



Simple, with Tsh Oxenreider

Episode 184

thesimpleshow.com

Segment One

Tsh: [00:01](#) This is Simple; I'm Tsh Oxenreider.

[00:10](#) Hey friends! In this episode, I'm chatting with my friend Katherine Willis Pershey, co-host of the show and regular contributor for The Art of Simple. As always in this episode, we're spring boarding off what we wrote about this week. Katherine shares real-talk truth she gleaned after she hit publish on her recent day in the life. Seeing her day broken down by the hour helped her realize a truth I think a lot of us can relate to. She is busy, busier than she'd liked to be, so she opens up about how she wants to tweak things moving forward, even if she's in a season of life when she has to roll with the punches. Even if our jobs aren't exactly like hers, I think we can all relate to the feeling of being busier than we'd like. And since this week I wrote a recap of what I read this week, in this episode I'm sharing what I've learned about why I feel overwhelmed and scatterbrained from reading more nonfiction lately. That's the danger of collecting gurus and four ways to keep these smart but otherwise distant people at arm's length. Then in the third segment, since it's the start of a new month today, Haley Stewart and I dig into what's on the liturgical calendar for March. We're talking fat Tuesday, Lent, Ash Wednesday and a newly canonized saint. Let's get right into it. Here's Katherine and me talking about what to do when life feels way too busy and why it's healthy to read smart people but also keep them at a safe distance.

[01:40](#) Katherine, I hear you had quite an interesting response after reading your own day in the life that you wrote this week and published on the blog. Tell me a little bit about what your thoughts were.

Katherine: It's not like I didn't know I'm busy that's obvious if I look at my calendar, but just reading the play-by-play was exhausting. How am I doing this? And more importantly, how much longer can I keep doing this? To be honest, I was a little bit horrified. I've always wanted to have margin, to be un-busy and I'm not un-busy, I am busy.

Tsh: Did it feel a little confirming or validating to you? This is why I feel the way I feel? Or was it a complete shock?

Katherine: No, it wasn't a shock. I think it was much more of a, this is why I'm tired and feel a little overstretched. Part of it's just my life is filled with a lot of really good things. Learning what to say no to, even if it's a good thing, I think that's going to be my next task. I love the things I'm doing.

Tsh: It's interesting because the last day in the life we published a few months ago was Crystal's who had at the time, her youngest was just three months old. She was telling me, I don't know if I feel good about doing this because it's such a different departure from my normal life. But then she said it was so validating to see her day in the life and to realize maybe why she's not getting much done, because she's spending so much time nursing or just taking care of humans. I think there's just something to be said about recording a typical day in your life, at all stages, whether you are in that unusual season that you know will go fast or just in the messy middle, maybe a where you and I are, raising humans still but in a different capacity, but also juggling work. I'm curious what your thoughts are on that idea, the pressure we have to do so many things as women because I know you feel it.

Katherine: [03:44](#) I do. One of the things I thought about this was, the day that I was recording, was not a day that I really got to spend much time with my kids. Now that isn't always the case, but they are at school all day. On the nights that I work, none of us were really like it for mama to be gone during bedtime. That's just the reality of our life. I did think about, I didn't have as much time as I would have wanted with my kids, but I do think I'm really intentional about making that time that we do have really quality time. I try to give them as much undivided attention as I can. The fact that in that busy day we manage to have dinner together, now granted it was not a night I could actually cook real food. We were having an amalgam of leftovers and whatnot, but we had the time and we did that totally centering practice over the dinner table where we share the best part of the day. That reconnection when we are running in so many different directions, that's good. This time is going by. We're in the countdown where college is looming. I have an 11 year old, so we still have several years left, but I want to be present to them a little more than my current life is allowing me.

Tsh: I had that realization too a few months ago because my oldest is now 14. I think it had to do with Kyle and I talking about summer plans and there's this mindset we can sometimes have, we've got all kinds of time and realizing, oh my gosh, literally four summers left. That is crazy. Well, at least you know with all of us under the same roof. Some of these time markers I think are really essential. Even a time marker as simple as I'm going to log a typical day in my life right now for the season. What even started this impetus of I want you guys to share your days in the life, it's because I re-read one of mine that I wrote in 2012, quite a while ago. I read through it and I had forgotten 90% of that. I genuinely did

not remember that those were just normal parts of my day and I was so glad I recorded it to where I now want to do this, annually to remember this is where I'm at and also where can I make tweaks so that maybe by this time next year I'm writing a slightly different version of a day in the life. I think so many women listening can relate to your scenario right now of just a thing after thing on your plate as a working mom. I'm really glad you did that.

