

Transcript of DFH conversation with Davey Blackburn

[00:00:00]

Vaneetha: Davey, welcome to the Desperate for Hope podcast. I am so excited about our conversation, so thank you for joining me today.

Davey: Yeah. Thank you, Vaneetha. This is just such an honor. I'm really excited to be joining with you as well.

Vaneetha: Well, we've never met in person. The first time we met virtually, I was on your podcast and really wanted to hear about your story, but didn't get to really hear the full story. So I would love for you to just start by maybe sharing with our audience just what you're doing now, where you live, and then maybe jump into your story.

Davey: Sure, yeah. I live in Indianapolis, Indiana, and I live there with my wife Kristi and our three kids. Natalia, who currently at the time of this recording is nine, Weston, who is eight, and Cohen, who is three years old. And we are a blended family. all three of our kids are firstborns. So we have quite the, and [00:01:00] on top of that, we have two dogs. A great pyrenes and a miniature dachshund, couldn't be more opposites than those two. And so everyone in our house is fighting for Alpha. It is a busy, crazy house in the Blackburn household. but what we do as a family, it's really a very mission missional thing for our entire family. It's, this feels like a life calling is to help people heal.

So we help people in trauma, tragedy, and major life transition. We help them discover purpose in their pain. Our kind of big mantra is that, we want to help people partner with God to take back their story no matter what they've gone through. And so our ministry is called Nothing Is Wasted Ministries.

And and the main thread of what we do is we have a course called Pain to Purpose that individuals can take online as a self-directed study. They can hire one of our certified coaches in our ministry, or they can take it at a local church. and so we help churches create environments where people can unpack their pain, heal from it, and move forward on, on purpose and in and mission in their local church.

Vaneetha: What a great thing to do because I think people often [00:02:00] get so stuck in their pain and to really have somebody to guide them is huge.

Davey: Yeah. So, so I spend most of my weekends traveling and speaking at different churches all around the country. just flew in from Denver this morning at one o'clock in the morning speaking at a church out there. So, sorry if I have a little bit of jet lag and got up this morning to take my kids to school and I'm just like wiping the, uh, sleepies away from my eyes a little bit.

But, uh, while I was out there I got to do a little skiing, so that's fun. You always parlay some fun into it, but yeah, no, it's a such a rich and bittersweet calling that the Lord has us in, because like most people who get into the work that we do Vaneetha, we help people because we've experienced our own pain

Vaneetha: Yes.

Davey: and we have walked through the valley of the shadow of death.

And, um, God has been good through all of that. And we can say that now. Sometimes we don't feel it in the middle of it, but. We can look back and see that, goodness and mercy have been following us through the entire journey. and so I'm happy to share, our story [00:03:00] too and

Vaneetha: Yeah, please

Davey: of what happened. The birth, how this ministry was birthed. So I was a pastor and a church planter in Indianapolis, in 2015 with, my late wife Amanda. if you were to come over to our house and. visit with us for dinner at the beginning of 2009 or 2015. you would, uh, be with, you know, me and Amanda and, our son Weston, and um, and you would be celebrating with us that we were about to have our second.

and so, the fall of 2015, as we kind of came around, we had, we had been planting this church for a couple of years, and planting a church is a very difficult process. It was what's called a parachute drop operation, which means we did not have any kind of networks, friendships, community in Indianapolis.

We actually lived in South Carolina and the church that we were part of launched us to Indianapolis to start a church out of nothing. And so I always joke. That in church planting, you feel like God's called you to plant a forest, but dropped you in the middle of a [00:04:00] parking lot. And so you're just spending so much time trying to ...and energy and effort and relational equity, trying to build this little group of people that would buy into a vision of a life-giving church and um, and really invest in that with you.

And so we finally got to a place at the fall of 2015 where I remember my late wife, Amanda, looking at me and going, I think this is actually gonna happen. Like this is gonna take root. We had just, had three or four Sundays where we were over a hundred people each week and we're like, man, there's like a critical mass here.

It feels like we've got some momentum. And, it's been so many years and we're just kind of thinking about the next season and dreaming for, and planning for the next season. And, um, and in November, of 2015, November 10th, I left to go to the gym early on a Tuesday morning. And, that's a, it was a normal thing for me to do on a Tuesday was to get up super early, go to the gym, usually shower at the gym, go to Starbucks and start writing the sermon for the next Sunday.[00:05:00]

And, I happened to forget to pack my bag for showering at the gym. And so I knew I needed to go back home. And when I came back home, I walked into my house and walked into my, and what many people would describe to be their absolute worst nightmare. Amanda was lying on our living room floor and she was, surrounded by blood.

She was, when I rushed to her side and tried to see how she was, she was unconscious, but she was breathing very laboriously. And I thought for that moment, that those are those moments Vaneetha that are just, they're indescribable. Everything, you kind of go into tunnel vision. Everything goes fast motion and slow motion all at the same time.

And your brain is acutely picking up on all of these minor details and then everything else just kind of fades in the background and you're just in panic mode. And I, that's where I found myself. and so, um, I quickly called the paramedics. I thought that something had gone wrong with our pregnancy and to me I was thinking, [00:06:00] Okay. Try to stay calm. if we just get her to the hospital, everything's gonna be, it's gonna be okay

Vaneetha: Mm-hmm.

Davey: because nobody thinks that something, this upending would happen to them, especially when you have answered a call of ministry and of church planting to go and follow this, what already to us seemed like this daunting, intimidating thing.

To go and be in the center of God's will to plant a church. And when you're a pastor's family and you're thinking, okay, we're building a kingdom, we're

following you, God, you kind of have this unwritten agreement with God that you are, that He's gonna protect your family. Hey God, we're gonna do some really difficult, hard things to help build your kingdom.

But you've got my family's back. And so you just don't think that something tragic like this would happen. And so all I could think about was something's gone wrong with the pregnancy. If we get her to the hospital, she's gonna be okay. Maybe we've lost the baby, But, but Amanda's gonna be fine.

