

All Ears with Abigail Disney
Season 2 Episode 10: Krista Tippett
Hope Is A Muscle
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ABIGAIL DISNEY Did I tell you I got a puppy? Hang on a second. I would like you to meet Ruthie full name Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Three and a half months old. And, well, let's just say like her namesake, she is a strong of will. So she, um, she may make herself heard from time to time.

KRISTA TIPPETT Can I just say I actually love about your podcast that you let life happen on it? I love it. This is one of the few audio experiences I know where the dog in the background will somehow make sense.

ABIGAIL DISNEY This is a little more life than we like to let in. Way more life than we're used to. But she's a lively little puppy.

It's advent. And as any good Catholic girl can tell you, advent is a season of waiting. Of patience, of slowing down. This is when the night dips down to its deepest and darkest just before it yields to a tiny point of weak but promising light.

As it happens the weeks between a presidential election and inauguration always take place during advent. And until this year, that thought never occurred to me, but wow. As the days continue to shorten and we wonder just how much darker things can be, as we all wait for January 20th, we are all getting a powerful lesson in the waiting and hopeful nature of faith.

So that's why I'm delighted today to welcome my friend Krista Tippett, because she knows a little bit more than the average bear about the nature of the struggle, the gift of faith, when the darkness is at its most oppressive. Every week Krista Tippett's *On Being* makes its way into our homes and cars and workplaces and what she does once she's there is revolutionary. In a culture bent on valuing only what can be touched, what can be counted, and what can be monetized, Krista consistently asserts the relevance and even necessity of those aspects of life that are none of the above.

Krista Tippett has become a broadcasting institution, also producing radio and live content for NPR, writing books, lecturing, convening, and more.

She's also as kind, smart, and thoughtful as you might've imagined she was. So as we enter the season of light at a pretty dark moment in our history, I can think of nobody better with whom to discuss how we heal our individual and collective souls. So Krista, thank you so much for joining me today.

Welcome.

KRISTA TIPPETT I don't know if I can say anything after that introduction. Thank you, Abby.

ABIGAIL DISNEY Every word of it is heartfelt and true with my friend. So on being, let's just start there. I like to imagine the pitch meeting. What, what was that pitch meeting like where you walked in and said, I have this big idea and I'm going to talk about like being

KRISTA TIPPETT You know, Speaking of Faith is what started first. And, um, and that was in the early, I like to say in the early century.

Right. So it was, it was, it was actually before September 11th, 2001 that I started talking about this, but after September 11th, 2001. Religion was everywhere in the headlines in a catastrophic way. Um, and, and we had, uh, we had an evangelical president in the white house.

so I started saying we need to talk, uh, we need to talk about this part of life in its fullness and its complexity. And that was a hard sell, but, but, but we, you know, we managed to get that going. and then about five years in what I realized is that we had this thing called Speaking Of Faith.

And every week, every day we got emails from people saying, I'm an agnostic or I'm atheist, but what you're talking about are conversations that I want to be part of. And I have to get over the language of "speaking of faith". Every time you start the show, we had people from such a broad range of, of the way this part of life is practiced.

I had thought it was important in the early century to say, yes, this is public radio. And yes, we are speaking of faith and in a way that is going to open your imagination up and engage your intellect rather than shutting those things down. But at some point, I realized that the title wasn't spacious enough.

And I realized that what I'm fascinated by are the animating questions behind this part of life.

And, and so that was the process that started this. So what do we call this? What is the name? And *On Being* was, it was hard to find.

Naming is difficult and thorny, and ultimately you have to live into a name, but what I liked about it was the hospitality of it. And, for me, it also has these really deep, lovely, theological echoes, right? The name of God, "I will be who I will be," or actually, "I am who I am," but actually in the Hebrew it's "I will be who I will be" so it's a word that sounds simple and maybe even vague, but there's a lot of beauty and there's also a lot of mess to it. If you actually kind of open it up.

