

# How Can I Keep Going with Susi Moser

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, work, communities, susi, climate, conversation, climate change, church, ipcc, talk, change, faith, experience, happening, deeply, responses, moment, feel, reckoning, world

## SPEAKERS

Dr. Susanne Moser, Katie Patrick, Nicole Diroff, Ben Yosua-Davis

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Nicole Diroff 00:01

You are listening to Climate Changed, a podcast about pursuing faith, life and love in a climate changed world.



Ben Yosua-Davis 00:09

Hosted by me, Ben Yosua-Davis



Nicole Diroff 00:12

And me Nicole Diroff. The Climate Changed podcast features guests who deepen the conversation, while also stirring the waters.



Ben Yosua-Davis 00:20

The Climate Changed podcast is a project of The BTS Center. Thank you for joining Nicole me for this episode with our guests Susi Moser. In a moment you'll experience Susi for yourself. She embodies curiosity as she engages on global issues in a truly interdisciplinary way.



Nicole Diroff 00:44

As we do in every episode, we will also provide you with a moment of centering, and some meaningful next steps you could consider taking. Most importantly, we hope this episode stimulates your head and your heart.



Ben Yosua-Davis 00:58

One of the themes that you'll hear emerge in my conversation with Susi is the beauty and power of becoming a helper in your own local community. Nicole, I'm curious do you remember learning to be a helper when you were a child?

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Nicole Diroff 01:12

While I keep a tidy house now I do remember that I did not love cleaning my room as a kid. My room was pretty messy. But I do remember actually a moment at church, when a group of teenagers that I was a part of decided to paint a fence that really needed painting behind the church. And it was this moment of collective fun and service. And when we were done, it really looked different. So church was a place that helped me learn to be a helper.



Ben Yosua-Davis 01:48

You know, as I think about this question, I actually go to a far less joyful, more prosaic practice, which was that of writing thank you notes to let people know that we appreciated them. Often when I was a kid, this is you know, for birthday presents or Christmas presents or things like that. For my parents, it must have felt like pulling teeth getting these things written, I was not the sort of person who loved sitting down and handwriting 20 notes to people who had just given me gifts. But it's now a discipline that I am passing on to my children, who I think probably enjoy it as much as I did when I was a kid, but feels really, really important gratitude as a way to help and support other people. Some of you may think, well, that is nice of you folks to do that. It's great to paint fences or write thank you notes. But we have a massive global crisis on our hands. Now this is true. But as you will hear from Susi Moser any effort that builds community is actually significant climate work.

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Nicole Diroff 02:46

Let's start with a grounding. Katie Patrick is the author of the book and podcast How to Make Changing the World the Greatest Game We've Ever Played. She recognises the critical role of creativity, optimism and imagination in the craft of social and environmental change. Through this guided meditation, she reveals the big mistake so many of us make in our climate work, one that she made herself.

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Katie Patrick 03:17

Most people think that if you want to change the world, you need to educate people about an issue. And then the education will make people really emotionally concerned. And then that emotional concern will lead to the behavior you want them to take. Maybe it's going vegan or a company, you know switching their purchasing from non recycled through recycled paper or whatever it is. And I think we've all made this mistake, I definitely did it for the first 15 years of my career as a content creator. There is this phenomenon that happens that is studied by academic behavioral psychology researchers and it's easy to test that if you take 50 people, and you test them on what they know about climate change and energy efficiency, and how much they care about it, and then you put them through a learning experience. Maybe it's a two hour documentary or a lecture. And they learn about all the places the ecosystems,

whatever, they'll be concerned, they'll be more knowledgeable, and they'll be more emotionally concerned. If you track their behavior for the next six months, you will find that they almost do absolutely nothing in terms of their behavior. That's because when you go out to educate people and to make people concerned you will be successful in educating people or making them concerned. But that's a completely different thing to achieve, than to get somebody to do an action. So if you really want to affect the world, you have to look at your own project to see where you're falling into this problem. It's called the value action gap. We have values that don't turn into actions and to start with looking at it like a behavior designer, I am trying to design a behavior to get people to grow more of their own vegetables, or to get people to ride their bike more or give up their fuel guzzling car. How do I design for the behavior and that's an entire of science in itself. There are a lot of different ways to do it. Educating people and getting them concerned is actually very weak drivers, maybe even not a driver at all.