And I get to the hospital and [00:07:00] doctors and investigators inform me that she has three bullet wounds, and that the third is, through the back of her head. And, they have her kept alive right now on machines and they're gonna see if they can operate in any way to remove this bullet. But it did not look good.

And Vaneetha, I don't know what came over me in that moment there in the waiting room, but I, it was either faith or shock or some weird combination thereof. But I grabbed the doctor's hands and I prayed the biggest, boldest prayer of faith that I could muster up. And I said, God, I know right now there are people in this hospital, they're trusting in science, they're trusting in reason.

They have no idea they have, they don't have any context for miracles, but you're setting up our family for a miracle so that people will come to know you. And you're gonna sweep a revival across this hospital. And I just knew it. I had so much faith that, and I couldn't fathom any other result. And 24 hours later, Amanda was pronounced officially deceased.

that was November [00:08:00] 11th, 2015, which happened to be four years to the day that we packed a moving van and moved from South Carolina to Indianapolis to start this church. So in, in seemingly overnight, I lost my best friend, my soulmate, my ministry partner, and now I'm a single dad trying to figure out how to grieve through all of this.

And pastor a church who is deeply grieving from the loss of Amanda too.

Vaneetha: I just cannot imagine going through that. What kind of questions did you have of God when, you'd prayed this huge prayer with the physician and just really trusted, like we've given up everything? God, of course, you're gonna come through of course, people who've trust you and love you and are in ministry of course, you're not gonna let this happen. Tell me about what happened to your faith and the questions after that.

Davey: [00:09:00] yeah. Well, My, my faith was definitely shaken. It wasn't shaken to the standpoint of I don't believe there's a God anymore. Which some people, they go that route. They're like, if there is, there's the big question. If there is a, if there is a loving God out there, how in the world could there be pain and suffering?

And I wasn't at that place and mostly because I had a really incredible foundation of faith. I have a very rich heritage. I've watched a lot of family members go through difficult things. I've watched God, Show up for them in the midst of tragedy. And I just never thought it would be my story. My theology at the time, I wouldn't have been able to tell you this, but when you face a tragedy like this, you face some kind of lost grief, pain, hardship, trauma, whatever you want to call it, however you deem your circumstances, when you face that, it forces you to confront what you really do believe about God, what you really do believe about yourself, and what you believe about this world.

Trauma can cause us [00:10:00] to, to start to see those three things in a very skewed lens. And it can also help us to see those things in an even clearer lens if we allow God to walk us in the valley. And so at that point, my, my belief about God was God, as long as I follow after you, as long as we are men and women of integrity, as long as we are following your will, as long as we are sacrificing for your kingdom.

Everything's gonna be fine. We're gonna be, for lack of a better term, we're gonna be blessed.

Vaneetha: Mm-hmm.

Davey: So on some level, I had kind of a functional prosperity theology and this type of tragedy confronted that head on, where all of a sudden now I go, okay, is God, are you really good? Are you really, because you could have prevented this.

You could have stopped this. Well, how, in the, why in the world would you allow something this horrific and heinous to happen to a woman who was in, in my, [00:11:00] from my perspective, probably the purest woman this world has ever seen. I mean, this, Amanda was unbelievable. she was a rare kind. And I couldn't reconcile that. That was very difficult. And so it took several months of actually me stuffing and suppressing some of these really big questions before I realized that instead of stuffing and suppressing them, I had to take them to God. And they're questions like, why, why me?

How could you, why did you not... prevent? And what began to happen in my spirit Vaneetha, is I began to hold this grief in and suppress it and try to cope with it by putting on kind of a, I was a pastor, right? So I'm supposed to have the right answers, supposed to have the right, but inside I was being eaten up so I could stand in front of national television and kind of out of muscle memory share things like, Hey, [00:12:00] I'm choosing to forgive the three men who broke into my home, these three perpetrators.

And while that's true, it was a choice that I made. There was still so much emotion beneath the surface that had to get untangled for the next several months. And it began to make me physically sick because what I wasn't doing is I wasn't taking those questions to the Lord. I was just stuffing them and bottling them up thinking I, I can't, I can't, like I'm not a good Christian, so to speak if I ask these kinds of questions Now I believe quite the opposite.

I actually believe now that. You should question God, that it's actually in the questioning and the wrestling, where we find the richness, the mysteries of who God is, where he reveals his character, his goodness, where he begins to show us how big he is, how great he is, and yet how much he wants this personal, intimate relationship with us.

And he begins to show us where he is in the midst of our stories and how he is intervening in our stories. And you begin to understand he doesn't always intervene to prevent. Things from [00:13:00] happening to us, but he always intervenes to produce things from that.

Even Jesus said himself, in this world, you will have trouble.

You will have sorrow. He said, but take heart. I've overcome the world and in many other places in scripture we see this. Romans eight, we see you know that he works all things together for the good of those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. Well together means the really great seasons of life, but also the really bitter seasons of life.

That he works those together to produce something great in us and through us and for other people. And so, you know, scripture tells us in second Corinthians that this light and momentary affliction, although it doesn't seem light and momentary, it's producing for us an eternal weight of glory that far outweighs the former.

Now, all of these things I could not come to the understanding of and really experience the depth of it. Unless I took these really difficult [00:14:00]

questions to God and, in taking those difficult questions to God, God personally shows up and reveals himself to us. But it only happens when we actually ask God those difficult questions.

The why questions, the what now? The how could you, the, all of those things.

Vaneetha: Exactly. I mean that so resonates with me because I mean, that's why I wrote the Bible study, because we ask questions and I was just like, you, after my son died, I got up at his funeral. God never makes a mistake. And then you know, you can get divorced from the words that you say when you're in some kind of ministry, like you say the right stuff.

Davey: Right.

Vaneetha: But in some ways, and I'm sure there are people listening that are like, yeah, I've been afraid to actually voice the questions. 'cause people often say, I never ask God questions, never ask God why. And I'm not sure why they say that, but it just puts God at a distance from us.

Davey: Right. And what.

Vaneetha: I love what you said about that.

