



# **EVERYTHING BELONGS**

**Home Base**

with Rev. Dr. Randy Woodley

Mike Petrow: Paul, it is good to see you again. I missed you.

Paul Swanson: It's always a pleasure. Whenever we get to hang out digitally or in person, it's a gift.

Mike Petrow: Man, I got to say, before we jump into it, the last two episodes, first of all, it was so great to have Drew Jackson join us and bring his voice into the conversation and your conversations with Jim and Dr. B, oh my gosh, just amazing.

Paul Swanson: They were so generative and so fun and like you said, it's so great to bring Drew into this co-host role and be able to mix it up with him, and there'll be times where it's me and him and you and him, and we'll keep the flow of those conversations. The spirit will remain the same, but it's going to show up in different ways, and I think it's allowing us to draw from the depths of the contemporary traditions that we seek to embody.

Mike Petrow: Right on. Well, all our friends listening, welcome back to the Everything Belongs podcast.

Paul Swanson: Yes.

Mike Petrow: This season we are looking at Richard's book, *Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi*. And just a reminder, you do not need to read the book to listen along and just immerse yourself in these fantastic conversations, but if you want to, it adds a whole nother layer of depth to it. This week we are going to be talking about chapter four, Home Base, Nature and the Road. Paul, I'm going to guess this chapter is a little bit near and dear to your heart.

Paul Swanson: It is. I think for very similar reasons to you as someone who loves to spend as much time as possible out of doors, who loves to travel and meet people along those roads that are outside my own home bounds is always an opportunity to expand different horizons of my life. How did this chapter hit you as you went through it this time?

Mike Petrow: It was good to come to it again. It was fun to be reminded how much time Francis really did spend out on the road and in nature, to remember that walking is a huge spiritual practice and I think for me, I might've said this in a previous episode, I still do all the things. I still sit in contemplative prayer. I still journal, I still read, but what's become the two most meaningful spiritual practices for me lately is being out in nature and just listening and listening to the way the divine shows up when I get to hear the stories of other people. And so I felt that sort of pulsating in the chapter and then in the conversations we got to have with Richard and in the conversation I got to have, and I was sad you weren't there.

Paul Swanson: Yeah, me too.

Mike Petrow: But the conversation I got to have with our guest this week, Randy Woodley, who is a person who also really exudes both of those things, the deep listening to the wisdom of nature and the deep listening and the deep sharing of stories back and forth.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. I think there's something about the vulnerability of the elements and of also of the traveler that Francis embodies, and I think we get into some of those ... we knead into some of those elements in our conversations with Richard. And I cannot wait to hear your conversation with Randy and how some of that becomes alive as the two of you, great minds

and hearts, exchange ideas and stories.

Mike Petrow: Yeah, I love that, Paul. And that's what a brilliant, keen insight, the vulnerability of the traveler. That's pretty cool. Speaking of, we invite our listeners to travel with us to Richard's Hermitage to grab another seat on the couch with Paul and I as Opie curls up to beg for snacks and listen. And Richard puts his recliner back, puts his feet in our direction, and asks us what we have for him today. From the Center for Action and Contemplation, I'm Mike Petrow.

Paul Swanson: I'm Paul Swanson.

Mike Petrow: And this is Everything Belongs.

Paul Swanson: Richard, thanks again for-

Richard Rohr: You're welcome.

Paul Swanson: ... welcoming us back in here to talk about chapter four, Home Base, Nature and the Road.

Richard Rohr: Nature and the Road. Okay.

Paul Swanson: What a great combo. To ask you first about your own life experience knowing that you're a Kansas boy through and through, and then you, of course, left Kansas for seminary, but then you ventured down to New Mexico. I believe you were a deacon then, right? You weren't a priest at the time?

Richard Rohr: A deacon.

Paul Swanson: A deacon. And here you are coming to the southwest, unknowing that throughout your adulthood you'd be teaching and preaching all over the world. How would you describe that sense of traveling to New Mexico and just that Franciscan calling of being on the road, like Francis modeled such an itinerant preacher style? Did you feel like you were stepping into that role as you came to New Mexico for that first time?

Richard Rohr: Well, I just never knew how big it was going to get. I didn't know that my cassettes were going to become well known and my books coming after that, and that's when I was forced to recognize running through airports. Traveling is now my vocation. I can't say I ever liked it. I liked it when I'd get there and be met by lovely people, but traveling, gee, that was a across delayed flights, missed flights. Oh, that was hard.

Mike Petrow: Taking your shoes on and off, wheeling around the stuff.

Paul Swanson: How would you describe your sense of New Mexico as a young Franciscan when you first arrived?

Richard Rohr: New Mexico was just the great adventure of these wide open skies and this western freedom. You almost saw it in the landscape that you didn't see back east. Nothing wrong with the east, but it was cultivated, civilized, built up, and here it was all waiting to be built up, but incapable of it because it was too dry and too rocky and too dry. So nature held its own much more out here, the natural rugged world and that, I loved.

Mike Petrow: I think we all share this. I love the landscape of New Mexico so much. I could weep if we get too deep into it. It's so beautiful. I was so moved. You've told me stories about your first assignment in Acoma Pueblo, which is up in this elevated, it's up on top of a mesa if I remember correctly.

Richard Rohr: That's right.

Mike Petrow: You told me stories of sitting over the ledge with the young boys or driving the pickup truck out and around.

Richard Rohr: Oh, my orange pickup.

Mike Petrow: God, what was that like to be 16?

Richard Rohr: A dream that I didn't want it to come to an end. And they put me in charge of taking the census for the whole Pueblo and the neighboring pueblo, Laguna. So I drove my orange pickup to every house on the two pueblos, and usually it was in those days, the mother and the children were home. Father was at work. It was just a pure adventure, the blue sky. I never stopped falling in love with it.

Mike Petrow: Goodness gracious. I remember you telling me a story about driving all the young boys out. Was it to a cave and you would sit and look at that cave?

Richard Rohr: The enchanted mesa.

Mike Petrow: Yeah.

Richard Rohr: It's the mesa after which the whole state is named. Most people don't know it. We call ourselves the land of enchantment.

Mike Petrow: Sure.

Richard Rohr: Well, east of Acoma, maybe not even half a mile is a freestanding mesa called the Enchanted Mesa, and the natives believed the Acoma that they were created on the top of it. Well, by the end of the summer, I had a lot of cache with the mothers especially, and it's a matriarchal society. Once you've got the mothers on your side, you can do whatever you want. The war chiefs can say whatever they want, but they're not going to out speak the women.

And I was apparently doing so much for their kids. I would come through town in my little orange pickup and just honk the horn and they'd come and jump in the back. And I remember one point saying, "Well, where would you like to drive more than anywhere just in a short distance?" "Enchanted Mesa." And all kind of mythology to it. That's where they believed they were created. It isn't true, but no point in telling them that. And what advantage is that? So we waited for a Saturday, it was probably in August, and the word spread that Father Richard, they called me father, even though I wasn't one, is going to take us to the Enchanted Mesa.

Somewhere in my files, I still have pictures of me up there with those boys. They're

little tiny pictures. And we made it to the top. I was in good shape in those days. We had some ropes and we went all over the top looking for any indication of ruins. There was none. No one ever lived up there. There's no water except there's these puddles. I have some pictures of the puddles, the rock openings held water, and that, next to the killing of the rattlesnake, that made me a hero. Taking the teenage boys to the Enchanted Mesa. It was pure heaven.