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Nicole Diroff 05:30

That was Katie Patrick. Learn more about the many free resources she has on her website. Visit [Katiepatrick.com](http://Katiepatrick.com). That's [Katiepatrick.com](http://Katiepatrick.com). And special thanks to Citizens Climate Radio for providing us with the recording of Katie's The Big Mistake. She appeared in Episode 61 of Citizens Climate Radio. That podcast is hosted by our very own producer, Peterson Toscano look for the Citizens Climate Radio podcast wherever you get podcasts.



Ben Yosua-Davis 06:14

Dr. Susanne Moser is our guest for today. She is a ridiculously accomplished scientist, a geographer who has worked at the highest levels of climate science, including on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or the IPCC. This is the UN body responsible for assessing climate change, and the reports carry incredible weight around the world. Now Susi has been on an amazing journey from that work and with the IPCC to the work she does today, helping equip people on the frontlines of climate change, to engage in that work for the long term. And I think you'll find her to be wise, heartfelt, and deeply honest, as she describes what this meaningful work looks like. Susi, it's so good to have you with us for this conversation. When you meet someone for the first time and they ask, what do you do? What do you tell them?

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Dr. Susanne Moser 07:17

Oftentimes, I tell them that I work on climate change, as simple as that because most people don't want to know more. When I have a little bit more time, I say I am a researcher working on climate change, adaptation and resilience. If that's too much jargon for people, I would just say I help people prepare for and deal with the impacts of climate change in a variety of ways,



Ben Yosua-Davis 07:40

and what identities are important to you.

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Dr. Susanne Moser 07:43

I'm a geographer by training that is important to me in the sense that I chose that very deliberately. I am a lover of earth by heart, I'm a poet by vocation. And in a social sense, I'm a daughter, sister, gardener, I'm a friend to many people. Those are the things probably that matter the most.



Ben Yosua-Davis 08:06

You've been on quite a journey to take you to the work that you do now. And I wonder if you could share the story of your journey as a scientist working on IPCC reports, among other projects to what you do today.

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Dr. Susanne Moser 08:20

I mentioned that I'm a geographer by training. And I should probably start there, which is many years before I got to the IPCC. I chose geography because I was looking for a topic that wouldn't bore me anytime soon. I don't have just one passion. And so I couldn't dedicate myself to whatever singing or just writing or whatever the case might be. So I was looking for something that would capture my attention for the length of my career and geography, the world, the whole earth seemed to be big enough and also diverse enough in terms of the natural science aspects of it, the social aspects, a cultural aspect, that was my beginning. And I studied physical geography first to understand earth sciences, including the climate. But very soon into my studies, I discovered that there is something else besides that, and that is humans and how they affect the environment, the earth and how they are affected by it. That is a central theme within geography. Actually, it's not just about where is what sort of children's game of location location, but it is very much about trying to understand that interaction between us and the living Earth that we are part of. Studying that got me very quickly into this area of interest of if we understand what we're doing to the environment, why are we not stopping it? Why are we not trying to prevent this changing the earth in profound fundamental ways? Very quickly, I got interested climate change as sort of a topic of investigation and trying particularly to understand the human impact on the environment on the climate. And then the other way around. After graduate school and a postdoc, I got really interested in this connection between science and practice. Assessments like the IPCC, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, conducts is one of those principal activities, if you will, of how we synthesize the science and help people understand what it means help people understand how well we understand something, and then feed that into the policy process. For a long time, the IPCC was sort of the the place to do that. But I also gotten involved in national climate assessments, as we have here in the US, and then at the regional and state level. And ultimately, as I entered into my professional work, postgraduate school, it was, what does it mean to any local community? How do we help them prepare for what's coming? How do we help local communities reduce their emissions, but also, in particular, prepare for the impacts of climate change that can't be avoided. So that's kind of how I got my path into this question of adaptation and resilience building and preparing for more disasters and things like that. I got into that, in the mid 1990s, I would say long before, there was anything like an adaptation science or adaptation practice in the United States. Now there are thousands of people working on this, but at the time, there was like half a dozen of us, we all knew each other, pretty much around 2006, after Al Gore's movie came out, all of a sudden, something shifted. Before, most of us were really focused on the reducing of emissions, the mitigation side. And after that, it