Davey: Yeah. And what Jesus wants to do is he wants to walk with us in it.

Vaneetha: Mm-hmm.

Davey: Right. That's why Psalm 23:4 says, though I walk through the [00:15:00] valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me. Well, if you look at the entirety of the first part of that passage you see God being talked about as some kind of far off aloof God, you know specifically The Good Shepherd, right.

The The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. It talks about him in the third person, but then all of a sudden you get into the valley and it flips. The tense flips to the second person for you are with me. It becomes very personal and that's what happens in the valley that we continue.

Now here's the thing. We go to God, we ask these questions like Job, right? And we're looking for some kind of explanation as if that's going to help us somehow. And I think, Vaneetha, it is an imperative step for us to walk through

to ask those questions, right? We cannot skip that step in terms of walking with God and grief, walking with God and trauma.

However, what we realize as we ask those questions, as we wrestle with God is that we actually, our soul needs something deeper than explanation. [00:16:00] Our soul needs incarnation.

Vaneetha: Mm.

Davey: Our soul needs God's presence. Right, because it's in God's presence where we experience the fullness of joy, where we experience peace.

And really in the, that's what we need in the midst of a storm is peace. Not the storm to be calmed around us, but peace in the midst of the storm so that Isaiah 43 is true. Where it says, though, you walk through the waters, you will not be overwhelmed. Right? Though you walk through the fire, it will not burn you.

And so this is what you begin to discover as you ask God these questions similar to Jacob wrestling with God, right? Like, here's this moment in scripture where this is, this contends with everybody who says you shouldn't question God. God put this moment in scripture where he specifically said, Hey, I want to show you.

The moniker, the namesake that I gave my people, and I'm gonna feature this moment right here as this is how my people are gonna be marked. I'm gonna take them from Jacob to Israel, right? One who strives and deceives and heal grabs to [00:17:00] get what they want. To, one for whom God fights.

Vaneetha: Hmm.

Davey: Right? But that only happens in the wrestling, whereas Jacob is wrestling with God.

What happens is he, God breaks his hip, heals him in a moment, right? All in an instant, breaks his hip, heals him, and then blesses him, changes his name.

Vaneetha: Mm-hmm.

Davey: And this is the journey that we take with God as we walk through grief, as we walk through trauma, as we walk through pain, is that as we wrestle with him now He's going to begin to bless us through this and He is gonna change our identity, change the direction of our life, change the

purposes that He has for us into these redemptive purposes. And so I think it's imperative that we begin to wrestle with God and ask for that kind of explanation, but then also know that God's going to bring incarnation, His presence in that, and that becomes the healing salve to our soul as Jesus walks with us in the [00:18:00] valley of the shadow of death.

Vaneetha: Mm-hmm.

Davey: And then He'll show up in personal ways that are like, okay, I man that. I can't argue with that. Thank you Lord, for bringing that kind of personal healing into my heart,

Vaneetha: Yeah, I love that. Especially just thinking, you started talking about Job too. Job had all these questions, but the questions were ultimately not answered the way he'd asked them. But, God gave him His presence and Job, I've seen you now and that's changed everything, before I just heard

Davey: and it happens. It's facilitated through those questions. let me give you a for instance. I remember one time I was, as I'm wrestling through all of this, I remember, I don't know if I was reading in scripture or if it just kind of came to recall where, we have a high priest who is empathetic with everything that we've experienced, right?

and so I'm going, how could that be true, God? Like, how could you know what it's like to lose a wife? this was one of my questions in, in [00:19:00] rebuttal and anger toward Him. How could you know? And in just this sweet, still, fatherly voice, the Lord said, David, I know exactly what it feels like to lose a bride. Sin came in and stole my bride from me, and I remember having this personal moment with the Lord. It was just me and Him, and it was like, like it took my breath away Vaneetha. It, it was like,

Vaneetha: Wow.

Davey: oh my gosh. You do know what this is like. And then He goes, and then I laid my life down to bring my bride back and so that it was like the Lord was going.

So Davy, what I want to do is I want you to partner with me to take back your story, partner with me to now move into redemptive purposes, but it's going to require sacrifice in laying your life down.

Yeah.

Davey: it was like, oh, so he starts to do these like personal things. I probably, I don't know, I don't know anybody else that I've talked to that's had that moment with [00:20:00] God.

And likewise, if you have personal moments in your trauma that you've walked through that nobody else would be able to share. That's what's so beautiful about a relationship with Jesus and walking with him through pain and suffering. It's so custom designed.

Vaneetha: it is. It is. And I mean, I feel like their suffering is really when we get to hear God's voice clearly. I feel like I knew God's voice, through scripture and at times, but there was something so clear about God's voice in suffering. I don't know if you've felt that way as well.

Davey: Oh my goodness. Yes. So one of the things that, the reason our ministry is called Nothing Is Wasted is because even from the outset while we were in the hospital, we were waiting for test results to come back to see if they were gonna be able to operate, if there was any way for Amanda to be revived and um, We're sitting in the hospital room where I'm sitting on the other side of the bed from her sister.

It's just the two of us, her sister and I sitting there with Amanda. It [00:21:00] was incidentally, Vaneetha, the same sides of the hospital bed that we were sitting on 15 months earlier when Amanda was bringing Weston into the world. So here we are in a very different circumstance, looking like we're gonna be saying goodbye to Amanda.

And I knew that if she could hear anything, that she would want to hear Elevation worship, and so I put on Pandora radio station on a phone at the foot of her bed Elevation Worship. Now, Pandora's randomized, it's not, you don't get to choose which song you're gonna listen to first. You just choose the radio station and then it picks it for you.

Well, the first song that came up was the song, Nothing Is Wasted by Elevation Worship. And it's like even in that moment, in this, the gravest darkest moment that I had ever stepped into, the Lord reached down and it's like heaven touched earth. And He was, and He just in this very personal way, He goes, Hey, this is not gonna turn out the way that you want it to turn out, but I'm here and I'm gonna walk with you in this and I'm not going to waste this.[00:22:00]

I'm going to bring meaning to this. And, what that did, Vaneetha, is that it kind of, in some ways trip wired me into remembering what Amanda did as a hobby,

and she was turning into a business. She would restore furniture. She had started to build up a reputation in our city where she was, taking this furniture, restoring it, and taking it to, markets and different antique stores and stuff, and turning this furniture for a profit.