Katherine: I think the only other time I've done this was specifically for a work project. I can't remember the details, but we were asked to track our time for a few days. There was a sense of like what are we doing? What do we need more help with? What are we working on? It was specifically tracking only work projects and the thing about my life, and I think a lot of working moms as we are doing a lot of constant toggling back and forth between, whether it's mentally or in the actual task, the professional and the personal. My power hour is gymnastics. I get more work done when I'm sitting in that gymnastics studio than I do in the rest of the week. It's this not clear cut now I'm working and now I'm not. It's all mixed up. There are gifts to that. It means I can bring my laptop and I have my cell phone, I can be there for the gymnastics run. But it also means, you're always taking the work with you, always toggling.

Tsh: It reminds me some of that concept a makers versus manager schedule, which we have talked about here on the podcast. I don't know if you know what I mean, but there's this tension I think when those of us who are in a more creative field, and I would argue you are as a pastor, which we'll get into in a minute. I think that there's a modicum of creativity there as well as the managing stuff. Whenever we are just in a particular season where we have to cram a maker's life into a manager schedule and I will link in the show notes to people who aren't sure what I'm referring to, there's a post that went viral probably 10 years ago now about a guy who described to why makers need maker schedules and not the usual manager schedule that our life revolves around, which is like a typical day in your life right now in Katherine, where you're just accomplishing tasks and moving from one thing to another and checking boxes.

Nothing wrong with that, but it's hard whenever you feel this desire and need to create something from an inner place of health and creativity and you just can't have that because of real life and kids and the normal expectations. I am curious, you hinted at this a little bit, you said I need to be better at saying no, and you said also that there are a lot of good things in your life. In other words, you're not having to say yes to things you hate. There's a lot of great things. Where do you think is the tension between having to say no, and at the same time also being really grateful and blessed for all the good things in your life?

Katherine: [09:17](#) Last year I was involved in the yoga teacher training, which was time consuming of its own, but it was one weekend a month and it was somewhat a

discrete sections of time. Now that I am, for years have worked as a pastor and a writer and has this sense of a dual vocation and now I have a, what's the word? Three parts? Three-ual? I don't even know. Tripartite? I don't know. I'm trying to weave the yoga teaching into work, into my vocation in my days in a different way than it when it was this thing I went and studied once a month. I think there's a little bit of tension of how much can I really teach. I love teaching. I love teaching at my church, especially because it just feels like this seamless piece of extension of my ministry. I love writing. I love writing for you. I love writing for the other publications that I contribute to. I love writing sermons on the weeks that I am preaching. That's a whole another project on top of everything else where I also need to write a sermon. I don't want to give any of those things up. I am giving myself a firm talking to that I can't keep offering to sub as much at the yoga studio. I am in the process of switching. In the piece, I said I've been teaching this Tuesday night class. I am not a night person. It's throwing me off so much. A 6:00 AM opened up and so I'm going to keep teaching at the studio but 6:00 AM is much easier for me to fit into my life. I'm going to see how that goes for a while. It may be that ultimately I realized teaching at Church has to be enough. I'm going to give it a couple more months to see if that that change makes a difference but I mean I don't want to give up any of those things. They're all fun.

Tsh: I like that you are giving yourself a lot of grace to just make little tweaks here and there and seeing what works and if it doesn't work you try something else. I think those of us who tend to be all or nothing people, that is a really good reminder that if you are trying a new practice, you're adding something new to your life or you're taking something away. It feels all wrong to not just throw in the towel and say, oh well forget it. I think you're doing great work in that department. It also reminds me a bit, I talk about this in the class I teach because I do have people create for themselves a time-ventory is what we call it, where they are marking down, a typical day in a typical week. There is a Ted talk, by Laura Vanderkam, and I'll link in the show notes, she talks about how we all have the time we need. It's just a matter of what we prioritize. She uses the illustration of somebody whose basement suddenly flooded and needed immediate attention in order to salvage whatever and she found the time for it. And the reason is simply a matter of priorities and it's one of these tricky things of we play this mind game of I don't have time for this, but really we do have the time for the things that matter most to us. It might not feel exactly what we want at the time, but find ways to make it work is my point, so I'll link to that in the show notes.