ABIGAIL DISNEY I mean that's, the job of faith and conversations about meaning, right. Taking a big pile of spaghetti and pulling the strings out and making sense of that.

KRISTA TIPPETT Yeah. I mean, just, just as you said, know, you, I love the way you spoke about advent.

You know, the thing that I think we, um, We don't consider about this part of ourselves and this part of life, and these traditions, is they are often there for us precisely in the mess, right? They are there for us when things do not add up. And when there are no answers and they meet us there and say, yes, this is a part of being alive. And we can find, like there's a searching, and there's a kind of sacred confusion that happens when things stop adding up, that is so often an invitation to growth.

ABIGAIL DISNEY but you know, you always start the show off with that question about your guests, spiritual foundation. And I think it's such an interesting question because I always see. How it brings out a really interesting part of a person who isn't necessarily always about that question. Tell me what it is you hope to reveal when you start there with a guest.

KRISTA TIPPETT So it's, I, I found it kind of a magic question and, but it's, it's really important the way it's framed. So I'm not, I'm not asking somebody, are you religious? I'm not asking, tell me about your spiritual life, which I think any of us, including me, would be tongue tied and unable to meet that question.

Asking somebody about that, what I have learned, and I didn't know this in the beginning, I learned it. Is that asking somebody about the spiritual background of their childhood? First of all, it takes them into their bodies. Just because memory takes us into our bodies and, you know, this is a contrast for me that I very much want to have always wanted to dive into between the really cerebral and argumentative way we do religion publicly and politically, and actually the experience of it. And so, for some reason, and it's, it has surprised me at times, especially when I've talked to people who are really not at all religious. Right. Um, for some reason, letting the question be about the spiritual background of your childhood makes people really free to wonder about that out loud. And what I've also learned that is fascinating and very much in sync with why I wanted to do all this in the first place. These kinds of conversations, is because what it often takes people to are questions, it, or fascinations like amazement. Also, it takes them to, and some of those questions are hard.

Some of those questions are about why people are terrible to each other. So sometimes those questions are about being lonely. Sometimes the spirit-- I can't remember who this was, but this one has really stuck with me. The person whose memory of church was how. His father drove them to church and stayed in the car and read the paper while they went to church.

And so what I found though, is that, is that beyond whether the answer to that is fascinating, which is sometimes is, or just kind of, you know, simple, the question itself, plants, somebody in a really soft searching place in themselves, and it joins up their head and their heart and their body so that when I'm speaking to them, even by way of technology, so we're not even in a room together, I'm getting all of them. And that comes through in their voice, which is also embodied and the people listening partake of that experience too.

ABIGAIL DISNEY I love that you don't ask people directly about believing in God or specifically religion, because when you ask people about their, their formation, they, they tell you a lot about their parents, their siblings, the cultural contexts, they grew up in the, you know, and that's so much richer. Now you grew up in a very interesting cultural context, very different from the one you live in today, or the one that you grew up in after you left home. Tell me, tell me about Oklahoma.

KRISTA TIPPETT Yeah. I grew up in a small town called Shawnee, Oklahoma. And I grew up Southern Baptist, but church was so much more, I mean, we went to church three times a week.

Um, but even, so it was more than a place we went to. It was the center of community. It was the center of social life. My grandfather was a Southern Baptist preacher evangelist, and he had a second grade education and he was one of the smartest people I knew and, had a really big life of the mind, for him, all of that was, was centered around and grounded in his Bible.

He was afraid though. He was afraid of his big mind and he was afraid he'd never been taught or invited to bring his questions to his faith. And I think, you know, looking back now, if you asked me about the spiritual background of my childhood, and I think that I was, I was tuned into that in him for some reason.

And that was forming, what I was also tuned into. That's with me even now where I live, as you say, in a very different world, I live in a different part of the country; he was full of complexity. his faith was so judgmental and it really was. And he really was passionate about that.

And he was the most loving, playful, funny person I knew. And so that. I think that that sense of complexity and even contradiction made its way into my sense of who God is, and I know that that makes its way into my imagination now, as we live in a country that is so full of stereotypes and simplifications and fear about the other side, and even different parts of the country.