And she would ask me to pick up this dresser that someone had thrown up, thrown out on the side of the road as I'm coming home from work. And I'm like, literally, someone threw this out. They discarded it saying it. They, there is nothing you can do about this. And I brought it, I'd bring it home. And the first time I did this, I said, what in the world are you gonna do with this?

And she said, Davy, trust me. Give me a little time and I'm gonna turn this into something beautiful.

Vaneetha: Mm.

Davey: And she would do it over, and over and over. It just, it, it never ceased to amaze me what she would do with these pieces of furniture that people had [00:23:00] thrown out and discarded as trash. And the Lord brought that back to my recall saying, Davy, I know this looks like a situation that cannot be repurposed, that cannot be restored or redeemed, but trust me, give me a little time and I'm gonna turn this into something beautiful.

Vaneetha: Wow.

Davey: so in it, it was over and over and over, Vaneetha. I mean, I can tell you story after story, after story after story of God showing up in very personal, intimate ways where you go, only God.

Only God. And what that does is that reminds me that okay, He has been in my story, He's been in the details of that. And so I can trust Him because of His past faithfulness. I can trust Him that He's going to be faithful in the future. Right? The best predictor of God's future faithfulness is His past provision.

Vaneetha: Yeah.

Davey: And so you can track that and go, this is why the Israelites would set up alters, stone monuments to say, oh, remember God did this. Remember [00:24:00] God over and over you. See, remember, remember, remember. And so as you begin to experience God in these personal ways, it begins to build your faith anew to go, okay, the next trial, the next storm, the next thing that we go, because inevitably there will be one.

I can trust God that He's going to, He's gonna carry me through this, and He'll be like a, as Isaiah 30 says, a voice whispering to me. This is the way walking it. Though we give you the bread of adversity, the water of affliction. The teacher will hide himself no more is what Isaiah's 30 says.

Vaneetha: Yeah. And you really do see that in suffering, that your teacher doesn't hide himself anymore. I love that verse too. And I just wanna go back to something you just mentioned. So your ministry is called, Nothing Is Wasted, sort of pain to purpose, and this idea of purpose. I deeply believe in suffering.

God is sovereign. God brings things into our lives, but today there's a lot of people that really push against that. What would you say to that? Like why has purpose been comforting to you?

Davey: Yeah. Well, that's a really good [00:25:00] question. I think people begin to push against it because maybe they make it binary as if it's okay, this purpose somehow outweighs or makes my suffering worth it. And it's like they're trying to put it on a balance, like a scale. Like, okay, if there's enough purpose or enough impact, it's gonna make this thing that I went through worth it.

And I don't think that you can look at it binary in that way. I think when I think about purpose, I think more along the lines of meaning

Vaneetha: Hmm.

Davey: Like this, what happened to us, what happened to many of you guys who are listening to this? It's senseless. There's no reason for it, right? There's no You can't quantify this thing.

It's like, well, okay, well here's the reason why this happened and one plus one equals two and carry the three and all that. Oh, now it makes sense because there's a balancing of an equation that's not how the mysteries of God work. That's how we in western culture want to experience it because we're very Hellenistic and we're very chart oriented, but that's not, beauty [00:26:00] and meaning is something totally different.

It's a lot more. Ethereal a lot more. Something that we experience and that's what purpose is. There's this thing that God does in this that both restores our soul, right It, it makes us whole again, and then gives us the opportunity to help other people in what we've gone through. So we're able to leverage what essentially a scripture says that what the enemy meant for evil in our lives.

We're able to leverage it with God in partnership with God for good and for the saving of many lives.

Vaneetha: Hmm.

Davey: And so what that does is it doesn't bring back your lost loved one. it doesn't necessarily restore. We will one day experience full restoration, and that's the beauty of our faith. We do not grieve as those who have no hope, is what scripture tells us.

But our sights are set on a different world, a different time, a different era where [00:27:00] Jesus will fully eradicate sin, death it, it will all be placed under His feet. And He will wipe away every tear from every eye. And there will be full and final restoration. He will make the thief repay seven times what he stole from us.

But right now, as we're in the already, not yet, we get to experience redemption. We get to experience this kind of partnering with God to leverage this pain for the good of other people. And as I started studying, I started, I was studying, man's search for meaning. If, I don't know if you're familiar with that book,

Vaneetha: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Davey: and he was a Holocaust survivor and he, he was a contemporary of Sigmund Freud.

Sigmund Freud as a psychologist said, well, man's chief aim is to avoid pain and to pursue pleasure. That's the whole meaning of life, right? And, Victor Frankl was like, there's something deeper with that. And his faith informed a lot of that, but also his experience in Auschwitz and other concentration camps where he observed in his own heart as his manifesto essentially.

Right. Got [00:28:00] stolen from him. While he goes into this concentration camp, what kept him alive? Right. As long as he was able to, as long as he, he wasn't, taken out of his own agency to kind of be thrown into one of these gas chambers. What kept him alive? Kept him every single day. Okay, I need, I've got hope, I've got hope.

I've got hope, was purpose. He said, I've gotta get outta here so I can bring to the world this thing that is so deeper. it's more existential than anything that, that I am. And so when you begin to do something that is bigger and beyond you, that's for a much greater cause or a greater purpose.

What it does is it begins to allow you to see, I don't, not in any way minimize the pain that you've gone through, but it allows you to hold it up in, in some ways next to this really large, grander thing that you're a part of.

Vaneetha: Right.

Davey: And it kind of, what it does is it kind of simulates what happened with job eventually.