Mike Petrow: That's amazing.

Paul Swanson: I remember-

Richard Rohr: I didn't say, "You know this isn't true?" Just like I wouldn't discount the Adam and Eve story for a Christian, I didn't want to ... They were just ... Walking around with their mouths open looking everywhere. They were on top of ... They tend to be nines. I wanted to say, "Why haven't you been up here a dozen times?" Someone has to take the initiative and then they'll follow very, very excitedly, but they won't be the first. When you teach, you can't wait for them to raise their hand. You have to call on them or say, "Now two or three of you, you get together and you choose which one is going to give you the answer."

Mike Petrow: Oh my gosh.

Richard Rohr: They don't want to stand out. Isn't that beautiful?

Paul Swanson: That's beautiful.

Richard Rohr: So different than us.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. I'm thinking about, you mentioned the mothers, you tell this story about you were doing the census and pulling up at sunrise.

Richard Rohr: Yeah. I started early.

Paul Swanson: And you want to take off from there. Because I feel like you learned about a respect of nature through the Acoma people as well.

Richard Rohr: Maybe it happened twice or three times that whole season, but if I got there at the right hour, the mother would be on the east side of the house facing the rising sun and gesturing this with her hands. This gesture of welcome, sort of like we do when we're being saged. You pour it over your head. Identical movement. And I stopped my truck and wait until they'd finished and the kids were just instructed to keep quiet. That's all. And to do the gesture, to do the gesture of welcome of the morning sun and keep quiet. Morning sit. Morning stand in their case.

Mike Petrow: Well and welcoming, is it brother sun?

Richard Rohr: Yeah, brother sun. I don't know that they use that term. I don't know. They might've, but probably not.

Mike Petrow: I love the similarities. Y'all want to hear the worst joke that I have?

Paul Swanson: Please.

Mike Petrow: Okay, so this is relevant, I promise. There is a saying attributed to Francis that we don't know that he actually said, which is, "Preach the gospel and if necessary, use words." And I love to say preach the gospel and if necessary, use birds because Francis is so often depicted with birds in his hands, which I love. In this chapter, you talk about the vulnerability and the fragility and the of Francis being a preacher on the road who also can see the natural world as his congregation. It's really, really beautiful and there's a freedom that comes through in Francis being in touch with primal creation in the natural world. Why do you think this is such a central part of who Francis is?

Richard Rohr: Well, they weren't ... most of them, some were educated, but most of the first generation were not educated. So uneducated people know reality through things more than through books and ideas. That's probably the first starting point. They show you the tree. It's all wired up, up in the tree above Assisi where they claim he preached to the birds. When I first went, there was still always birds in that tree, always. Assisi is so filled with magic. They keep wiring it up, hoping it's right on a hilltop, a crag on the side of the hill and the people weren't listening to him, so I went up to that. He said, "I'll talk to you. If the people listen, you'll listen to me." And they did.

So he set the tone and ... You remember anima in Latin means soul, and somehow he knew that animals had soul. He honored them. He let them speak to him as it were. He spoke back to them. Once you let something have a voice like this little mother duck here who made her nest in my front yard this spring, I got her and I talked to her. And it was just, I don't know how conscious I was of it, but it was my way of granting her dignity and I think she knew it. She never left. Even though this is somewhat busy spot, she never left and in fact either planted her second brood in the same place. I still don't know if that was another duck. She probably told her about it, her friend.

Mike Petrow: I love that.

Richard Rohr: Another duck came.

Mike Petrow: I love this image. This is the most Franciscan image I've ever had of you. I did never realize you would go out and talk to the duck. That is ...

Richard Rohr: Oh, didn't I tell you that?

Mike Petrow: No. This is beautiful.

Richard Rohr: Well, it was no big deal. I asked her if she was okay in there. I put some water, in case she ... I said, "Aren't you pretty far from water?" She just looked at me.

Paul Swanson: What'd the duck say?

Richard Rohr: No, nothing just looked at me. Not especially with fear, just with calm, stillness.

Mike Petrow: Ducks are very contemplative. I talk to ducks a lot.

Richard Rohr: They're God's favorite.

Mike Petrow: Tell us again.

Paul Swanson: Yeah.

Richard Rohr: Native people say ducks are God's favorite because they're the only animal that can walk, that can fly and that can swim.

Mike Petrow: That's awesome.

Richard Rohr: Once you hear that, you say, "Yeah, they're God's favorite."

Paul Swanson: They got to be be.

Mike Petrow: I love this idea. One of the things you helped me remember and it's really changed my life, is one, this idea that nature is the first bible.

Richard Rohr: Nature is the first bible.

Mike Petrow: And the first revelation of the divine. I know as humans have become more detached from nature, and as religion has become more ideological and theological, we've drifted from that and it's so good to be reminded how imminent we can encounter like the great mystery in the divine, just in the natural world that's right in front of us.

Richard Rohr: Romans 1-20, can you quote it by heart?

Paul Swanson: If you start it, maybe.

Richard Rohr: Look it out. Romans 1-20. It's all there. I need to throw that out so people don't think I'm trying to throw out scripture.

Mike Petrow: For God's invisible attributes, eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen since the creation of the world being understood through all that has been made.

Richard Rohr: Talk about a complete statement. Yeah. Paul, Romans 1-20, most sophisticated of all his letters. Most theological of all his letters.

Mike Petrow: Yeah. Maybe the least understood, but good one.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. My namesake always has something to say, but when I think about this chapter, I think about nature. I think about the road. I think about vulnerability before the world. You're ...

Richard Rohr: Very good.

Paul Swanson: You're naked before the world, and in this chapter you talk about the Franciscans as mendicants, those who begged for what they needed. And then you write that this is a role of neediness rather than being needed ourselves. And so this makes me think of when I step into nature and I feel very small when I see the Sandias, like I'm a mendicant for meaning or

I feel that same way when I travel-

Richard Rohr: That's nice.

Paul Swanson: I like that one too. Or when I travel to new places, I bring that same kind of empty bull spirit. How does one integrate this mendicant mentality into the daily routine of every day, 21st century western life.

Richard Rohr: Don't presume you know. Don't presume you understand. Don't presume you're in charge of the moment. There's a certain quality of and control that you need for mental stability, but not too much. When you overdo it, when your life becomes a search for control for the final meaning, the only meaning, the definitive meaning, when you think of it, books came along very late in the history of human development or earthly development. Books are so artificial in comparison to a tree or a mountain or a lake.

It's almost embarrassing we have to teach that. But smart boys go off to school like the three of us did, and read from books and get rewarded for it. No one gets rewarded for gazing at trees. And I suppose you notice my front yard trees here are growing. It's just about good to reach by porch by the end of the summer, I think. It's been delightful. We planted those trees six years ago.

Paul Swanson: Wow. Yeah.

Mike Petrow: Wow.

Richard Rohr: Look how they've grown. They get just the right amount of water. They're a work of art.

Paul Swanson: I thank you, Richard. That invitation of just continual vulnerability for the world and not getting stuck in knowing, but the nature is the first bible as connecting to what is. I think that's something that anyone can take away and step into practice. So thank you so much for this.