And we have this rural, urban divide and because of the world I grew up in, I just know that none of those sweeping generalizations about people on the basis of one thing they did or said, or who they voted for tells anything like the full story of their humanity.

ABIGAIL DISNEY I apologize for the sound of the dog!

So you left Oklahoma and you went to Brown University and that had to have been a massive culture shock. What was harder for you about that culture shock at Brown coming home or being at Brown?

KRISTA TIPPETT Yeah. When I think back to my 18, 19, 20 year old self, I have such compassion for her, but she didn't have any compassion for herself, right? It was, it was, it was so dramatic that that move I had made from, it felt like one planet to another. Because it was such an all encompassing world that I came from, as I said, you know, church was life, and there was a complete belief system and there was a way to see the world.

And it was a small place and it was in a time when it was much harder to see beyond the boundaries of any place, than it is now. And so it was just confusing to me for this entire world that had not just made sense, but been the only thing that made sense for it to, I could not, I could not figure out how that, how it fit, like how it even co-existed out there alongside this other reality of kind of this East Coast intellectual world, which I found thrilling. And I just soaked it up like a sponge. It didn't alienate me actively in a way from where it came from, it gave me a lot of new questions, but it also just made me feel like there are these different worlds in the world, and I didn't know what to do with that.

And when I came home, I found it so disembodied, because again, I, you know, I left the planet. I now inhabited and I, and I couldn't just come home for two weeks and make the transition. So when I was home, I just ended up feeling kind of alien.

ABIGAIL DISNEY So you kept going further and further away from Oklahoma, right? You became a reporter, you went to Berlin, you worked in Germany for a while, and you found your way to the State Department.

KRISTA TIPPETT Yeah, I was fearless, right? Like I had gone from Shawnee, Oklahoma to Providence, Rhode Island. And I could go anywhere after that.

ABIGAIL DISNEY Yeah. Yeah. So there you are in divided Berlin and you're working with the American ambassador, and it's so interesting to me that in the way you talk about your life, that's what led you back to divin

ity school? Okay. But you're going to have to explain it.

KRISTA TIPPETT You know, I interviewed Brian Stevenson a couple of weeks ago. And, we talked a little bit--, he's about my age, which is to say he's also about your age. And, you know, he went to law school, right? I mean, that's what you, you know, there were, there were, there were certain paths in the 1980s if you wanted to change the world and one of them was law school and one of them was, getting into policy right. Into, into politics in a way and, and, and journalism for sure.

So I, I'm learning to be more respectful of my younger self and see how I kind of hustled my way into places that it was really improbable that I should be. But I also was fortunate to be kind of in the right place at the right times. But anyway, so. I was aware as I moved through my twenties, as I looked at my resume, which of course your resume doesn't feel like a resume when you're living in it. You know, I felt like a failure and I was second guessing myself all the time, but my resume actually was just outstanding.

I, you know, I went on my Fulbright to Bonn and I, and I interned in the New York times Bureau. And then I got to go be the stringer for them in Berlin. And, And then I got hired by the, by the State Department and yet, it was so unsatisfying. It was just so inadequate. I mean, it was also wonderful. But I was in divided Berlin in this city, which was--talk about that experience of there being many worlds within the world--So here I am in one city that has been split down the middle at the end of World War II and divided into two completely--not just different opposing, um, political and ideological worldviews, but actually two worldviews--that were at war. It was a cold war, but they had missiles pointed at each other. And, and, and I saw people my age, being raised with two utterly different versions of the history of their people and the history of their people was a history that was quite extraordinarily important and terrible in world history, right? For a lot of other people. I was in the country that made up the word "wanderlust". You know, the Germans who were, who were perpetually restless. And I was, but I was, I was spending my time, a lot of my time in East Germany with Germans who had been locked, locked inside this wall and this border, and you would get a passport when you got to be 65. It was basically like this great social experiment and what I started seeing because I, cause I, cause I knew people on both sides of the wall, I had access to both sides of the wall as a journalist, and then with my wonderful American diplomatic access, I saw the great, the great kind of essential human drama unfolding, which is I watched how people on the Eastern side of the wall, it could, you could literally have nothing, you know, I'm putting quotation marks around, round that, but have nothing that we think of as including their freedom. Right. including their, just their dreams. They didn't have basic choices. And still people