Where he's [00:29:00] questioning God, questioning God, questioning God, putting up his own righteousness, kind of, and his ledger going like, what did I, you know, how did I deserve this? And God's like, okay, hold on, let's, were you there when I suspended the sun, the moon, and the stars? were you and Job all of a sudden realizes how, oh, okay, there's something much grander here and I don't know why Vaneetha, maybe it's because that's how we were created.

That brings a sense of awe and brings a sense of healing. And brings a sense of wow, I get to be a part of something bigger than myself. That really propels us forward. I think that's what I mean by purpose.

Vaneetha: Yeah. No, I

Davey: it's different for everybody, right?

Vaneetha: But I like really appreciated the fact that you said, it's not that we can say, well, Amanda died because of this. we don't know that, but we know that how that God is using it. John Piper has this, God is doing 10,000 things in everything he does, and you may know one or two of them.

So we may see something that God has done through it, but I think. What people push [00:30:00] against, which I understand is, this happened so that, because we're not God, we don't know, but we do see all the things that God brings out of something. Not all of them. We see a very small fraction, but we see that God does bring redemption partially in this life and obviously fully in the next life.

So how would you say you've seen God's redemption in your pain, so far on earth? What have you seen?

Davey: That's a really great question. I mean, I think in so many different ways. to me, as I, as I, um, share Amanda's story and her legacy, I mean her heart and

her passion Vaneetha, if you knew her, was that people would come to know Christ.

Vaneetha: Mm.

Davey: I mean, that's what she lived for. I've never met a woman who was so self selfless and so sacrificial in just her life, like her calling.

You know, at 18 years old when we first started dating, she and I were reading *The Barbarian Way* together. Irwin McManus. I don't know if you remember that book, but it's basically about the story of John the Baptist and what do you do? Where is your faith [00:31:00] when God doesn't show up for you the way that you thought he was going to.

Just as John the Baptist experienced, right? Where he goes, wait, are you the Christ? Or should, we expect someone else, right? Because I'm in prison. That's not how this was supposed to go down. And man, what's so crazy about that is that was a catalytic moment for her in saying, God, it doesn't matter what my, what comes in my life, I just want my life to mean something for you and mean something for the kingdom of God.

And so there is this very real feeling that I have every time I step on a stage, or every time I talk about Amanda's story on a podcast where I get to partner not only with the Lord in helping other people in their pain, bringing them hope in the midst of their pain. I'm partnering with Amanda too, and that feels very redemptive to me because I know what her heart was.

Her heart was, "Hey, let's bring as many people into the Kingdom as we possibly can." And so I even tell my son that, when he was little and we were wrestling through the loss of his mom, and he'd say things, you know, he's 3, 4, 5 years [00:32:00] old. He'd say, I wanna just, I just wanna go to heaven. I just wanna go to heaven.

I say, I do too. I do too, buddy. I wanna see your mom and I wanna see, I wanna see Jesus, but this way I would tell him. But we have so many people here on Earth that we have been assigned and called to help. And when we help the last person that we're supposed to, then we get to go to be with Jesus and we get to go see Mom.

And it's this worldview that I'm trying to, I think I'm preaching it to myself too, but I'm also framing it for him. That's okay, we are here on temporary assignment. And so that is a redemptive thing for me when I go and speak at

places and I see people come to know Christ, and I see people's eternities changed, altered forever because of Amanda's story.

That's redemptive. And then what's really beautiful too is God, I call it the icing on the cake, right? Because I think that redemption by definition is. That you are now, your life is repurposed to help others. Like I think redemption happens the moment you take your pain and you leverage it to help others.

That's redemption. But I think God brings icing on [00:33:00] the cake in each one of our stories too, to restore some things too here on Earth. It gives us a foretaste of the ultimate restoration that's gonna happen one day in glory. And so for me, one of those things is, meeting my wife now, Christie.

Vaneetha: Hmm.

Davey: And even the way that it went down is a very redemptive thing.

Okay. Because, spoiler, I'll just go ahead and cut to the end of it. Her stepdad is one of the chaplains for the Marion County Prison System, and he had been assigned to the three men that killed my wife.

Vaneetha: Oh wow.

Davey: So Kristi was at the time... I met her at our CrossFit gym. Just kind of random. Random, of course there is really no such thing.

Did you know, there's no such thing, Vaneetha, in the Hebrew language is the word coincidence. There's not a single concept for it. And many, Jewish people are gonna contest that if there's no word for it in Hebrew, it doesn't actually exist. It was a man-made construct. [00:34:00] Everything's providence.

And so I meet her randomly providentially in this CrossFit gym. Well, several of the folks in that CrossFit gym have been coming to the church I was pastoring, and so there was just a really cool community there. So she starts visiting and I'm no, this is the first time I had ever noticed anybody since Amanda passed.

I was like, something about her, I could not get her off my mind for months and months. Now she avoided me like the plague. And I, you know, now I,

Vaneetha: or no?

Davey: now I know why she really didn't want to be entangled in my story.

Vaneetha: Mm-hmm.

Davey: there's a lot of stuff, she shared some of her story on our podcast.

There's a lot of stuff in her past that contributed to this, but, really she was like, I'm connected to his story. I don't really want to be actually connected to his story. And so I had no idea about this, so I'm kind of pursuing her trying to, she, her previous marriage ended in a really painful divorce, so she had a daughter and single.

Single mom checking her kid into our kids' ministry, and I'm just not, I'm like, what? And then she starts serving in our inner city ministry, which is, was designed and birthed out of [00:35:00] Amanda's death. And we wanted to intercept kids and teenagers before they step into a life of crime related drug related activity.

And so we're in this really, like, you know, very, just, violent, Rough part of our neigh... Rough part of our city. You know this neighborhood where we're serving alongside of a church and she's serving there. And I'm like, I can't, this doesn't make any sense. Here's this mom who's coming down in this inner city and she's wor wow, there must be something intriguing about her.

So finally, three, four months into observing her in all of this, I corner her very pastorally in the CrossFit gym and I begin to ask her about herself. And that's where she drops that on me, Hey, listen, my stepdad, and I'm like, Wow. And I was actually in the process of finishing up the manuscript to my book to turn it into publishers asking the question, God, what is, what's, where's the redemption in my story?