became all of a sudden, this realization, oh, we can't prevent this entire problem. It is going to happen. We're on a very steep curve of emissions, climbing temperatures climbing sea level, what are we going to do? And so I saw lots and lots of people coming into the field. Lo and behold, 10 years later, I still knew a lot of the people in the field. And they all took me aside at conferences, and they said, how the hell are you dealing with this? It was just as really profoundly lost and despairing and exhausted experience that I witnessed among my colleagues, people who just simply didn't know, what could they do? How could they keep going, looking at basically the apocalypse every single day of their lives. That's what they go to work for. Some of us when it comes down on TV, we can switch it off. Now these people go there, they work on this every single day, that experience repeatedly hearing that again, and again, and seeing people burn out seeing people leaving the field because they just didn't feel like they could do that for the rest of their lives. That got me where I am now, which is trying to help build psychosocial support for the people who work on the frontlines of climate change.



Ben Yosua-Davis 13:15

You know, as you're describing this, it just struck me how this is becoming more and more a universal experience for people who wake up one day and now increasingly hear people use the language of ecological conversion. And they realize, oh, my goodness, what in the hell are we doing to this planet and to one another, and to the more than human communities that we're a part of? I'm wondering if you could talk about what function burnout plays in that and why it's so important for those of us who are engaged in climate work, which is now as I say, wider and wider circles of people and wider and wider circles of profession, why it's important to find ways to engage in this work for the long haul.



Dr. Susanne Moser 13:55

Burnout is a widespread challenge that, you know, many people experience at this point, because we are going faster and faster. And we have really terrible work culture in this country where we don't think we can take breaks, we don't get vacations. Many of us really literally don't have any vacations. That's kind of the jobs we have. But it is far more than, than just give me a break. That would help a lot. But it is a lot about wanting to do the right thing and not being able to when you run into troubles not being able to talk about it because especially emotional responses you might have grief that you might have worries, fears that you might have for the community, for your own family for your children. We don't get to talk about those at work, not in technical professions as so much like engineering or planning is. It's that kind of challenge that leads people to just feel really despairing and exhausted and like, what am I doing here? How can I keep going?



Ben Yosua-Davis 14:56

As you were talking, I was tracking my own emotional bodily responses to what you shared. And I'm not, of course unaware of any of these dynamics, nor have I been for a long time that I noticed the adrenaline I noticed the anger, I noticed the anxiety, I noticed the grief, I noticed the rage. And I am struck at the incredible intensity of emotions that come with this work, that are not the same in virtually any other profession. Every other profession has its ups and downs. But there is something that feels very deeply existential about this. There's this

discourse happening, I think, in the climate community broadly about what does it mean to be honest, and speak the truth and do so in productive ways, I see a lot of dialogue between either the well, we're all doomed, so sit at home and wait for the end of the world to come versus well we can't tell people how bad it is, because then they're not going to want to do anything. So we have to pretend that this technology is going to work for us. And I'm curious for you, what is a practice look like of telling the truth in a way that is helpful in a way that inspires action that helps people honestly reckon with reality?