created, not everybody--I mean that crushed some people--but I saw how--human beings would still create lives of dignity and beauty and intimacy and creativity.

And at the same time in West Berlin, where I spend the other half of my time, I see that you can in quotation marks again, have everything and all the choice and all the freedom and have a pretty superficial existence. And so I just got fascinated by, you know, how the, the missiles, the weapons and the ideological battle was supposed to be about ultimate things.

And it was potentially about whether people would live or die. And we really did feel that, we really did feel that, that could happen. But this other choice of. of what it means of leading a worthy life of choosing that, of crafting that, I also saw that the policy didn't address that.

And at the end of my diplomatic years in Berlin, I was working with people who were political appointees at a very high level who were nuclear arms experts. And I saw a lot of people with great big exterior lives and really impoverished, alarming, alarmingly emotionally impoverished inner lives.

And so all of that combined to kind of send me away, having had an incredible experience that I was grateful for, but really confused. And it kind of, you know, ultimately, I wasn't using the word spiritual, I wasn't thinking about religion, but yeah, it kind of led me back into what are the traditions?

What are the places in human life, where we've actually looked at this, and wondered about this, and had a conversation about this.

ABIGAIL DISNEY Where you, this is, this is something I always encountered because I, you know, even as a pretty young person would, would find myself in rooms of people with a lot of power. And I was always a little shocked by how much they just didn't have inner lives. But that, that, you know, if you're talking about ultimate things, shouldn't you be thinking about ultimate things. I mean, I recognize what you're talking about in what you saw in those people, in the embassy and I can totally see how it would drive you to divinity school or to somewhere else, but, was it a disappointment exactly? Or was it to make yourself prepared to be a better version that?

KRISTA TIPPETT When I left Berlin, I still thought that I would be. That I would then you know, that I would stay on that track. Cause I, you know, at this point I had good, great networks almost on both sides of the political aisle. Like I would go back to DC, I would get a job I would--And um, because I couldn't imagine not wanting to do that if I could. So it was, it took me a while to realize that that just wasn't who I was, but, but also let me, I mean, to your question, divided, Berlin was a really strange and unusual place for me to land, and I was able to, to get into these really high places because you know, Berlin on the one hand, was the fault line of the Cold War, And on the other hand it was a, it was an island in the great Communist sea. It was hard to get to, it was in some ways in its own special way, a small town, like full of spies full of all this intrigue.

But you could, if you were, if I landed, there was a New York times stringer and I could know anybody I wanted to know. Um, and so, so here's the thing: I managed to kind of skip over maybe some years that

it would have taken me if I'd been doing this in a normal place. And I was right in the room at the pinnacle of certain kinds of power.

And so I saw, like, this is who I would be spending all my time with. If I stay on it, like, this is success! Right. And I was like, is this what I want to be when I grow up? Is this who I want to be when I grow up? Is, are these the people I want to be spending the rest of my life with professionally? But it was very confusing to be thinking that.

ABIGAIL DISNEY Yeah, but isn't it, this is part of the problem, right? Because the people who have the kind of character to be asking themselves, that question, take themselves out of the equation. I mean, it's a self-selected universe for emptiness.

KRISTA TIPPETT I felt really, I wouldn't have known even to use these words then, but I felt morally unsettled, like profoundly unsettled about this being the way the world was.

ABIGAIL DISNEY Yeah. Well, I mean, it's still to this day, you know, the more powerful people I meet, the more shocked I am by the level of mediocrity, I find, not just in terms of their spiritual lives, but even in terms of their intelligence. Honestly, it's just hard to understand, well, it's hard to understand how you can be driven by anything but ambition to make your way to the top.