Richard Rohr: Knowing is another form of possession, and then you have it.

Paul Swanson: The clinging of it.

Richard Rohr: Yeah. You have it. You have your diploma. Yeah. So be careful of knowing. You have to balance it by I don't know. I don't know.

Mike Petrow: I think it's one of the things I love about getting lost in the big vistas of New Mexico and the wide open land is it's I don't own it. It's too big.

Richard Rohr: It's too big. Yeah.

Mike Petrow: And yet it welcomes us in. Yeah. I hope all our listeners can find the places where they can have their own conversations with birds and ducks and gaze at trees, and read the first bible.

Paul Swanson: Amen to that.

Richard Rohr: What a nice way to end. Thank you.



Mike Petrow: Everything Belongs will continue.

Paul Swanson: Hey, everyone. Welcome back. Today, Mike is joined in conversation with the Reverend Dr. Randy Woodley, an activist, scholar, author, teacher, wisdom keeper, and Cherokee descendant, recognized by the Keetowah band who speaks on justice, faith, the earth and indigenous realities. He's the author of numerous books, including *Becoming Rooted* and *Shalom and The Community of Creation*, and most recently, *Journey to Eloheh, How Indigenous Values Lead Us to Harmony and Well-Being*. He and his wife, Edith, co-sustain Eloheh, Indigenous Center for Earth Justice and Eloheh Farm and Seeds Outside Portland, Oregon. Dr. Woodley is also an affiliate faculty member here at the Center for Action and Contemplation.

Mike Petrow: Randy Woodley, my friend. It is always a gift to get to have a conversation with you. How are you doing today?

Randy Woodley: I'm doing okay. A little under the weather, but I'm going to make it through and appreciate what we're doing here. This will be good for folks to listen to, I think.

Mike Petrow: All right. Well, we'll try to be gentle and if you need anything, you just let us know as we go through. But under the weather especially, I appreciate you making the time to talk with us, especially about this great chapter in Richard's book, *Eager to Love*, and especially this chapter, *Home Base, Nature and the Road*, which I'm really, really excited to talk to you very specifically about. Before we get into it too much, Randy, is there anything you would like our audience to know about you?

Randy Woodley: Oh, I'm just a farmer.

Mike Petrow: A little bit more than that, I think. I'll tell you what, it has been such a gift to have you as a leading voice in our new *Essentials of Engaged Contemplation* Course in the New Living School. And one of the many, many things I love about you is first of all, your love of nature and its wisdom, and I learned so much from you and you share with us about that. Also, your deep appreciation of the power of story has been really, really enriching for me and your deep utilization and celebration of the power of conversation.

I don't know if you remember this, but when we first reached out to you about helping us out with the program, you said something to the likes of, "I don't really want to do any more lectures, I just want to have conversations." And it worked out so great, because that program has so many conversations in it. But I think my first question for you, Randy, is is there a connection there? Is there something about nature and story and conversation that go together? Are story and conversation a more natural way of doing education?

Randy Woodley: Yeah. I mean, let's just think about how folks used to live. So basically, so my wife's from a very nomadic people and I come from a more settled people, but they would hunt and put away foods and everything. And then in the winter time, there was not much to do except for gather firewood. And so you sat around and you talked around that fire. You taught the children, and the children knew who they were through these stories. And this is something that's really left us today. Most of our kids, I mean, I run into people who don't even know who their grandparents are, which is just a shame. But that story and what those folks who live closer to creation have to teach us are just so important. It gets us back in

touch with reality.

Mike Petrow: Oh, man, I so appreciate that. Well, so to throw a little fun personal anecdote in, I'm literally 47 years old, and I just found out for the first time that I'm a third Russian. Didn't even know that until just a couple of weeks ago because I tapped into Ancestry.com And called my dad, and he finally admitted that it was something ... His grandfather spoke Russian, but it was the '50s, so they didn't want anyone to know that. And it's amazing. I think about so many friends of mine how cut off we are from our history and our ancestry.

Randy Woodley: Part of that has to do with the Americanization movement that occurred around 1900, the late 1800s, the early 1900s. It was like forget who you are. I mean, they even sent ... you had New York mission societies going out to South Dakota and North Dakota and Wisconsin and Minnesota and trying to get those Swedes and the Danes and the Norwegians to speak proper English. I mean, that was their job because they want them to be good Americans. And so being a good American, as it turns out, is not forgetting your past. And it's left an awful dearth in a lot of people's lives right now. And I would say even creating a neurosis in society.

Mike Petrow: Wow. That's powerful. When I think about how detached most of us are from the land that we live on, which for a lot of folks is not the land that their ancestors come from. And in addition to being attached from the reality of that situation, so many of us are detached from literally just the trees and the animals and the sound of the wind right outside our window.

Randy Woodley: Yeah, exactly. And we don't have to be. I mean, you don't have to just go back to the land of your ancestors. And I spend a lot of time in the introduction of the book *Becoming Rooted*, saying we're all indigenous from somewhere. We all have this thing in the DNA in the back of our minds or wherever it comes from, that our people knew how to not only survive but thrive with the environment that they lived in at one time and those kinds of skills and those kinds of stories, we have lost that, which is really unfortunate. And so we're needing to sort of get back to that. There's an old, forgive the reference, but there's an old Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young song that said if you can't be with the one you love, love the one you're with. That was back in the '60s. But if you can't be with the land you love, love the land you're with.

Mike Petrow: Yeah. I so appreciate that. And there's two sides of that that hit me. There's a mythologist I really like named Martin Shaw, and he talks about the difference of being from a place and being of a place, and he sort of says become of a place, get to know your neighbors, get to know the land, get to know the animals and the routines in the place that you are situated in.

Randy Woodley: And get to know the original peoples from that land.

Mike Petrow: Yeah, goodness gracious.

Randy Woodley: And their relationship. That can be very informative.

Mike Petrow: Yeah. Well, and I appreciate too what you and Dr. Barbara Holmes also on our faculty have taught me about getting back in touch with indigeneity. It had never occurred to me until

very recently that that was an option available for me that I could look into my ancestry, and now I know that I'm from Siberia and I can research ancient Siberian customs. I know the word shaman comes from that region of the world. Things I never would've known if I had not been given permission to investigate.

Randy Woodley: Yeah. And there's so much history there that has been slanted. It's been, I don't really know another word except for to use, but whitewashed throughout history because I look at what they said about our people. I know how spiritual our people are and were. I understand the values that came out of that. And the early missionaries, and even some still today said we are of the devil, that we're haters, that we are dumb as garden poles, and we had nothing. Right? And so that was to be replaced with whatever Europe brought, and that's just probably something that occurred in the Church of Empire all along.

Mike Petrow: I so appreciate, Randy, the willingness with which you share the wisdom of your own tradition and culture, and you're willing to share it even with those of us that hail from colonizer cultures really.

Randy Woodley: Yeah. We're all in the soup here.

Mike Petrow: Yeah. Yeah, that's well said. I appreciate it.

Randy Woodley: We have to heal together.

Mike Petrow: Yeah. And I can't wait, in a little bit, we'll talk about Eloheh because your understanding of that that we all have to heal together or we're not healing at all has really, really, really been informative and transformative for me. But to start at the beginning, we're talking about this chapter in this book, Eager to Love, which Richard wrote about Saint Francis, and in this chapter, Home base, Nature and the Road, Richard, he talks about how Francis was out on the road. And so he was a different kind of a monk, if you will, not even necessarily a monk, but he also really talks about Francis connection to creation.