Katherine: I'm trying to remember if I read her book or another time management book that had a very similar message. It was very much like you can do all the things, you just have to not do the things that aren't your, if you do an honest time

inventory. On a typical day, I do waste more time scrolling through Facebook. That didn't happen much on that Tuesday, but on other days it happens. Part of what the book I read was promoting was that if you really are cutting out the fat, there will be enough for what we want to do.

Tsh: Absolutely. 100%. I have found since I've cut way back on social media that it is, for example, just upped my reading game again. I'm reading so many more books and it's like, ah, there's the missing piece for me. Not being on Facebook anymore, cutting way back on Twitter, Instagram, those kinds of things. That's just an example. We're not going to get into that really. I like that you brought up.

Katherine: That is exactly what really makes me know that I don't have enough margin. Well, one thing when a kid gets sick, I have no margin and suddenly I'm re-shuffling everything with with some stress. But I'm not reading enough right now. I'm just not. I miss reading books and not just the audio books, but sitting in a chair with a blanket and a cup of coffee reading.

Tsh: [14:00](#) I think it's good to take temperatures like that every now and then, you can just pause and evaluate and that's a great one for you, a great barometer. This fact that I am not reading well or reading at all means something else entirely. Perhaps that one domino that you can tip over will cause all these other things to happen. I think that's really good. All that to say, I think this whole day in the life routine is really healthy for so many of us to see, interesting, this is how I'm spending my time. Am I happy with that or do I need to make tweaks? I am curious, Katherine, just because you've already alluded to, that you have vocations that not all of us have, or careers and that's being a pastor of a local church. We've talked about this before, but I'm curious because so many people see their pastors on Sundays, but not really Monday through Saturday. Tell us a little bit about some of the other things you do while still wearing the pastor hat.

Katherine: [14:57](#) It really is a generalist vocation and even the master of divinity degree that most pastors work to earn before they start ministry. It's one of the few true generalist degrees. Most vocations are highly specific, you specialize. I had to take classes in preaching and worship and scripture and then pastoral care and counseling and church administration and that all fed into that's how broad the actual job is. One minute you're in a committee meeting, the next you're at a hospital bedside and then there's the sermon to write. Then there's 17 more emails about following up with people about, maybe sometimes it's emails about pastoral issues, emails about are we going to have the chairs set up in this room at this time for this event? There's a sense that it's almost like anything and everything. It certainly isn't the kind of job that you ever did everything on my list today. That never happens.

Tsh: [16:08](#) I actually find myself feeling as a parishioner, I feel myself more pastored whenever I know that those in leadership of my local church are doing so much more than just delivering sermons, I say just in quotes, by the way, delivering sermons that I can listen to you for half an hour and then check the box and call it good that I had been to church. You guys really do shepherd small flocks so much, that's just such a huge part of your day. I think when I realized that it affirmed for me my desire to be plugged into my local parish even more because somebody is aware of my life. Even if maybe they don't literally come by and ask how I'm doing that. You guys really do care a lot about those you've been called to take care of.

Katherine: [17:02](#) I try to be thoughtful about making sure that I am reaching out to people, but I also am really intentional about trying to put myself in the position of being ready when I'm needed. I used the word unbusy earlier. I think it was published in the early eighties, an essay by Eugene Peterson that was published in Christianity Today and it's called *The Unbusy Pastor*. He basically says clergy, our sole responsibility is to be ready to offer a depth of spiritual guidance that you can't offer if you're just filling your days with busy work. To be in prayer for your parishioners to be in connection with God generally, to be studying scriptures, to really be cultivating that inner life so that you have the depth to be present to people whenever whatever arises. I reread that essay from time to time as a reminder of how I really intend to embody this vocation.

I often feel like I come up wanting, but the vision is there, the intention is there and I think the possibility is there too. It's just so easy to get bogged out.