KRISTA TIPPETT Yeah. I mean, and I also think, I think it's a dynamic that we need to own as a culture, right? Because we, this is what we reward. We reward loud, external lives of wealth, power and celebrity. So is it any wonder that this is who, who rises above the surface and runs for office and runs things. I mean, I think the other strange idea that we have, because we do value the acquisition of wealth so much, like we just do culturally, but, but we've also kind of, we make this weird equation, like: if you make money, that does mean you're smarter or better or more worthy. Right. We, and really across a lot of our other divisions, right? That's not a, that's not a Democrat or Republican thing. It's not a red/blue thing.

It's not a rural/urban thing. It's not a generational thing. Like we have a kind of reverence for people who make money.

ABIGAIL DISNEY Yeah. And we've, we've equated wealth with value.

KRISTA TIPPETT Yeah. We have equated wealth with value! And the truth is like making money is one skill, right? Like the certain kinds of intelligence and strengths that go into that, are just a certain kind of intelligence and strength.

ABIGAIL DISNEY You know, you talk about the imagination a lot. Um, and so in that, I think that you've put your finger on the thing that got sort of exorcised, if we can use an upside down word for it, like, how would you define moral imagination? Where if we put it, how do we bring it back into public life?

KRISTA TIPPETT Yeah I think that's one of the most important questions we have to pursue, as a society moving forward, because the problem is we don't--As you said a minute ago, like we, we know how to value, we know how to value wealth and profit. We haven't created metrics, to make that, that kind of,

uh, insertion of a, of an idea into a business setting. And I mean, to me, to me, moral imagination, I mean, there's so many ways to talk about it, but, but, but, you know, fundamentally it's like, it's like, what, what questions do we ask?

I think everything comes back to the quality of our questions. Um, uh, you know, we know that in science, but it's also true in life, the quality of our questions.

ABIGAIL DISNEY And, and the, and the problem with discourse in this country is it's all exclamation points.

KRISTA TIPPETT Yeah. It's all arguments, opinions, all cerebral. Yeah. We're so good at asking, When and How Much, like, what will we do? And moral imagination is about the question of Why.

we still need those other questions. We still need those other pursuits, but we need to hold them in a balance in a creative tension. and these other kinds of inquiry they're gonna slow us down, but you know, maybe one of the things about 2020 is.

It has slowed us down, right? And so we, we know how this feels now and we, and we, and we don't want to stay like this, I mean, you started out speaking about advent and I feel that this, this December, this, this Advent, this mid-winter, the natural world itself calls us inside. It calls us inside. It invites us to get still, whether that feels natural or not, or is convenient or not. And what's at stake in this moment, before we make this passage out of 2020 and into a new year, is that this year has pointed us towards so many essential questions and wonderings about who we want to be on the other side of this.

And, and, and, and before the vaccine arrives, right, we, we need to let ourselves settle with all of this. Back in March, April, May. Where were we suddenly not just as a culture, but as a world, had to ask "what's essential and what is not?", and "essential" were nurses and teachers. People, people who feed us are essential.

ABIGAIL DISNEY It's such a clear message we're being sent here about like, you can't build an economy without caring. You can't build an economy without love at the center, and because feeding and caring and nurturing and teaching: these are all acts of love.

KRISTA TIPPETT Yeah, to me, this is, uh, this, what we were just talking about. This is, this is a move towards moral imagination. It's a challenge.

ABIGAIL DISNEY I think so. if healing were possible. Where would it come from? Our leaders are going bring us? Where should we be looking to for the tools and the language, and the people who can bring us toward healing?