And at that point, it was almost as if Francis was bringing something back to Christianity that had been lost. He was innovating, but he was really rediscovering. I love this passage for those who are reading the book, it's in the very bottom of page 46, Richard writes, "Creation itself, not ritual or spaces constructed by human's hands, was Francis' primary cathedral, which then drove him back into the needs of the city, very similar to Jesus' own movement between desert, solitude and small town healing ministry. The gospel transforms us by putting us in touch with that which is much more constant and satisfying, literally the ground of our being and has much more reality to it rather than theological concepts or the more ritualization of reality. Daily cosmic events in the sky and the earth are the reality above our heads and beneath our feet every minute of our lives, a continuous sacrament."

Randy Woodley: Yeah. So I think of that and I think about creation is the creator's first and longest discord with all humanity, and not just Christians. Creation is put there for us to connect with creator and connect with who we are as human beings. And so the earth is our natured home, so to speak, Richard talks about this that all the images of Saint Francis are like with the dove and with the ... And the reason for that, he's just doing what is normal. He's returning to normalcy. He's returning back to our natured earth, the place that we can gain

the most of our spirituality and our understanding of who the creator is. And it was that Platonic dualism that broke that. Right?

And then we have people to think like Saint Thomas Aquinas and others in the church who really continued that dualism. But we are ourselves, we're walking earth. We all go back to the earth. We have a lot of the same salts and minerals, and we are all connected through DNA to so many other creatures on earth. I mean, we share so much with even daffodils, right? We are the earth. We are nature. And for us to create this, like Richard discusses here, this sort of human-made edifice is to glory in what we think we can do, but actually we are simply recreating and we can recreate well or we can recreate poorly.

And of course, our cities have been built very poorly. There's another way to build our urban centers that would not just express this sort of creativity, but it would also feed us. But we get so trapped in this Platonic dualism where we think it's the things of the mind are separate from the material world. And so now the earth is suspect and our bodies are suspect, and none of that is reality. That's unreality. And so Francis just simply reminds us what it means to be a human being again.

Mike Petrow: It's so good. And it's interesting to me, I think about that sort of dualism, that mistrust of nature, that protecting ourselves from it. And I can't help but imagine that somehow that leads to our also, again, being cut off from the land being cut off from our ancestry, being cut off from the stories that shape us and eventually being cut off from community. We're such an individualistic society, and so many people struggle with feeling so alone.

Randy Woodley: Yeah, absolutely. We're probably the most individualistic society to ever walk the earth. It's really sad because there's nothing from the most subatomic particles into the multiverse that is alone. There's nothing singular. Everything is relying on each other and connected. Yeah. So that's helpful to know that those things out there, even the use of things is probably not proper. Those non-human humans out there are relatives, and we have a reciprocal relationship with them, including the earth and all the creatures underneath the earth and things over the earth and et cetera. So it's our responsibility to take care of these things.

Mike Petrow: Well, and I appreciate that. And again, I appreciate you saying that it's our responsibility to take care of them. Because I don't want it to limit this to just my personal experience of it and my wanting to feel something. But it is interesting to me in listening to your teaching in studying Francis wisdom, I've noticed how sort of my experience has shifted. I spent a lot of time hiking in the desert, and I start to notice now I feel like I'm alone. There's nothing there. And then there's eyes on me, there's a coyote, or I scare a big jackrabbit, or there's bees around or there's a hummingbird. And this notion of starting to think of every living thing as a family member, Francis talks about brother sun and sister wolf or brother sun and sister moon and brother wolf.

Randy Woodley: Yeah.

Mike Petrow: Right. Yeah. It's a whole different way of being, and yet it's probably a return to what's more natural and more ancient. Does that feel right?

Randy Woodley: Yeah. And page 47, Richard makes a reference to Jesus in this regard.

Mike Petrow: Yeah.

Randy Woodley: And I think it's great. He says, very similar to Jesus' own movement between desert, solitude and small town healing ministry. Jesus had to have people, but he also had time in solitude and in that time in solitude, he was not alone because all he talks about is things like birds and trees and flowers and seeds and soil and all those kinds of things that he's being observant of nature. And the reason why is because Jesus couldn't become fully human unless he connected with creation.

Mike Petrow: That's so powerful and so profound. Well, I think about Jesus growing up in a world where the Hebrew imagination talked about Sophia, the wisdom that is all around us in nature that is observable in everything, but it's observable in the flowers and in the trees and in the seasons and in the rhythm.

Randy Woodley: And that gives us our humanity. That helps us to understand that we are simple human beings on this earth, sharing it with the whole community of creation. And Jesus needed that as well.

Mike Petrow: Yeah. Yeah. God, I think you were the first person who really helped me see. When we talk about this 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness, and it's always referred to as Jesus' temptation in his trials. And I think of it as like Jesus went out into the wilderness to face the devil. And in reality in that story, that only happens at the very end. The notion that Jesus was 40 days immersed in nature just learning. It says he talked to animals and angels came and waited on them. It's a whole different way to think about the story, but I get where a sort of later interpretation would want to make it, "Oh, the wilderness is the place of the devil," and not the place where he's being instructed by reality itself.

Randy Woodley: That was taught by many missionaries that the wilderness or the jungle or the desert or wherever they were was the place of the devil. And there's a great movie about the Jesuits called *The Mission*, right?

Mike Petrow: Oh, yeah.

Randy Woodley: And Jeremy Irons and other folks, and they tell them to return to the jungle. And the response of the chief who had been basically, I think, manipulated over all these years to follow a platonic, dualistic kind of Christianity, and he says, "We can't go back to the jungle. The devil lives in the jungle." And I thought, "That's so sad." This is where God speaks to us. This is where we have this discourse, and we do this. I used to teach a course, academic course called the Theology and Ethic of the Land, and we would go out for a couple hours as part of that course. And I was always afraid people would not have anything to share when they came back. But every time, and then here at Eloheh, my wife, Edith, she does the same thing. She takes people out for an hour and they all come back and they all have something to say. It's something they learned from creation. So yeah, this is, like I say, this is the most important discourse with the creator we can have.

Mike Petrow: There's the passages in the Hebrew and the Christian scripture that say things like the whole earth declares the glory of the Lord or the trees of the fields clap their hands. And we are so quick, "we", so many are so quick to interpret those scriptures metaphorically. And I always feel like we interpret the wrong things literally and the wrong things metaphorically. But this

idea that I don't think that's metaphorical. I think nature is really speaking to us. Don't you think if we take the time to listen and learn how to hear?

Randy Woodley: Well, look at this great passage in the oldest book in scripture, right? Job. And there's this wonderful passage, I think it's either in 12 or 9, I can't remember which chapter, but it says, "Speak to the Earth and let her teach you. Listen to the fish of the sea. Listen to the birds of the air." This is the relationship that we're supposed to have. But unfortunately, the Western worldview adopted this platonic dualistic worldview, and now we have to unravel that and get back to a more natural reality.