Tsh: [18:24](#) Well, be encouraged that I am encouraged when those of you who are in church leadership also just to have your day in the life that feels really full like yours right here. I read yours and I thought, it's great to read another human. Who's got kids that gets sick, who's juggling multiple hats, who's just doing her thing, who needs to run errands who's a few minutes late for meetings. All the things that we can all relate to. I think that's also a gift to those of us who appreciate your church leadership, that being human is part of the human experience. That's a good thing

Katherine: I do want to lift up, I feel so grateful that I serve this congregation that not only is absolutely affirming my humanity. I don't serve a church that puts clergy up on a pedestal or has unrealistic expectations of us. I have to say this time and again, I'm so grateful that they affirm this ministry that I feel called to that is a little more quirkiest than what I thought I was getting into when I went to seminary. Oh, you want to start teaching yoga in the chapel? Okay, you go do that. We'll take your classes when you're done. That's just an example of I have an incredibly warm relationship with my congregation and I learned early on when I served a tiny church that one of the most important things a church needs from

its pastor is to know that the pastor loves them and is there for them. That's always been what I'm trying to operate out of, that's my intention. That's my vision of ministry and it's mutual though. There's a very warm and loving relationship, trusting relationship.

Segment Two

Tsh: [25:14](#) The thing I wrote about this week was my usual monthly, I say usual, it's the second month I've done this, but I'm going to make it usual in 2019, a recap of what I read in the past month and at first I thought I didn't get that much read. Then I looked at my list and I actually read quite a bit. One of the things that felt a little disjointed to me as I was looking through my books is that I felt a little bit flustered and harried is maybe the right word, by some of the nonfiction books I read, which was a real surprise to me because I actually read more fiction than nonfiction this past month. The nonfiction I read in January was so powerful and helpful to me, especially *Atomic Habits*, that I keep thinking about it. My brain keeps wanting to go back there and park on *Atomic Habits* and parse it out even more and dig more out of it.

The nonfiction that I read this past month in February was something called *The One Thing* and *Power Moves* and it just got me to think. The other thing is I'm still working my way through Brene Brown's latest on leadership, which is also really good. It started making me feel really flustered, that classic feeling of too much information. I hinted at in last week's episode that I've been really craving silence and being more intentional about carving that in into my daily life. I think it's largely because of this. It reminded me overall of this gentle reminder to be careful about collecting gurus. I don't know if you've heard our friend Emily Freeman talk about this. She's mentioned this on her own podcast before. Basically this idea of stop collecting gurus. It's a sign whenever you are not sure what to do, you start looking for those who, with good credit, many times are full of wisdom and have a lot of insight into the thing that you're feeling you need some answers to, be it health or work or parenting or whatever. You start going to the books, you start going to those who you look up to and collecting information. There is goodness to that, right? Especially in our technological world where we can with the click of a button listen to really smart people, read really smart people, but at some point there's a limit. We have a finite capacity for information before we need to process it. This is what I talked about last week on the podcast. I think I started feeling a bit of brain overload from my reading of nonfiction and I think it comes down to this idea of guru collecting. Personally for me, a takeaway is that I'm going to continue to slow down on my nonfiction reading. I have mentioned before that I've been on a fiction kick for several years now.

There was a season when I was doing nothing but reading nonfiction and I'm not quite sure why now looking back but I hit max capacity and I stopped for about almost two years, reading any nonfiction at all other than skimming or reading some friends books or whatever. I just dove deep into fiction and it was really life giving and I felt like I learned just as much about life and the things I needed through storytelling. I got back into nonfiction this past fall and it's been really enjoyable to have both in my life. I'm learning I can really only do one at most, two nonfiction books in a month because I can only take so many people in my life telling me what to do and I need some space to process the things I'm learning.

A takeaway is I need to listen to my desire to actually go back to *Atomic Habits* and take some more notes and think about how to apply it to my life. As I mentioned in my January post about what I'm reading I don't have some numerical goal for me in reading books this year. I decided to abandon that idea. It's great for some people, but it's not for me because I read all the time anyway. Deciding I'm gonna read a hundred books in a year or something just feels like pressure. It completely made into a game something I just do for fun. There's no reason for me to read a lot. I can slow down and read with more intention some of these nonfiction books.