I was so fresh. I was just all about, I believe God's, that nothing's wasted, but what do? what is actually, does that have any [00:36:00] bearing here on earth too? And so here she, she tells me this, that not only is this someone I'm intrigued by, I'm interested in, but she's that closely connected to a part of redemption that requires me to step even further into courage. Further into, wait, now I might actually have to have some conversations with these guys, or God seems to be propelling me toward that. And so, so that's, that is one major redemptive thing is we ended up, when she told me that, I just said, do you wanna go out?

Do you want, you wanna go get some dinner sometime? that, I didn't know what to say, but we started dating, we got married at the end of 2017, blended our family, and then we had one of our own in 2019. And so it, it's really special because now what we do as a family based on her story and my story colliding, is we help people heal.

And we, I've always felt like ever since I was, ever since I was 18 years old, and God called me to ministry, I've always felt like that there was like a connection with Jim and Elizabeth Elliot. For whatever [00:37:00] reason, I just, I felt so inspired by their story. I had no idea that my story would be so akin to their story and so, Now I feel like Beita, to be honest with you, and I, this is not anything the boast of me.

This is something that in real time I'm wrestling with and struggling with the Lord, is that God's calling me to visit at least two of these men in prison.

Vaneetha: Wow.

Davey: And I don't know what that looks like. I don't know how I'm actually gonna have the strength to do that, but to keep leaning into some redemptive, what I would call redemptive vengeance in my own story.

And that is, getting vengeance on the real enemy,

Vaneetha: the mastermind behind all of this, the one who comes to steal, kill, and destroy, as Jesus said. And if I can bring as many people into the kingdom of God as possible, the real enemy is really ticked off by that.

And if I can have some part in seeing the men who killed my wife, their lives be [00:38:00] changed.

Davey: The very instruments that the enemy used for death and destruction. Can you imagine what kind of real true vengeance that is? that's a scripture says we're operating in a different realm. We don't fight a battle of flesh and blood. We don't have, we have weapons of righteousness. and so that's kind of where I see our story moving in, in redemption.

Vaneetha: Wow. Well, I love that word, redemptive vengeance. that enables us to forgive. I think when we have that mindset, like our battle is not flesh and blood. It's not these men that brutally killed your wife, but it is Satan who you know, is part of their stories in terms of what brought them to that.

So I'd just love to talk to you, like, tell me about this process of forgiveness and Yeah.

Davey: Well, you said it right. a lot of times people push back on forgiveness because they think it seems passive. And they think it undermines this sense of justice that we have. We have been given a sense of [00:39:00] justice. That's part of the Imago Dei. That's the image of God in us. Right. God is a just God, so he makes things right.

And so we have inside of us this idea where we go, that's not right. We need to make that right. Right. Eternity is written on our hearts in that way and yet when we try to go and make things right in our own human strength, we end up completely fumbling the ball. And we actually make things worse. we end up perpetuating pain typically, is what we end up doing.

And so, the, what I begin to realize in all of this is that the act, cause I'm a very action oriented person. That's just by nature. I, I like to, and I, and I encourage people when they're walking through pain and suffering, especially trauma of some sort. it robs from you agency. God wants to invite you into places where you can regain a sense of God-given agency.

Now you do have to recognize the places that you're out of control, right? Then you trust the Lord with that, but then you also partner with him in the things that he's put in, in your hands to do something about [00:40:00] right? And so that actually begins to restore you too, as the sense of agency. Again. And so I think some of that active role in forgiveness is actually doing, as Jesus said, is like not just letting go of it or releasing bitterness because bitterness is gonna rot the hand that holds it.

Like it just eats you up inside. It doesn't do anything to your perpetrators. It just destroys you and the people you love around you, it kind of oozes sideways. So instead of just releasing that, which is an imperative part of it, right, releasing that. But also playing an active role in it. And Jesus said things like, when your enemy is hungry, give him something to eat, which is wait, what?

When he's thirsty, give him something to drink. Like actually go above and beyond and show compassion to him. So, so really there's kind of two parts to this forgiveness thing. There's mercy and there's grace. So mercy is, Not experiencing what we do [00:41:00] deserve. So my part in showing mercy to these men is, Hey, I'm choosing not to hold this over you.

That doesn't mean it abdicates them from the natural consequences of their decisions. It doesn't mean it abdicates them from the process of the judicial system that we have here in the United States of America. But what it does mean is I'm not going to hold this over you, and some of it's more for my sake than it is for yours.

Right.

Vaneetha: Mm-hmm.

Davey: And then, so that's mercy. I'm showing mercy there. And then Grace is, Hey, I'm actually gonna show compassion towards you. I'm gonna pray for you. I'm gonna visit you in prison. I'm gonna, and so you can do all of that while still having boundaries and potentially not even reconciling in relationship.

'Cause there's a difference between reconciliation and forgiveness. Reconciliation there... it requires repentance and an ask of forgiveness, right? A confession, a contrition of heart. And then you can reconcile, but you may not get that with someone who has perpetrated in your life. You may just have [00:42:00] to do your part.

And that's just extending forgiveness and releasing the bitterness in your own heart.

Vaneetha: Yeah.

Davey: So that's the journey I've been in, and it's a daily decision. This is not a feeling, this is not something like I wake up like, oh, you know, I feel like forgiving today. No, no, no. This is something that actually has to be put at the forefront where I have to decide this and go, okay, I'm gonna choose forgiveness today.

That's what I'm gonna choose.

Vaneetha: Well, I'd love to know sort of right before the podcast started, we just talked about the fact that your, the trial just happened a few months ago. Just would love to know, like sort of what has happened since in terms of the lives of these men and how that was for you in waiting years for that.

Davey: yeah. Well, technically what happened was that there were three men. One was the actual shooter, the two accomplices took plea agreements with the state to testify against the shooter. Which to be honest with you, really bolstered

and solidified the case. I actually spent some time on our podcast and nothing is wasted podcast doing about an hour and a half reflection on the trial.