Mike Petrow: Yeah. And that makes so much sense, cut off from nature, cut off from our bodies, cut off from our human family, cut off from our more-than-human family. And I love that you referenced this passage on page 47 because the next paragraph, I love. Richard writes, "Jesus himself commonly points to things like the red sky, a hen, lilies, the fig tree, a donkey caught in a pit, the birds of the air, the grass in the field, the temple animals, which he released from their cages and on and on. He was clearly looking at the seemingly non-religious world, ordinary things all around him, and appeared to do most of his teaching outside. Francis said, wherever we are, wherever we go, we bring our cell with us." And by that, he means the room or the prayer closet that the monks would be in. "Our brother body is our cell and our soul is the hermit living in the cell. If our soul does not live in peace and solitude within this cell, what avail is it to live in the man-made cell?"

And there, I love that idea. If we can't go into that quiet place in ourselves, it doesn't matter whether we're in a monastery or whether we're in a city, but he connects that to being out in nature and to Jesus using all those natural metaphors. Something you really open my eyes to is Jesus would always use these natural metaphors, and then he would say things like, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." And I always thought about that in political or even sort of governmental terms or even through the lens of empire. But when I read your book, *Shalom and the Community of Creation*, do I have the title right?

Randy Woodley: Yeah.

Mike Petrow: You sort of changed my thinking on that. When Jesus talks about this coming kingdom or when he talks about this other way of being in the world, do you think he's connecting that to the natural world?

Randy Woodley: I do. I think he's looking at reality as a whole, not piecemeal, not through a platonic dualistic lens. I think he's looking through, we call Hebraic Holism, which means that he's connecting it to both political realms and the natural realm, if you will. And it is just like all of these things, this binary thinking is part of the thing that comes down the pike from platonic dualism, right? It's just like, well, people will take the Beatitudes, for example, and other things, and they'll say, "Well, this is all ethics." But no, these are actually to be structured in society. That whole what I call the *Shalom Sabbath Jubilee Construct*, which he announces as his vision in Luke Chapter 4 after going on this vision quest. And he says, "It's not exclusive. It's for everyone." Right? And so this is Jesus' way of saying this whole thing. And Mary understood that, right?

And John, the Baptist understood that. John the Baptist boils it down to ... He doesn't fall



in his father's footsteps as the high priest. He goes out and lives in creation and he knows something we don't. And then when they say, "Well, what are we supposed to do?" And Jesus remember said John the Baptist is the greatest prophet who ever lived. And I think it's because he boils it down to the most reducible way of saying it, which is if someone needs a coat and you have to give them a coat, stop cheating on your taxes, stop your military power over people. And it boils down to the most simplest of things, but it's both structural and personal.

Mike Petrow: Yeah. And so natural. And so this is where then we have to talk about the concept of Eloheh and your newest book, which I'm so excited about. As I said before we got on the episode, my physical copy of the book I'm trying to get, because that rascal, Paul Swanson has it and hasn't given it to me yet. So Paul, if you're listening, I really need to get that book from you. I love how you start the intro of the book right off and you're like, "This is not a book about making you happy." Could you tell us a little bit something about why your book is not a self-help targeted to make people feel happy?

Randy Woodley: Well, everybody buys these happiness books. I mean, 10 to happiness or seven ways to happiness, or five ways to make yourself happy. But that's not what's going to make you happy. What will make you happy is understanding what is we call well-being or shalom or Eloheh. It's this idea that things have to be right in our whole community. They have to be right among us. They have to be right with the creation. And so when things are right, that's well-being. And so we're not trying to make people happy, we're trying to ... But happiness is a byproduct often of well-being, but well-being is a much bigger construct. And so that's what we're interested in is bringing well-being to others.

Mike Petrow: That's so beautiful, and I love this idea. Eloheh, one of the ways you can translate it is the harmony way. Is that accurate?

Randy Woodley: Mm-hmm. That's kind of my standard way of generically talking about this among ... Because so many societies, indigenous societies have similar constructs, whether it's Aloha with the Hawaiians or Aboriginal people, or ubuntu with Zulu or whoever it is, that we all have these kinds of constructs that have to do with the whole community and the whole creation. This thing about Shalom, it's like if, and I really appreciate Walter Brueggemann's work in this area. So if half of the community is fed and half of the community is hungry, no one has shalom. There is no shalom.

Mike Petrow: And I love that idea that my happiness, my harmony, my well-being is rooted in the community and creations, happiness, harmony, and well-being. And this idea, you really screwed a light bulb all the way in for me when you said all these things that we're doing to try to pursue our own individual happiness are actually sabotaging our individual happiness because they're not anchored in communal harmony. And that, wow.

Randy Woodley: Like I said, we are people who are meant to live in community and whatever that means for each person, but we're not made to be alone. I mean, there are times, of course, when we need that, but that's not how we're to live. We are part of a whole community of creation.

Mike Petrow: And that's it. And that's that rhythm. Jesus would leave into the wilderness, but then he

would return. And that idea that we are a part of the community and the community of our human family and our more than human family. So let's back it up. Where did you first encounter the concept of Eloheh?

Randy Woodley: So I knew that there was a Cherokee construct that sort of was like that, right? I mean, I had heard it. I didn't know a whole lot about it. I just kind knew this is in our teachings. And then the Navajos are pretty famous for having this [native language]. They call it the beauty way or the harmony or way of balance. So I was on something called Pilgrimage for Reconciliation with a group, the InterVarsity Multi-Ethnic group. We were five weeks on a bus together, four weeks on a bus together looking at some of the most broken places in the US. So I taught two weeks on the Cherokee Trail of Tears, and then we had two weeks on the Freedom Trail, the Civil Rights Trail, and we read Walter Brueggemann's book Peace. And I kept saying to my wife, there's something in our Cherokee culture that's like this.

And so after that year, then I went back and I began to ask elders and others and come to find out, yeah, there's really two words. One, the most appropriate is Eloheh, the other is Deyukti, and everybody, it sort of can't always be in one word, can't be captured in one word. And then the next year it was a little bit clearer. And then finally when I did my PhD work, I decided like, "Well, I want to find out how widespread this is among our tribes." So I had basically 45 different tribes and 10 different elders, spiritual leaders who spoke their own language, who I interviewed extensively and the 45 tribes and from every region of the US and Canada.

And everybody always knew what I was talking about. Every one of the tribes and every one of the elders said, "Oh, yeah, yeah, we have that. It's called such and such." And then I began to ask some of my friends from other cultures who knew what I was working on, and they were like, "Oh, yeah, we have that. Maori's have that. Aboriginals have that. Zulu have the umbuntu. The Maasai have it. Ikalahan Filipinos have it. Scandinavian Sami's have it." And so I asked Brueggemann one time, and we were at the same event one time, and I walked over to him at the table. My wife had to push me. I'm an introvert, but she kept pushing me to go over there and talk to him. And I just said, "I have a question for you." I said, "I mean, here's my experience. So that would basically mean this is the original instructions for all humanity." And he said, "Absolutely, absolutely. This is the key to being human."

So yeah, then I've sort of been teaching writing about it ever since and discovering more and learning, and this is the way we're supposed to live. And that's what the book's about is sort of how Edith and I have applied these things in our own lives, and it's our experiences. It's a pretty experiential book about our stories, but it has a few, I guess, a couple chapters that are more ... the first couple chapters, a little bit more heady, but to set the stage. But after that, it gets to be our experiences. And then we go through each of those 10 values and talk about those and how they've played out in our lives and the life's Eloheh.

