



Life after Dark

The Everything Happens Podcast

A Conversation between Kate Bowler & Barbara Brown Taylor: Discussion

Author and Episcopal priest Barbara Brown Taylor is no stranger to darkness. After experiencing devastating loss, Barbara explores our culture's pursuit of the sunny side of life. But perhaps there are things we learn in the dark that we can't learn in the light. Kate and Barbara discuss the two halves of our lives and how to practice courage even in the scariest of circumstances.

1. At the beginning of the episode, Barbara defines the darkness as anyplace physically, spiritually, emotionally, or vocationally where she cannot see where she is going. How would you describe moments of darkness in your life? When have you experienced a season of particularly disorienting darkness?
2. Barbara shares with Kate that when navigating the darkness, she relies on tools such as intuition and friendship. What "tools" do you use to help navigate dark times? How are they different than those that you rely on in the light?
3. Kate marvels at Barbara's counter-cultural idea that we shouldn't avoid the darkness that is an inevitable and natural part of life, but instead lean into and linger in those disorienting moments, being curious about what gifts may be there. What do you think about this idea? What tempts you to avoid lingering in the darkness? What have you learned in the darkness that you could not have learned in the light?
4. Together, Barbara and Kate ponder the dangers of "full-solar spirituality" that only wants to stand in life's sunny moments, leaving little or no room for what happens when things fall apart. What do you think about this idea of "full-solar spirituality?" How do you think about darkness in the context of faith? How has your faith helped you in difficult times?
5. Barbara describes her book, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, as an opportunity to practice flexing her courage muscle, walking further into vulnerable places than she had any reason to go. Have you even ventured into a dark or vulnerable place on purpose? What did you learn from that experience? How would you describe a time recently when you flexed your courage muscle?
6. Barbara tells two different stories, one about moving chickens at night and another about exploring a wild-cave, that consider the possibility of reframing darkness not only as terrifying but also exciting, comforting, and full of wonder. When was a moment in your life in which you experienced darkness as exciting or awe inspiring?
7. Barbara confesses to Kate that she wants to help others in times of darkness by doing practical things to make them feel better, but many times what is needed is to be with them without doing anything to fix it. Can you think of a time when you struggled to switch from doing for to being with? Who is someone who was present with you in a time of darkness? What difference did their presence make?
8. When Kate got sick, she decided on several "Rules for the Darkness" including, no talking about anything difficult after 8 p.m. or before 7 a.m. because those are times when she feels off balance—more fearful, anxious and less grounded. What are some of your "rules" for dark times? When do you feel like your strongest, bravest self?
9. Kate and Barbara speak about the significance of human touch to put us back together when we feel we are most falling apart. Touch can ground us, connect us to others and remind us of the gift of being human. When is a moment in your life when touch was sacred for you? Whose touch do you crave most?
10. Kate asks Barbara how other faith traditions have enhanced and expanded the way she thinks about walking in the dark. Who has taught you how to navigate darkness? What insights have you gleaned from other traditions or deep thinkers?

Bonus: After listening to this week's podcast, what part of Barbara and Kate's conversation resonated with you most? What insight will you carry with you?

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