So, um, if you ever, if you [00:43:00] wanna go and do a deep dive, you can go listen to that. But the process for the time in between waiting, this is gonna sound really trite because I'm trying to condense seven years of waiting in, a couple of moments right now Vaneetha. But what I realized is that sometimes God delays things in our lives because either we're not ready. And so it's a, it's, we're going, okay, I want this to be over. I want this. And God's like, okay, well this is gonna, this is gonna crush you 'cause

Vaneetha: Mm.

Davey: I need to do some more to fortify your character, to strengthen you, to make you ready for this. Or the world's not ready for whatever God's bringing you into, or, just if you overlay this to anything in your life where you feel like there's delay or you're like, come on, like what is happening?

Why does it feel like things are so slow? Why does it feel like God's withholding here? so either you're not ready or the world's not ready. [00:44:00] or what God is doing in this is he is trying to assemble the pieces to make sure that ultimately, You can step into that next season. So for us, this was very symbolic for us.

It was seven years of a wait.,

Vaneetha: Hmm.

Davey: Seven is the number for perfection. Eight is the number for new beginnings. So in this journey, the Lord was going, Hey, I'm gonna, I'm bringing this to fruition, to like, uh, now what's interesting is Amanda and I were married for seven years. So married for seven years and then seven years later it's brought to Justice on, in the earthly sense. And even that number of perfection, the Lord used that to go, okay, this is just justice here on Earth. It's not perfect justice. And now Davy, I'm releasing you into a year eight, a new season and, Vaneetha, at this point right now, there were some things and, I didn't do any kind of, I did some public appearances, but I kind of like held off and didn't do a lot of [00:45:00] podcasts or didn't do a lot of, I did, I had my own.

Because I could kind of control that setting, but I didn't say yes to a bunch of appearances on news stations and stuff because I was asked not to buy the

prosecution because the more that I talked about, right, it could maybe potentially jeopardize the case or you know, that sort of thing. So we had to keep a lot of it at bay, which to me personally and in an earthly state, felt like, man, we're holding back a lot of the ministry that we could be doing right now.

Right. We'd be very choosy with some of that stuff. Well now the Lord's going go, just do okay. Everything's closed. Go. But I don't, looking back, I'm not sure my heart and our family would've been ready to just go and be released into it. I don't think our ministry would've been ready. So in seven years as we're working through all of this stuff, there was some infrastructure being built in our ministry and our family and our hearts and our character that now everything we're ready.

To step into whatever this part of the redemptive journey God has for us on whatever this new season [00:46:00] is. So that's a little bit of what God's been teaching me in the kind of delayed

Vaneetha: Yeah, I mean, they say, God is never late, never early. He's always just on time, but we often want him to be in a very different,

Davey: He doesn't work on our timetable, does

Vaneetha: No, he does not. He does not. Well, I wanna go back to something you said at the beginning, just talking about questions and wrestling with God. And I'm guessing there's people listening right now who have questions.

just what would you say to the person who's sort of doubting God and asking questions? what would you say to them?

Davey: Well, I would encourage them. I would say, Hey, keep asking those questions, but take them to God

Vaneetha: Hmm.

Davey: because He, He can handle 'em. He's not intimidated by them. find somebody that you can wrestle with that will hold space, for you to wrestle. They, they won't try to resolve it for you. Job's, friends did a great job for seven days and then they started trying to resolve some things or try to explain some things.

They couldn't, it became binary for them. No. Find somebody that's like willing to just kind of sit and wrestle and [00:47:00] maybe even ask some questions

with you. And so sometimes that can be done through a counselor. I would recommend a counselor who has, who is, faith-based, like biblically based under, has a really strong Christian faith, and they can walk you through that because I think it's imperative to have a biblical worldview as you're walking through this, right? absolutely. It can be integrated with other things, but I think to have that foundation of okay, we have a biblical worldview before anything else.

and so I think that's a great thing. and so, start with that why question? Well, why, right? And then move more to a okay, a how question like. Well, God, how are you showing up right now? to open your eyes and start to write some of those things down. How am I seeing you show up in other people's stories?

This is why it's important to listen to other people's stories as they give testimony to, well, how God has shown up in their lives. Revelation 12 says that we overcome by the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony. And so as we hear other people's stories, we, our faith is [00:48:00] bolstered. We are borrowing faith from them until we can have some of our own.

Right? So how are you showing up in other people's stories? Okay. How might you be showing up in my story too? And then what should I do about this, right? And who do I need to do this with? I think those are some very important questions. and that's what I would encourage people, I'd kind of help them to frame some of those questions.

Okay. These are some questions you should ask. And take those to the Lord and take those to trusted close advisors.

Vaneetha: How are you showing up is such a great question 'cause it makes us pay attention, whereas often we don't pay attention and God is showing up and showing up and we're not looking. So I think that's a great, I think when we ask the question and then looking around for the answer,

Davey: That's so true. Yeah. You're going to, you're gonna find what you're looking for in a lot of ways, right? So you can look at the world through a very pejorative lens, or you can look at it through what Jesus calls. Well, the rabbis of Jesus' day would've called a good eye, which is what Jesus was referring to when he talked about the eye being the lamp to the [00:49:00] body.

Vaneetha: Oh,

Davey: was a common teaching of that day where the, the rabbis would say, okay, are you looking at things through a good eye or a bad eye?

Vaneetha: And a good eye is, okay, God must be upped up to something. Here, let me clue in a little bit more. This isn't going the way I thought it would.

Davey: What's God doing? I can't wait to see what he's doing in this. A bad eye is like, oh, death and destruction. We're coming to the end of everything. It's a very negative perspective on our story, on our life, and so that's why Jesus goes, okay, what you let in is gonna inform your soul. The eye is the lamp to the body.

Is you gonna let it in a good eye or a bad eye?

Vaneetha: Oh, I love that.

Davey: And so I think that's where we get to choose. We can't choose what happens to us in life, right? But we do get to choose how we respond, how we see it, and how we respond.