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Dr. Susanne Moser 16:07

For a longest time, climate scientists have just thought, well, let me get the message, right, let me just deliver one way. And if they only knew, then things would all change. Well, it's what we call the information deficit model, the idea that apparently, someone's missing information, and therefore they're not acting. So if we fill that void with enough information, then suddenly miracle happens, and they all will act the right way. There's a lot to be said about that. But that's not what I mean, in terms of how we need to communicate, we need to actually encounter each other as real human beings with head heart, hands, feet, the whole beings, and learn to approach each other again, especially in conversations where people have different opinions, we tend to shy away, because we just don't know how to hold on to ourselves and actually listen to the other person, I'd like to say the first thing we could do is just shut up and listen, learn to listen again with each other, when it is your turn to speak, to speak from what your own experience is, is, I think, a really important thing, because who can argue with that? It's my experience. Sorry, you don't get to argue with that. And I don't get to argue with yours. Whatever yours is, we can argue about opinions or political approaches, or maybe best technology choices, but not about my experience, and your experience that is our own. I often train climate scientists in speaking and it's very difficult for them to sort of come as human beings as opposed to as scientists. One of the ways in which I often encourage them is to say, come as a friend. And what I mean by that is, how would you encounter if you met a friend? How would you start talking to them? Would you start with all the negative news and just barrage your friend with that? Without even saying, Hi, and checking in how they are? No, you would do exactly that you would connect on a human to human level first. And then eventually you check in how are you doing, and you then get into, you know, all this stuff's happening. And sometimes, if you come with bad news, if you will, as a climate scientist, you would actually say, You know what, I have to tell you this, and just that phrase, I have to tell you something hard. That gives the human psyche enough of a moment to just guard themselves just a tiny bit, but still being able to listen, that moment of giving people a tiny heads up and then saying what it is, and then not walking away. You wouldn't just say you know, I have cancer and you walk away, you would stay in the conversation and say, What are you doing? How can I help whatever. We know how to have these conversations, we go from the hard truth to being with the emotions that it brings up and then saying, How can I help? Finding a way for everyone to meaningfully help is a really important aspect. In climate change, I get that question all the time. What can I do? I'm just this person, this problem is so big. My answer used to be giving them a whole list of things that could do behavior changes in the household or political activities, like going to vote or engaging at the local level. These days, I ask people, what do they love doing? I ask them how do they want to be in the community and how do they connect? And if they say, you know, I'm a member of the gardening club, or I like having cooking outings at my house, or I don't know what they do, right? Crochet classes, fine. Do that. And the reason I say that is because those are ways in which we maintain or nurture and maintain the social fabric of our society. And when things get really hard that is what we will need.



Ben Yosua-Davis 20:03

As you share, I'm just struck by some of the language you've used to describe what we need to face into this moment well. You've talked about frameworks, you've talked about spiritual practice, you've talked about the importance of community. So we have a place a circle of support, but also learning what it means to be in deep dialogue with those who come from different perspectives than us. Of course, as a person of faith, I remarked that these are the things that faith communities are supposed to be able to do well, because they're part of our lineage. This, of course, has not always been the case. And I think, especially in the American context, the white western Christian Church is particularly complicit in this moment that we're in today, including in the ways that has been actively involved in the destruction and degradation of the more than human communities that we're a part of. And yet, as you might also imagine, I have this deep hope, that maybe the faith communities, at least that are a part of my tradition, as a Christian, might be able to rediscover their vocation to do exactly some of these things in the moment that we're in. What do you think that people of faith or faith leaders might be able to offer the communities that they're a part of, but also what they might be able to offer these broader conversations that are happening right now,

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Dr. Susanne Moser 21:26

I would add to your recounting of the church's impact on the planet, not just in subduing if you will, the more than human world, but of course, it's also not embracing women as equal to men as a big issue. Same as with if you think about the mission history of so many churches, the subjugation of people of color, exploitation of many, many people all over the world. Those are all aspects that belong into this category of reckoning that the church has to engage in, we as individuals have to do our own reckoning of what values we live by what beliefs we hold, and how we behave. But so do in the institutions of our society. And whether that is political parties, or governments or whether that is the church, I think, each of us including the environmental community, there is no one that will be spared of that reckoning, although it will look different in different contexts. There are many, many things that the faith community does well in terms of helping to support community helping to support some of this deep introspective reflection that that we need to engage in. We have a somewhat fraught history between science and religion in general, I think that also needs to be looked at on a fundamental level, in some of the work that you and I have done together with other people in the faith community, there is more need to understand the actual facts of what is happening, how deeply and how far along we are in changing and the earth systems and really threatening our life support system. In and of itself, I think that will involve a lot of deep, deep reckoning, spiritual reckoning, how we could let that happen. To the extent the faith community can work with those who have the facts, and those who understand psychological processes well, to hold space for these difficult conversations, not shy away from them. That is profoundly important work that needs to be done, to stay open to people who are deeply threatened in their own identities, by the changes that are required. We have a big polarization happening in this country already. And one could read that simply politically or economically, but I read it often psychologically, when people are really, really threatened in their identity, they are pushed to change. And who of us wants to? Thank you very much. It was just fine before or it's too hard and I don't know how. Helping people frame that process and frame the dark night of the soul. That's your territory, right? Helping people really move through that process and supporting them, mentoring them, guiding them as elders, if you will. We don't have enough elders in this culture anymore, and



helping them through that. What I would think of as an initiatory shift from a passive adolescent adults that we are mostly to more mature humans and in fact become the true humans we could become we are called Homo Sapiens Sapiens, the wise ones well, yet to become, I would say, helping that shift, I think is a really essential task for the face community,



