

2. Invisibility: Legitimizing Joy

Lauren has been working on the Office of Personhood album for a couple of months now. One of the things she brings to the table is a terrific work ethic, so she plows deeply in whatever I give her to do. Hence, the blogs on this theme of her becoming visible will be quite sporadic, but I anticipate huge change over time because she walks in stark reality and invests deeply.

Listening to the album made things markedly worse, in that she now realizes the problem is much larger than simple invisibility. She is not even remotely in the office of personhood. She grew up in a controlling environment, joined a profession that is quite rigorous in how they dispense legitimacy and is in a city that competes savagely for their flavor of legitimacy.

So on every level, she was commoditized from childhood especially the devaluation of being a woman in a man's trade. She received the message she would always be less than, but if she sacrificed deeply to make the men around her successful, she would be allowed a small place on the playing field.

Being a hard worker, she worked hard to become the best commodity out there, only to find that her best was not good enough.

She listened to the album, made a list of a few things that brought her joy and proceeded to try to figure out how to walk this out. She is still in a variety of contexts where the pressure on her to conform to the look and the ideas of most of her communities is quite large.

So, Lauren, here is my strategy for now.

First of all, you have made huge progress in discovering that you were designed to be "quirky" as you described it. And you seem to be pretty OK with that discovery. That is huge and valuable.

Your art form at present is to enjoy your joy privately until there is a large enough imprint on your spirit, soul and brain to deal with the outside world.

Here are some examples from my life. My home town has a train track through it with active trains. Most people hate it, and the price of housing goes down the closer you are to the track. I happen to like the sound of the train whistle and the thunder of the train as it goes across the one bridge.



So when I am in a grocery store, surrounded by strangers or with my wife, I might hear the train whistle in the distance. I do nothing externally. But internally I smile and enjoy the sound. I call that "being alone in public." I am enjoying my joy in private, inside, even though I am in public and my wife is trying to decide which avocado is going to be ripe in two days.

Here is another. I enjoy odd juxtaposing of clothes that actually work. So sitting on an airplane, watching people board, I am casually watching the people coming by. Most clothing is boring, stupid or ugly. But when I see that college athlete come in wearing that impossible combination of clothing that actually WORKS, the artist in me smiles and savors and enjoys how he pulled it off.

Most of the time, the things I enjoy are not what other people enjoy. So I have learned to enjoy my joy widely, privately, even though it is not socially acceptable to do so publicly.

So start there. Let's do two things. First, can you send me three illustrations of your quirkiness that you like and how you enjoy your joy there? I would like our tribe to have an opportunity to enjoy your design with you. Then, start keeping a record and see if you can hit 20 joy sessions a week. That is three times a day that you consciously gave yourself permission to enjoy your joy and you did.

Now, in the bigger picture, we have massive challenges with your outside world. Your family will possibly never come to enjoy God's workmanship the way you do. You might move someday to a different city that is a bit more laid back. You might not. You might get a different job, but your trade is pretty stuck in a rut in terms of not being joyous or quirky. So how you live life as yourself long term needs a bunch of conversations over time.

But right now, we are going to choose not to have those conversations. First, you need to be solidly reconciled to yourself. You need to come to immense peace with the person God designed. So start with what you have on your list. Learn to celebrate "alone in public" and let's build some good stuff into your being.

I look forward to your email with three of the quirkiest things about you that you love, and how you do on your first week of keeping track of enjoying your joy.

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From the Hub