Vaneetha: Yep. Yep. I love that. Okay, well we're near the end of our time, but I, just had a couple of more questions. I think having a sense of humor in suffering helps a ton. Wondering if you feel that way, [00:50:00] and, and if so, what makes you laugh? How do you do that?

Davey: Oh well, yeah, it absolutely does. What I love about my wife now, she's an Enneagram seven, if you guys speak Enneagram.

Vaneetha: I speak Enneagram fluently, so,

Davey: And I'm an Enneagram three. So what that means is I have zero hobbies and zero fun. I just work all the time. But what I love, what's been so, and one of the things that drew me to her is how much fun I had with her.

she brought life and joy into my life. You know, it was like this, there's something that was just so lighthearted and childlike and playful and fun, and it was like, what? And I learned to laugh and that was really important for me. Now, okay. I know I'm speaking a little bit facetiously and saying I learned to laugh.

Of course I laughed before this, but there was something about learning to laugh in the middle of grief and holding those things in tension and being okay with

like, at one moment laughing like hysterically at the next moment, just crying. At the drop of a hat and being okay with the mixture and the tension of both of those emotions.

And I do think it's important the way we laugh now, [00:51:00] I mean, we will send each other these like we're like the classic send each other the memes or the like reels from Instagram that are just goofy and hilarious and ridiculous. So while I was away on this speaking trip and doing some skiing, a couple, for a couple of days, I've just got like a bunch of these Instagram reels that she sent over to me.

And I'll just sit there and we'll laugh and we'll laugh. We will be lying in bed sending each other these reels while we're in the same bed together. Just laughing. Right? And I think that's important. I think it's, especially in the ministry that we're doing, there's so much what you could call secondhand trauma.

I'm listening to people's stories all the time. They're heavy, they're painful. They're very burdensome. And so there are times you just have to kind of get up out of it and find levity. I think it's, oh gosh, I think it's John Eldridge that recently said this, that Jesus had to have some, oh, what did he say?

I can't remember the word he used, but essentially detachment from benevolent detachment is what he said. Jesus benevolently detached when he went away to a quiet place and when he chose [00:52:00] not to heal everybody. Right. Like even the son of God who could've just like, yep, everybody's healed, right? He chose, there's certain ministry I'm gonna do and there's, I'm gonna, I'm gonna benevolently detach from others.

And so I think it's imperative in what we do to just say, I'm gonna take a break and just have levity and be lighthearted because it feeds your soul.

Vaneetha: Yes,

Davey: feeds your soul. And, so yeah, that's, those are some things we love taking trips and traveling and we love the beach. We love the mountains.

We love just, hanging out with the two of us. We love laughing with our kids and just being goofy with them. so yeah, I agree with you. I think that humor is a very important healing salve to the soul.

Vaneetha: Oh yeah, but it's, oh, I mean, I used to just make myself even watch like Tim Hawkins or standup comedy, just something like, I've gotta, if I don't have laughter in my life, maybe I'll just find it and yeah,

Davey: we do that often and sometimes it's really clean comedy. And sometimes it's not. I'll say, and you're just like, okay, this is a, this is, you just laugh. You just laugh and laugh. [00:53:00] But it's fun to do that with her, especially. I think that's one of the gifts that the Lord has given me and having.

I, he's given me two incredible wives. I was speaking in church yesterday in Denver, and somebody came and said, the Lord has blessed you with two incredible wives. Very few people are blessed with even one in their lifetime, and he's given you two. Proverb, 31 women. It was just like, wow. Yeah, you're right.

One of the, one of the distinct characteristics of Christie is that we just laugh and it's just so fun. So.

Vaneetha: I love that. Well, my last question is, since this podcast is called Desperate for Hope, I love to ask my guests, what is one practical way you found hope in the midst of your suffering when you felt desperate.

Davey: That's a really good question. I mean, aside from all the things that we've talked about in this conversation so far, I think, I think one of the things that, that has where I've found hope is, dreaming again. when you experience the loss [00:54:00] of especially your best friend, your spouse, your soulmate, You spent so much time dreaming together and thinking about what your life was gonna look like and assuming that you were promised that, assuming that you were gonna grow old together and that's what God had for you.

And none of us, even though we say till death do us part, none of us stands on, in front of everybody taking our vows, thinking like, yeah, we're gonna. We're gonna experience this really tragic loss of one of, either one of us.

Vaneetha: Yeah.

Davey: And so you just kind of assume and you dream.

And so, so you don't just lose that person, but you lose all of the dreams that corresponded to. And so I remember having to kind of reemerge from that a little bit, the death of those dreams and be okay with, and not be scared of dreaming again,

Vaneetha: right? And not be scared of. The possibility that I could get my hopes up in something and it could, I, it [00:55:00] could disappoint me, right?

Davey: Or I, those dreams could die.

Vaneetha: But I think now as we're kind of stepping into this new season, and as Kristi and I are dreaming together and as we're dreaming with our team and ministry and stuff, it's just, that brings me a lot of hope because it feels very missional. It wakes me up every single day.

Davey: It gives me some kind of, again, purpose. To propel me through my day. So even on the days that are tough, it's okay, I got this hope, I got this hope. What's interesting is scripture tells us the, that hope is produced out of suffering, right? That suffering produces for us. Perseverance. Perseverance, character and character, hope.

And I always found that really I couldn't reconcile. I didn't understand how suffering produced hope until walking through this.

Vaneetha: That suffering forces us to really anchor ourselves in our hope, and that is Jesus.

Yeah.

Davey: And so no matter what we go through, no matter if quote unquote our dreams, as practically as I'm speaking about our dreams, [00:56:00] no matter if those become fulfilled or they don't, the real true one hope that we have is the Lord.

And I don't mean that in a very, in a real trite way. I just, I absolutely. we, when you go through suffering, you realize he is our hope.

Vaneetha: Yes. Wow. Well, I can't think of a better way to end than those words. When you go through suffering, you realize that Jesus is our hope. So thank you so much, Davy, for joining me today. This is a wonderful conversation.

Davey: Yeah, thank you.