Ben Yosua-Davis 25:10

The island that I live on when you live with 400 other people year round, you don't get to choose who you're in relationship with who you help, or who helps you. You inevitably form friendships with people with whom you have profound disagreements, one of the most beautiful gifts of living in a context like this, and I think it's a gift that we're going to have to learn to receive, again, as a culture is what it means to relate to one another as humans beyond kind of our consumer preferences for relationships, and how do we be with one another, often for very long periods of time, in the midst of those kinds of ongoing conversations, which I do think, are going to become more and more urgent, as the change becomes more rapid and more traumatic. And the threat becomes more obviously existential for everyone in ways that will no longer be deniable.



Dr. Susanne Moser 26:06

What you're describing is, essentially, it's not like you can't be lonely on an island with 400 people. And it's a lot harder to fall through the cracks when you are that deeply interwebbed with people's daily lives. I'll give you another example. That wasn't the case and how actually deadly it can be. You remember a few years ago, there was this enormous heatwave over Europe tens of thousands of French, particularly the elderly died, why? Because they're not living in this interconnected way anymore. They basically suffered because nobody checked on them. They were in apartments with no air conditioning, and no one checking on them, and they died.



Ben Yosua-Davis 27:10

Thank you so much for this conversation, for your honesty, for your deep wisdom and the ways you point us back to what I think of as kind of our foundational social technologies and spiritual technologies as human beings. Would you have a word of blessing or hope and or intention for our listeners, as we close our conversation together?



Dr. Susanne Moser 27:38

It's the springtime here. And it just is so astonishing to me how the plants and animals are more faithful than we are, they come back, they come back every single year, and offer their beauty and their life back to us. We can offer that to each other. Feels to me, like every time we extend a hand to another that is life affirming, and love and heart affirming. That, to me is a way in which we keep the chain going. And I'm just grateful for every single person who does that, rather than goes numb or destroys it. I just am grateful for every one of you listeners for affirming life and affirming connection and kinship to this world. Thank you for having me.





Ben Yosua-Davis 28:42

Thank you Susi.



Nicole Diroff 28:54

Thank you for that conversation with Dr. Susanne Moser, Ben. One of the ways I noticed Susi described her work was building psychosocial support for those working on the frontline of climate change. I've been thinking a lot about who those people on the frontline might be.



Ben Yosua-Davis 29:13

It is true. I think that the climate change front lines are expanding dramatically right now, I noticed that with students and youth and the way that so many youth are carrying this as one of their key questions for what does it mean to grow up and become an adult or do meaningful work? And of course, climate anxiety that is such a prevalent part of the teenage experience now in a way that it wasn't for me.



Nicole Diroff 29:37

Yeah, I think about the journalists who are covering disasters right now in a way that they may not even feel like they're finished covering one disaster when another hits. I've been having conversations with congregational pastors, who are acutely aware that those working on the frontline of climate change are part of their worshipping communities. I thought Susi spoke with such clarity and insight on some of the specific challenges and opportunities facing faith communities as they work to support those individuals and others. For example, if you remember, she said, faith communities can be really good at community building, and inviting the sort of reflection that moves us to be more mature humans. But she also seriously called out religious patriarchy, and the ways in which the Christian church has been deeply intertwined with imperialism.



Ben Yosua-Davis 30:40

For me, it begins with public confession and acknowledgement of harm that doesn't attempt to justify or say, Yeah, but or attempt to explain what happens, but simply to acknowledge the really significant harm that has been done, and to say sorry, especially to the groups that have been most deeply impacted. I think about some of the decolonizing work we've even done as an organization with our Wabanaki kin up here in Maine. And I think it's always important to begin that with an acknowledgement of the complicity that our tradition has in creating this moment, both kind of in past harm, and also in ongoing harm as well.



Nicole Diroff 31:14

Nice. And I think I'd want to add, the way in which ritual of repentance is something that faith communities have real history in engaging with. At a church that I was worshipping at a whole

ritual was crafted around repenting for the harm that churches had done to the LGBTQ plus community. It was intimate and personal. There was a real shift that occurred in that room as acknowledgement and requests of forgiveness were voiced.