Mike Petrow: The book is Journey to Eloheh, How Indigenous Values Lead us to Harmony and Well-being. This idea that it's original instructions for being human. It makes me think of a lot of these early Christian contemplatives that lived out in the desert would talk about nature as their first scripture and as their primary Bible. Do these original instructions for being human live in the natural world?



Randy Woodley: Yes. They teach us. I mean, I was adopted [native language] by a wonderful Kiowa family. And my Kiowa mom, she said it this way. She said, “We knew God was love. We knew God was different, sacred. We knew that God cared for us, but we didn’t know how much God loved us until we heard the story of Jesus.” And then she talks about how the missionary created that gap that was wide as the Grand Canyon. Everybody has in their own hearts, if they listen to creation and what’s going on, how to live. We all know, our conscious tells us. I don’t want to be stolen from, so I shouldn’t steal from others. I don’t want to be killed and so I shouldn’t kill. Treat people the way that you want to be treated. Jesus bolted down right to the golden rule.

And love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. And the second commandment, exactly the same. Love your neighbor as yourself. And so this is what life is about. If we are doing what we’re supposed to do as human beings, we are fixing bringing harmony to, bringing balance back in the whole community of creation. Whether it means the earth itself, whether we’re bringing water to people who are without it, whether it’s missing and murdered indigenous women, whether it is our other human traffickings, whatever it is that we’re doing, if we are repairing and restoring the community of creation, we’re doing what we are put on this earth to do, which is to till the earth, to tend the soil, to take care of this whole community of creation.

Mike Petrow: I so appreciate that. It makes me think of the concept in Judaism of the tikkun olam and the repairing of the world.

Randy Woodley: Yeah.

Mike Petrow: It also makes me think of, there’s this concept in early Christianity called The Apocytostasis, which again is a Greek word nobody needs to remember, but it was this idea of universal healing and universal salvation. And so apocytostasis would come up in theological circles, even nowadays, where people want to refute the doctrine of hell. And so they say, “Well, in the early church, for the first 500 years, most people believed in universal salvation.” And that’s all well and good to correct a scary idea like hell. But what I think people don’t do is they don’t go far enough. What did that actually mean? Because they weren’t correcting a problem that didn’t exist yet.

What did it mean that early Christian contemplatives believed, not in what Richard criticizes as our individual salvation project, but they believe the point of all of this was to work towards the healing of every person and everything and all of creation. And I’ve never heard such a brilliant insight into it until I read your work on Eloheh and it’s like, “Oh my God, that’s it. It’s the harmony way.” That’s what we’re moving towards when all things are in harmony, and I’m sure all things being in harmony doesn’t mean we don’t still have challenges and problems, but it’s a whole different way, Randy, for us to orient to being alive in the world. And I love that you ... Please.

Randy Woodley: Well, the whole Eden story, right?

Mike Petrow: Yeah.

Randy Woodley: It’s a story that’s supposed to teach us something. Well, what’s it supposed to teach us? It teaches us that the whole community of creation is there for us to tend to. Right? Go

out ... There's a story, the part of the one story where you go out and name the animals. Well, you have to get to know them to name them, to know what they are. And then the rest of the stories through Chapter 11, go on in Shalom or this harmony is broken at every single level. Now, of course, I don't believe in original sin. I think it was a fourth century control, and I want to get back and talk about control for a minute, but I call original sin, which is not immutable, of course, the misuse of the land. It was eating from the wrong tree. This is what creator said, "Don't eat of that tree." And that's exactly what they did. So it's the misuse of the land, not taking care of it, not tending the community of creation is what causes the disharmony.

Mike Petrow: Wow.

Randy Woodley: Yeah. Let that sink in for a minute.

Mike Petrow: I never in a million years, it's always been this telling me what I can't do and never don't take that tree's fruit. Leave it alone. Wow, Randy.

Randy Woodley: And whether it meant whether it was a tree or a flower or whatever is I think irrelevant. But what is relevant is you misuse the land. You misuse your role as a responsible caretaker or co-sustainer of the land.

Mike Petrow: So if we lean into the harmony way, and if we recognize that nature is not a possession of ours to dominate, but something to be in harmony with.

Randy Woodley: Yeah. Let me interrupt real quick. That's why we love our human edifices. And this is what Richard brings out so well. And he talks about the downfall, the Franciscans basically because they get stuck on edifices and things like this because we can control those things, but we have no control of creation of nature, so to speak. We have no control of the weather, we have no control of the wind. We can't control it. And so what does that do for us? It reminds us that we are human. We're just, like we say, there's a number of native ways. [native language] is a Cherokee way of saying [native language] is a Lakota way of saying it, but it says that we are all related and that we're responsible to the rest of creation.

And so when we focus on those human things that human built, and those are, like I said, they're recreations. They're sometimes okay, but when we do it to the detriment of spending time in creation, which is what is most natural, we forget that we're really humans and hubris sets in because ... And it's no wonder, Jesus, I love the metaphor. Well, I don't know if it's a metaphor, but I love Jesus saying the spirit is like the wind. It blows where it's want. You can't control it. And this is what our relationship with creator is. I love the ... I don't quote C.S. Lewis a lot, but in Narnia, right? He is a wild lion. So we have to get back to creation to understand our humanity and that we're not in charge.

Mike Petrow: It's so interesting. I think a lot of people don't understand the gift at the end of the Book of Job when Job is shown images of the majesty and power of the natural world and reminded how little control he actually has over all of it. I think a lot of people don't understand why that's liberating. But there is something for me. When I get out on the desert and I realize how small I am and how little control I have over storms and over weather. I got stuck in some quicksand a couple days ago. It's a real ... but it's a real-

Randy Woodley: Glad you made it out.

Mike Petrow: Yeah. Thank you. Me too. It was a little bit scary for a hot second, but there's a liberation in that, in being reminded that I don't have control.

Randy Woodley: Exactly. One trip a long time ago, this was, oh, probably 20 years ago, but we went to the Grand Canyon and then we went to the Atlantic Ocean, and then we went to Niagara Falls and the Niagara River. And I think I was just so in awe that whole trip, it was like, I am such a small part of all of this kind of stuff. I don't have control over it.

Mike Petrow: Yeah, yeah. That's exactly it. There's something humbling. But I always remember that the root of humble is ground. And to be grounded, not necessarily to be smacked down, but to be brought back down to earth and down to our roots.

Randy Woodley: Humus, human, all of those are related, right?

Mike Petrow: Yeah. And thank God humor as well. So it's an invitation to ...

Randy Woodley: Again, what it means to be a human being is to have humor.

Mike Petrow: Oh my gosh. Yeah. And to get a chance to laugh at ourselves when we hike somewhere we shouldn't or ...

Randy Woodley: Yeah.

Mike Petrow: Goodness gracious. So how does learning the wisdom of the harmony way, how does that completely change the way we orient to creation?