KRISTA TIPPETT I really do believe that, that the question for each of us about how we want to conduct ourselves and what kinds of spaces, you know, civic spaces, public life; the political realm is a tiny sliver of it. But like our workplaces are our civic spaces. Zoom is a civic space. Right? Our neighborhoods, even our families, because the thing is these fractures run through all of our lives. They don't just run state to state or County to County. Right? They run neighborhood to neighborhood. They run house to house,

right? They run through our families. And so there's a very real sense in which we have to figure out what healing-- and we have the opportunity to figure it out, what healing is and how it can work very close to home. And the other thing that was interesting to me, that we pay less attention to is, you know, yes, the presidential, the presidential voting showed us to be a very divided nation, but all across the country at the very local level, there were these fascinating referendums that were passed. Right, right? And there were, and there's all this social creativity and experimentation. But my favorite under-publicized event on election night 2020, was in Oklahoma, which was as in 2016 one of the first states to go red, to get colored in all red, the first non-binary public official was elected to public office in the United States and they are 27 years old and black and Muslim.

And in every way, not the stereotype of what Oklahoma is and that's the new reality. We are changing. So part to me also, in terms of keeping hope alive--because hope is a muscle that keeps us moving and acting and doing as well--

There's this biblical saying, "develop eyes to see and ears to hear," right? What is going to come at you automatically in your newsfeed? In what gets presented as, as what's the story of what happened in the world today, is going to miss the love, right? It's going to miss the care. It's going to miss the Black, Muslim non-binary public official in Oklahoma. It's going to miss the experimentation in communities, from places all over the country, um, uh, that defy turning any of that into a demographic or a voting block, right? So developing eyes to see and ears to hear. And I want to say, I mean-- this is pragmatic. Okay. It's spiritual, but it's pragmatic. It's about seeing the fullness of reality. It's about getting a true reality base. Politics doesn't give us that now. I don't think journalism gives us that. It gives us a partial reality base.

And to me, I think spirituality at its best is, it equips us to befriend reality in all its complexity and its mess in ways that, that, you know, the politics or, or our faith in the market, which is real, absolutely do not do.

ABIGAIL DISNEY Yes. I love that idea of befriending reality. I mean, fear, I think is the most powerful spiritual force in American life, right at this moment. And the cure to fear is moral courage, and in public life, we just lack anyone with moral courage-right now. Where's it gonna come from? Who is going to step into the breach?

KRISTA TIPPETT I know that fear, and pain, in public they turn up as anger, which is, like, strength. And, it's no more respectable to, to just be in pain or to actually just be afraid. Okay. Let's just say, "I am afraid." You have to, shroud that so that you're not just afraid. You're self-righteous; you're angry. You're doing something about it. It's not that something doesn't need to be done.

So I want to say that another calling for this time, it's not--you know, there are so many callings and there are things to fight for and there is justice to be won and there are people to be protected, right?

There, there are people who need other bodies thrown between them in danger--And, I think another calling that, that any of us can start to exercise in our world. is to be a calmer of fear. To create spaces

where people can be in pain and that can be true and, and, and, and where people can be afraid. And that can be true.

Because like, the things we know in life, we don't apply in public life. And to me, that's another step towards healing that we, that we, that we not just get to do, but must do. And one of those steps is like--

First of all the people we know the best who are most like us also disappointed and hurt us. Right? They also get consumed by fear and anger and, and, and, and don't rise to their best selves. And, and we know that when that happens, if we're able to stay in relationship, it's because there are moments where people admit that they were wrong. But it's never a perfect linear line. Right?

Like, there's confession and there's forgiveness and there's, and there's often doing the same thing again. Right? But what we do in public, or at least what happens on social media, I mean, I've watched, this is that if, somebody whose opinion is reviled or, or suspected, shows that they might have some questions, then they get leapt on, right? And there's this pile on. That's not how change happens. It's not how change happens in human life. It's not how change is going to happen in communal life.

ABIGAIL DISNEY What, what do your grandfather think of what you do?

KRISTA TIPPETT I, in some ways I have felt across the years that, you know, I ask all these questions on, on his behalf, in part, the questions he was too afraid to ask, or hadn't been invited to ask.