Ben Yosua-Davis 31:52

I think the other side to all this is that we have to acknowledge that we actually have a best self to live into. The beautiful thing about this as is it can start with practice. Most of our communities already have people that are doing incredible frontline work on these issues that we can just join up with and support. We can offer the front lawn of our church to a local gardening club so they can plant native species, we can find ways to support the climate movements, we can attend protests, we can offer moments of appreciation, we can offer up meeting space, there's a lot we can do that doesn't require us to start anything new, but instead to reorient our posture to one of humility and service to go to folks to listen and then to say, how can we help you do your work better?



Nicole Diroff 32:38

Nice. As I listened to Susi, her talking about how we need to stick with the difficult conversations, that we are so far along in threatening our own life support system on this planet. Faith communities, I think, bring some assets to sticking with those tough conversations. First, they are at their best selves intergenerational, and this is a intergenerational topic for us to be wrestling with. We have elders and faith communities, some are even ritually ordained into such a position. Faith communities are rooted in a specific location, a specific place in a neighborhood, and yet they are grandly connected throughout history and around the globe. That feels really important to me as we try and raise these topics and stay with them. And faith communities are a place where I go because there are messages there that draw me beyond myself, and ask me to think about something that's not related to my own self gratification.



Ben Yosua-Davis 33:55

I thought one of the most interesting things Susi spoke about was approaching change through the information deficit model, that we change the knowledge we're downloading into people's brains, and therefore, because they're all logical, rational creatures, they will naturally do different things.



Nicole Diroff 34:12

Susi's exploration of this, totally connected with my own journey. That's because as an undergraduate student, I majored in environmental studies and mathematics. I believed that if I could contribute to statistical modelling that told the truth, then our government would be able to make well informed policy decisions. If we have the right knowledge, then we can make the right decisions. That's what I thought. My life experience since college has taught me otherwise, though, that this theory of change turns out to be rather limited. And as Susi went on to talk about the practice of approaching people as friends, as compared to I don't know

machines that just if you give them the right inputs will put the right outputs, really connected to my work of relationship building among diverse communities. That's what really gets me these days is finding ways to bring people together who think differently, and finding ways to stay at the table with one another.



Ben Yosua-Davis 35:21

It strikes me as you share that, that that is specific, concrete, relational work, that's all stuff that happens on the ground. It's not about downloading some new abstract data into as many people as possible, but it's a friend to friend relationship to relationship over time in context.



Nicole Diroff 35:43

And sometimes I think, we consider those acts small things. It can be really deflating rather than inspiring to feel like we're building relationships when there's this huge climate crisis in front of us. I wonder sometimes, though, if Susi is inviting us to work on our relationships, because as the potential for violence increases, and in a climate changed world, these strong local social networks are going to be critical. Is that really a small thing? Or is maybe it just that our society right now undervalues those sorts of actions as we get so focused on technological progress, and consumeristic wealth? Another provocative thing Susi spoke to in your conversation was the important role of doing relatively small things in the context of an enormous crisis. I'm aware that this can at times feel deflating rather than inspiring. My father after church will often say to me, Why does my preacher keep telling me to rest? I don't want to be told to take it easy. There is work to do right now. I've heard those sermons too, and at times have had the same reaction. But I think my wondering and listening to Susi is, if Susi invites us to work on our relationships with our neighbors, in response to the climate crisis, we have strong local social networks. Is that really a small thing? Or is it just something that's undervalued? In a society that's so focused on technological progress? And consumeristic wealth? Maybe it's not such a small thing.



Ben Yosua-Davis 37:38

I find this to be a question that's really personal for me. Before I joined The BTS center several years before I did, in fact, I experienced this personal health and vocational crisis coming out of a season in my life as I think so many 20 something privileged males do, or you know, I think I'm supposed to go out and change the world. And I gave it my best shot, and it didn't work, my career fell apart. And then my next career fell apart. And then my health fell apart to where I was only able to function for 30 to 45 minutes every day, and I'm sitting here in my early 30s, with my whole life happening on the other side of the bedroom door thinking, is this all there is? If nothing ever changes for the rest of my life? Is it possible for me to continue to do meaningful work, and live a life that I consider to be meaningful? That experience was really difficult. And by the way, I'm thankful that so many of those things that fell apart, including my health have come back together in really huge ways. But that experience taught me a lot about these questions, and really forced me to detach myself from my egoic dreams of changing the world or being the hero of my own story. I found myself asking a different set of questions then. And I find myself asking a different set of questions of myself. Now, when it comes to this question of what does it mean to do significant work? Can the small things be significant? Here