Randy Woodley: Yeah. So I think it all begins ... We don't begin in our book with this value. It's kind of toward the end. But I think it begins with hospitality and generosity. I think that's the first step of harmony is to put ourselves out for the other. So this is why it's so important to welcome the foreigner, welcome the immigrant is to put ourselves out and be hospitable. And I think that includes our generosity, right? Generosity of food, our generosity of time, et cetera. And that's a good start. That's a good step is if we begin to do that. Now, I've lived in a lot of places in the south. There's a lot of ... in both African-American culture and Native American culture, these are big values. And I think it's because the South lived very close to a lot of the indigenous people for a long time. We experienced some weird stuff when we got up here to the northwest. I mean, people are friendly, mega friendly, but the saying goes like people in Portland or people in Seattle, we will give you directions to anywhere you want except for their own house.

Mike Petrow: Oh my God, that's amazing.

Randy Woodley: But we've got to ... so I look at Jesus establishes in Luke Chapter 4, what the mission is. It's this Shalom Sabbath Jubilee Construct. And then the rest of the gospels is sort of showing this out. And then the rest of each occasional letter is basically telling people how do you live into this in your particular situation. You've got to remember, they're all contextual and situational. But I love 1 Peter 4-8 where it says, "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another." Because love covers a multitude of sin. And remember, when

you invite someone in your home, be hospitable and don't complain. So this is very solid instructions of shalom, the hospitality that we need to be exhibiting to not just people we know and love, but to people that maybe we don't. And this is, of course, the wisdom of Jesus. Love your enemies.

Mike Petrow: I love that. Origin of Alexandria, who's my favorite mystic, says that one of our first images of contemplation is Abraham sitting in the doorway of his tent in the heat of the day in contemplation. And he points out that Abraham wasn't facing in, he was facing out. He was looking out to the world, and he was looking out to the natural world. And because of that, in the story he sees three strangers walk by and he welcomes them in, and then they turn out to be the trinity in some interpretations. And there's a lot of places you could go with that. But this idea that we see the divine in the folks who walk by if we're paying attention and we're looking out with hospitality. It's a fundamentally contemplative act. And I think we need to be reminded of that sometimes.

Randy Woodley: And we share that humanity with everybody. And so we all have something in common and we're all human beings. And in fact, we have a saying among our Indian tribes, a lot of times it's said in the sweat lodge, but in the different languages. But it's like I'm just a pitiful human being. I'm just a human being basically. I am not in charge. Right?

Mike Petrow: Yeah.

Randy Woodley: I need creator.

Mike Petrow: That's so good to remember. Well, so do you mind just like a fast fly over, is it 10 values that you identify?

Randy Woodley: Yeah.

Mike Petrow: In how you explore Eloheh? Would you mind just telling us what they are?

Randy Woodley: Yeah. And I sort of boiled it down because this book is ... it's not an academic book so to speak. There's a little bit of academic prowess in the first few chapters, but basically it's our story. Yeah. So those boil down to basically, first of all, harmony and seeking peace and seeking balance. Secondly, respect, honoring the sacred, accountability, remembering that we're all related, our history, looking forward by looking back, humor, laughing at ourselves, that makes us human, authenticity, speaking from our hearts, this is that vulnerability and authenticity and equality, learning from everyone and community, increasing our friendships and our relatives and balance, working hard and working well. And then finally, generosity, sharing what you have, including hospitality.

Mike Petrow: That's beautiful. I don't know whether to say that that sounds like a Franciscan book or Saint Francis sounds very much like someone who's maybe just a little bit in tune with Eloheh.

Randy Woodley: Yeah. Well, I'm glad to be found in that company.

Mike Petrow: Indeed. Let me ask you, before we run out of time, I have two more questions. One a little bit weird and fun for me, and one a really good practical invitation for our listeners. When I look at Francis, his willingness to go against society and empire and all the cultural

programming of his day, to me, he sort of falls into this archetype, this tradition of what Christianity and some other traditions call the Holy Fool or even sort of the trickster, which is a name for a lot of kind of characters that show up and if I understand correctly, seem to give us a disguised wisdom because they're not afraid to go against conventions. If that question makes sense to you, how is it that Holy Fools and tricksters, in your own experience and the traditions that you've been gifted to study and learn from, how do they give us courage to go against the sort of molds that we're pressed into?

Randy Woodley: Yeah. And they're sort of hard to classify sometimes because they teach us things not to do, but they also teach us things to do. Right?

Mike Petrow: Yeah.

Randy Woodley: And all the different tribes have different tricksters. The Kiowas have a fellow named Sang Day who changes into coyote once in a while. A lot of the Plains tribes have coyote. My tribe, we have [native language], that's the rabbit, and a lot of your Brer Rabbit tales, I think come from our trickster rabbit. And basically they almost always begin with I know what is best and I'm going to tell people what they should be doing instead of something more conventional or whatever. But they tell you the wrong way to do it. Right?

Mike Petrow: Interesting.

Randy Woodley: And then you learn from them like, okay, don't listen to trickster. But the idea is actually listen to trickster so you can learn how to live right.

Mike Petrow: Yeah. Well, and that's the thing that's so interesting to me, Randy, what you're describing in Eloheh original instructions for being human, it's the most natural and self-evident way to be. There's something in reading how you and Edith write about this that just like my bones and my body relax, because it feels right. And yet, so many of us live in constant cultural programming where it also feels counterintuitive at the same time. Does that make sense?

Randy Woodley: Yeah. Say a little bit more.

Mike Petrow: We live in a moment in time where our lives are so unnatural. We sort of need to break out of that programming to do something that seems revolutionary and rebellious just to return to nature and harmony.

Randy Woodley: Yeah. Well, hopefully, it doesn't seem too rebellious because it's the most natural thing there is. But in the *Becoming Rooted* book, I, at the end of every chapter, I have a ... I talk about something, then I say, "Now go out and practice this. Go do this out in your yard or whatever." And each one is just to get people outside and do something about it. It's funny because when I used to be getting interviews for *Becoming Rooted*, people would say, "Now how are we to practice this?" And I'm like, "Well, I gave you a hundred examples of how to practice it." And so we have to just get up and go. We have to be outside. We have to be in the community of creation, not isolating ourselves from it in order to develop these kinds of values.

Mike Petrow: Yeah. And I think you-

Randy Woodley: Just read about them, right?

Mike Petrow: Yeah, yeah. Right, right. Read a book that tells me ... What's the next book I can read to tell me not to read books, but to get outside?

Randy Woodley: Yeah, exactly.

Mike Petrow: But I mean, you've anticipated my next question, which is for folks who are reading this book, *Eager to Love*, and their experience of Francis is a birdbath, or they've heard the stories but they haven't ventured outside, or for folks who are curious and they want to read your book, what is your invitation for of us to begin to reconnect with the natural world as we take these explorations and learnings?

Randy Woodley: Well, I would say start dating. Start dating water. Start dating earth and its creatures. Start dating the birds. Work yourself into it, and pretty soon you'll fall in love. Right?

Mike Petrow: Oh, that is the best metaphor I've ever heard for reconnecting with nature. I love that. I love that. Oh my God. To invite our listeners to start going on dates with nature. That's beautiful. That's absolutely beautiful. If folks want to get more into your work, 100% everybody should order this book. I'm loving it already. In addition to that, Randy, what's the best way to learn more about you and Edith and follow all the good work you're doing in the world?

Randy Woodley: Well, they can sign up for our newsletter at [Eloheh.org](http://Eloheh.org), and Eloheh is spelled E-L-O-H-E-H. And I always tell the old people, it's like Electric Light Orchestra, E-L-O, and then heh, H-E-H.

Mike Petrow: That's great. I love it.