After 9/11, a few years after 9/11, I got a letter from a Southern Baptist minister, I think in Alabama. If you remember all the, the terrible suspicion of, of Islam and Muslims.

Um, that was so intense in those years and, you know, has continued to be intense in places. He didn't say, "I think Muslims are going to heaven. I think they're just like us." But what he said is, "what I know is that the way people are speaking about Muslims--human beings--and treating them and thinking about them and treating them is not Christian."

And he had actually written this beautiful children's book to share with the children in his congregation so that they would treat their Muslim neighbors with kindness and with Christian virtues of love and hospitality. And I had this fantasy that if my grandfather had lived into the 21st century, right? If he'd, if he'd grown into this, into this very different world or, or he'd been alive in this world that maybe that would have been a move that he would have made too. So I have hung on to that and enjoyed that.

ABIGAIL DISNEY You know, we have these people in our lives that, um, are the hardest for us. And yet the ones that draw us in, mine was my mother. And I think that in *On Being*, you were maybe cobbling a little pathway home.

KRISTA TIPPETT Yeah.

ABIGAIL DISNEY So one, one last question. And that is: Is there a lesson that you take away from all years of *On Being*?

KRISTA TIPPETT Um, I, I think that, the biggest thing that it plants in me is a comfort with mystery. When I say that it could sound, like a kind of woo-woo, fluffy space, but you know, it's, in some ways I feel that it is what I'm talking, what I'm saying is, also like, confirmed by everything we're learning in science. Like that, the mystery of ourselves, right, the fact that we are learning with absolute clarity in the laboratory, that none of us is an equation that adds up; that none of our positions are as logical or rational as they feel to us.

And I also think like in that religion, in that religious world I grew up in, I think my grandfather, you know, he was terrified of mystery. Right? His faith had so many certainties attached and those were, those were a foundation to stand on. And, and by the way, uh, you know, he came in a covered wagon and there was incredible trauma and poverty and I think all kinds of abuse.

So, so that was true of him. So he, those certainties helped him stand. Um, and they were meaningful. I don't want to just say that they were a crutch. But all of our traditions, including my grandfather's Bible, ask us like there is, there is absolutely a bedrock certainty, in fact, that there's a lot that we cannot see, cannot know, cannot tie up, cannot name cannot pin down, in this lifetime.

ABIGAIL DISNEY Are you, are you a TS Eliot fan?

KRISTA TIPPETT I do love TS Eliot, yeah.

ABIGAIL DISNEY Because one of the lines that always had me was,

Where's the life we have lost in living?/Where's the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?/Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?/The cycles of heaven in 20 centuries/Bring us further from God and nearer to the dust.

KRISTA TIPPETT Wow. And that's it. That's the thing about-- first of all, mystery is a common human experience. It's in birth. It's in death. It's in falling in love. Right. It's in, it's in taking a walk. So mystery is real, and it's just a fact. And that's what I've learned is it's also about being reverent before that, is also about creative possibility.

ABIGAIL DISNEY Yeah. Yeah, this is a beautiful place to take it. And I just want you to know the whole time being talking about the meaning of life and everything. Ruthie just fell asleep in a huge pile of my underwear. She went totally silent and is, like, comatose. So that's all she really needed.

KRISTA TIPPETT So good to talk to you. It's so good to talk to you about important things.

ABIGAIL DISNEY Yeah, I know. I so enjoy talking to you. There is so much more to tell you about Krista Tippett. You can find her beautiful books *Becoming Wise*, *Speaking Of Faith* and *Einstein's God*, wherever you find books, but please, especially at an independent bookseller.

And you can listen to *On Being* wherever you find your podcasts, where you can also find *Poetry Unbound*, *This Movie Changed Me*, *Living The Questions* and *Becoming Wise*. You could also learn more about the On Being Project in the Civil Conversations Project at onbeing.org.

ABIGAIL DISNEY You are so kind to join me, Krista. Thanks.

KRISTA TIPPETT Oh, thank you, Abby.