great work and doing great things in the world. And so it's just important to really highlight that. And that she is, she's family.

Barbara: Yes, she absolutely is. And one of the more important things I think that she's focusing on is how we become community again. There's been a lot of talk about beloved community and how we move toward one another. This is a quote, "How do we move toward each other in love? The truth of authentic power?" What she's saying is, "We need to work for change instead of resisting it." Wow, what a good application. So she talks about love in her book, and then she applies it by saying, "All right, the way toward change is love."

Donny: Yes.

Barbara: “And if you can manifest that then you’re going to see the fruit of that manifestation in love.” And love in motion it really is what it is. Love in action.

Donny: Love in action, yeah, yeah. She highlights the transformative force or the transformative or restorative power in love. The effectual component of love is that it transforms, it changes, it restores. You’re right, there’s this movement in love, this active aspect of love that she highlights. And I love what you’re talking about, this concept that she brings to the forefront, that we ought to move together toward love. That the motion, the movement, the teshuvah, right, the circle back is a movement toward oneness, toward union, toward communion which ultimately is a reflection of love and it builds community.

Barbara: It absolutely does. The other thing it does is it removes love from that mushy unexplored territory. Nobody knows what it is, nobody knows how to really live it. What it says is, yeah, there are practical ways to do this.

Donny: There are. And to our listeners, maybe as a practice, think of a time when you experienced the healing power of love, whether received or given, and reflect on how did it change your situation or your perspective. Thanks for listening.