Randy Woodley: So .org and we can sign up for the newsletter there, but I mean, I think I've probably been on 60, 70 podcasts now. You can just kind of Google my name and something will come up if you're interested, and you'll hear me yammering about something. But yeah, and then I have a number of books. I've written 13 books. I don't think I'm up there with Richard. But yeah, I've been putting out some books, including three children's books, which are the Harmony Tree books, which are really sort of my pride and joy is to teach the children how to connect with nature.

Mike Petrow: Oh my God, I didn't know that. I'm going to order them today. That's amazing.

Randy Woodley: Yeah.

Mike Petrow: That's fantastic.

Randy Woodley: The Harmony Tree trilogy. Yeah.

Mike Petrow: That's brilliant. All right. So parting question, this chapter is called Nature and the Road and Home Base, and Richard talks about how Francis encourages us in your work, in Eloheh especially encouraged to get back into the home base that is the natural world. And then Richard also points out that Francis didn't lock himself in a monastery. He was out on the road all the time. He was always moving. What do you think is the wisdom in recognizing

that a lot of our lives can be lived on the road, on the way going somewhere? And I also love ... Francis wouldn't ride a horse, he traveled sustainably. He did it on foot, but what do you think the wisdom is of being on the road?

Randy Woodley: So we don't travel by plane and we either go Amtrak or car or combination of both, and you get to see a lot that you would miss if you're just flying over stuff. And so we did something the last trip on the way back, we said, "Hey, let's take an extra day or two and instead of driving eight, nine hours, let's drive five or six hours and let's stop at a few things on the way." And oh my gosh, we were rewarded by some incredible things and that was so good. I mean, I don't know if people can afford to do that, time off or whatever, but that's something I learned. It's like don't be in such a hurry. There's good stuff out there.

Mike Petrow: That's pretty good. It's like we should consider the lilies and the birds. Right?

Randy Woodley: Exactly.

Mike Petrow: Slow down and pay attention. I love that. Randy, this has been such a rich conversation. I learn so much every time we talk. This was great. Looking forward to seeing you in the fall at our Students of Life event and can't wait to get into this book and then talk to you some more in the near future.

Randy Woodley: All right. Sounds good. I'm looking forward to sitting down with you and Paul and some of the folks that I get to actually spend more time with down there, so that'd be great.

Mike Petrow: I hope we get to really genuinely sit around a real fire and have a conversation. I'm looking forward to that a lot.

Randy Woodley: All right. Thanks, Mike.

Mike Petrow: All right. Be well, my friend. Paul, how great is Dr. Randy Woodley?

Paul Swanson: Man, he's the best and I'm jealous you got to be there and I didn't get to be there. I would've loved to have joined that conversation. I have such immense respect for Dr. Randy Woodley and for the way that Randy tells stories, the way that he writes, the way that he has this incredibly subtle but also gregarious sense of humor. But it just comes in through these small cracks of conversation and then I feel like they always make me chuckle and usually I carry them with me the rest of my day. And so how was it for you to engage in this conversation with Randy?

Mike Petrow: Man, it was so good. And first of all, I will say we missed having you there. As the conversation was coming to a close, we mentioned how mutually excited we were that Randy's going to be with us in New Mexico in a few weeks for our Students of Life event, and he was saying how he can't wait to sit with you and I and just have a great conversation in person and we have to absolutely sit around a fire. We've been talking about sitting around a fire and having a conversation for a year and a half now, and I can't wait to make it happen.

And I did also tell our listeners and Randy, that you've been holding my physical copy of his book hostage, so I would also like to get that from you because it's filled with the wisdom



that he exudes. Randy's ability to communicate an idea, to communicate a story, to get you inside an experience, to challenge things that you are comfortable with and get you to think about it in a different way. He just really, really exudes a type of wisdom that I find amusing, inspiring and challenging all at the same time. He's definitely someone that I want around the interior fire of my favorite teachers.

Paul Swanson: I like that language, and it just struck me too, we'd be remiss if we didn't mention that his wife, Edith was the co-author of that book and was not available for that conversation as well, but her story as well and the way that they braid their stories together on this journey that they've been on in their marriage and in their work. There's so many different entry points into Franciscan spirituality or ways to dovetail those conversations. I would love to hear your take on how that came up and for you and what you felt in that conversation.

Mike Petrow: Man, it's Randy's consistent invitation to tune back in to the wisdom of the world, of the natural world. It's so grounding in the literal sense of the word and putting our roots back into the ground. He, along with Dr. B, reminds us to get back in touch with our indigenous roots and for those of us who are more typically identified as white folks to remind us that we all have indigenous roots, right? We all have indigenous roots and we should not be satisfied with not knowing what they are, but go back and find our people and find our land and find our stories.

But as Randy reminded me, also know the land that you're on and the land that you're in and the people who originally populated and what their stories and their rituals were, and immerse yourself in that wisdom because that puts us closer to, I'm not going to get Randy's words exactly right, but something like creators original ideas for the wisdom of human flourishing, the original plan for what's best for humanity for us to walk the harmony way is available all around us if we learn to listen and pay attention. Man, just what a cool invitation, and I genuinely cannot wait to read that book if I can get you to ever let go of it.

Paul Swanson: It pains me that the last time we were together, I had it in my backpack and I just walked away with it once again.

Mike Petrow: It'll be there. It'll be there for me when we're done with Eager to Love. But my gosh, I hope our listeners have really, really enjoyed this journey. I feel like, Paul, we can not just ask everyone to figure out where and how they can get out and plug back into the wisdom of nature. Some of us are fortunate like us, we live so close to the desert. There's a vast expanse of emptiness we can get lost in. But for other people, it might literally just be the tree on their street or the park across town or the ocean waves that they can play on their phone when they do their contemplative sit. Paul, how would you leave everybody with an invitation to plug back into the natural world?

Paul Swanson: That's a great question. I think look around you, particularly within your own home context. What is the nearest thing that you can identify, that you can have a relationship that is in the more than human world? I know times when I've lived in big cities, it might be something growing through a crack in the sidewalk, or like you said, a tree in the street or even a God forbid, a cockroach in your entryway. Or it might be a grand forest outside your door, but how can you step into that with the reverence and humility of somebody who is just showing up to this place that others have steward, others have attended to, and of course, the



Creator attending to since the very beginning.

Mike Petrow: So good. So good. We'll see you next time, friends, as we sit down with another great lover of nature, our dear friend, Carmen Acevedo Butcher. But for now, may you listen to the song of the natural world being sung to you, and may you feel it stir your heart. Thanks for listening this week.

Paul Swanson: Thanks, everybody.

Corey Wayne: Thanks for listening to this podcast by the Center for Action and Contemplation, an educational nonprofit that introduces seekers to the contemplative Christian path of transformation. To learn more about our work, visit us at [CAC.org](http://CAC.org). Everything Belongs is made possible thanks to the generosity of our supporters and the shared work of Mike Petrow, Paul Swanson, Drew Jackson, Jenna Kuyper, Izzy Spitz, Megan Hare, Sarah Palmer, Dorothy Abrams, Brandon Strange, and me, Corey Wayne. The music you hear is composed and provided by our friends, Hammock, and we'd also like to thank Sound on Studios for all of their work in post-production. From the high desert of New Mexico, we wish you peace and every good.