a couple of questions. First, what if the climate crisis is not a problem to be fixed? What if even that framing is a distinctly Enlightenment based technocratic one that says more about the limitations of how we look at the world than about the climate crisis itself? And why is it that if I don't think I can fix the problem, then I also believe that there's nothing meaningful to do, which is completely contrary to the wisdom and legacy of so many of my friends from the global south. So another question I ask is, why do I tend to believe that only large scale responses count when it comes to the world's largest problems? Is that because small responses are inherently insufficient? Or is it actually about my addiction to power, which means that I can only think about meaningful responses in terms of dominance and control. And another question is, why do I assume that large is actually the best way to make changes especially making cultural change? History actually suggests that it's often small groups with deep intention that make the largest difference in shifting cultural currents. And I think about the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement, the witness of the Quakers or Koinonia Farm, there are so many examples of small communities of deep intent that changed the conversations that the whole culture was having. So this is not to say that we shouldn't fight for large scale systemic changes. But I think it's to say that those of us who find local, concrete contextual work to lack meaning should probably actually see that as an invitation to do some pretty serious soul searching into intentionally seek to learn from oppressed communities across the world. And often the roots of our own religious lineages about what they say constitutes a meaningful work in a worthwhile life. Rather than assuming that our Western power dominator frameworks are just the way it is.

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Nicole Diroff 40:52

Thank you for that, Ben. Everything you just said makes me really eager for our next episode in this season, which is a conversation I have with Eileen Flanagan, about change and power and the roles that each of us can take within that, a little preview to our listeners. That's what's coming next, and it's really good. As we come to the end of this particular episode, let's move into some potential next steps. As I was reflecting on what I might say here, I was thinking about listening to the On Being podcast with Krista Tippett, when she was interviewing the Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. Vivek Murthy, the author of *Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World*. Their conversation challenged me to think about how I might cultivate my loves in a climate changed world. During their conversation, Dr. Murthy said, "strength is not just about how much money we have in the economy, or the might of our military. Those are important, but our greatest source of strength comes from, I believe, our fundamental ability to give and receive love." He goes on to ask, what are we doing to cultivate love in our society, in our schools in our families? So I would like to suggest as a next step, perhaps the best question we can ask ourselves is Susi's question. What do I love? And I would add to that, how can I engage those loves in a way that cultivates caring community in a climate changed world? For me, one of those loves is birds. When I was buying a Christmas ornament at the Audubon Society store here in Maine this year, they asked at the checkout, if I would like to become a member of my local Audubon Society chapter, I reflected and said, Of course I do. From their email newsletter, I then was able to see that they were sponsoring a cleanup of the Scarborough Marsh. And so my family was able to join a whole bunch of people in removing plastic from that vital ecosystem, and doing habitat restoration for local endangered species. So I invite you to reflect on what you love, and how it might be used to form the sort of committed and caring community we so desperately need in a climate changed world. How about you, Ben?



Ben Yosua-Davis 43:38

I think about Susi talking about our need to shut up and listen, and then when it's our time to speak to speak from the heart. So my invitation is what's one conversation, you could start this week with someone where you could embody this practice. I invite you to schedule that time to talk and come ready to listen and ask good questions. And if you need some places to start, we have a link in our show notes to listening practice activities, including a resource from Story Core, and you can use these on your own or in groups.



Nicole Diroff 44:10

Awesome. Thank you all so much for joining us today for this episode of the Climate Changed podcast.



Ben Yosua-Davis 44:21

We would love to hear your thoughts and responses to our conversation.



Nicole Diroff 44:25

Email us at [podcast@thebtscenter.org](mailto:podcast@thebtscenter.org). That's [podcast@thebtscenter.org](mailto:podcast@thebtscenter.org)



Ben Yosua-Davis 44:34

Our podcast is produced by Peterson Toscano and as a project of The BTS Center in beautiful Portland, Maine.



Nicole Diroff 44:42

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