That's the thought about guru collecting from nonfiction books. It got me to thinking about a few other ways that I could avoid mindless guru collecting in my life at large besides just reading. I came up with four things for me. I don't know if they'll resonate with you, Katherine, but this is good for me. The first one is, like I said about *Atomic Habits* is to actually take notes and learn from a few. Basically apply the stuff you're learning to your life, don't just collect and gather knowledge for the sake of knowledge. Just because some book is the buzz that everyone's talking about right now, that doesn't mean you need to stop everything and read it just because you want to stay in the know. If you are feeling pulled towards something, be it some kind of parenting book or some kind of spiritual practice or in the case of *Atomic Habits*, some kind of goal setting habit building thing. Listen to that and just park and take notes. Apply it to your life, get little tidbits, see what that looks like in your life. Come back for more and go back and forth. Don't just power through the book for the sake of saying, I read the book, check, move on. This is maybe me, but that's something that I can be tempted to and instead just giving myself permission to say, no, it's okay, I'm going to listen.

Katherine: That makes so much sense to me. It's so easy to keep the reading shallow and then you're not getting anything out of what you're reading. To take it so much deeper by really working through it, that's so wise.

Tsh: Right. That's good for me to remember whenever my TBR stack is infinity. I have so many books I want to read and anytime somebody, be an Instagrammer in my real life says you've got to read this. So many books to read, not one more thing. Just to remember, it's okay, I've got time. I won't be able to read everything on the planet anyway and to just savor the the book that's right in front of me is really good.

Another thing that's a bit of a departure from specifically book reading is to be vulnerable and open with my friends in real life. In other words, learn from those who actually know me personally. A good way to stop this idea of guru collecting is to put on a pedestal those you don't really know and assume that they are the ones full of wisdom and that everyone else in my real life can turn and look to these people. One of my big soapboxes about the internet is this either intentional or unintentional way we idolize certain people and put them on pedestals as though they have been given some kind of special gift that the rest of us don't have. They know more and therefore we need to listen to them. Here, talking to a local pastor right now, I think is so important to remember that Christian thought leader TM on the Internet does not usurp my local pastor at all because he or she actually knows me, is actually invested in my life and even is probably a friend and it doesn't even need to be in someone in leadership like a pastor. It can be the other friends in my life who have gleaned wisdom from things like health, parenting, education, habit building work. There's so much wealth of wisdom that we have around us that we don't necessarily need to just turn to books or the person who has a huge following on social media as though they have the answers and the people around us don't. You know what I mean?

Katherine: [33:10](#) Totally. It's so funny because earlier when you were talking about that you don't need to read quickly to have the long list of you of you're going to do 100 books this year. I was thinking it's like the slow food movement only it's the slow reading movement. And now, speaking about keeping it local, it's like aiming to try to get our vegetables locally, actually aiming to try to get some of your wisdom and connection locally.

Tsh: That's a great way to put it. I'm going to park on that a little bit. It is very indicative of that slow food, local food movement. I think one way that I have found myself healthier this year is that I teach once a week at a local high school. I teach English and that has been so good for me as someone who does so much of her work via a screen and it's pretty public. It's so nice to zero in on I'm invested in these 16 kids one day a week. It's only one day a week. But this is my job. I'm not thinking about the internet or anything else on the day I'm teaching. I think there is some truth to that. The fact that it's scratching an itch in my life that maybe is something bigger at play. If you're feeling that need, perhaps you should zero in and go even smaller instead of trying to expand your circles.

We've talked about Dunbar's number on the blog and podcast as well. This idea of you only need so many people in your life and the Internet really masks this feeling of I've got all these people in my life when really maybe you don't. Maybe you need a real mentor in your life. A real person who can invest in you or a real friend or somebody you can invest in as well and is not just via Instagram or via email.

Number three and four, they play into each other. I'm going to recap them both. The first one like I mentioned, is actually take notes and learn from the things you are reading, don't just gather knowledge. The second one was be vulnerable and open with friends and real life and learn from those you know personally. Number three is for me to trust my own gut instinct. Just because They, say it's one way doesn't mean it's true for me. I can read a book, I can listen to some great Ted talk and they can make it sound like this is universally true and it might be to some extent, but I can also glean what I need and trust my own instinct that this might not be true for me now. I think that's really true, especially when it comes to parenting. We can read this is the way to do something. Discipline, talking to your kids, whatever. But at the end of the day, the kids that you have are real humans with nuances and particularities and you're parents and you know them very well, and at the end of the day you should do probably what just feels or instinctively, in your gut seems right. I think that can be applied to all this guru collecting knowledge that we tend to do to not just assume, well, they run this huge company or they have a huge following or they've written so many books, they must be right all the time. Not necessarily. I think it's good to know yourself well enough to say what is my fourth point, which is to embrace the phrase, good for you, not for me.

There's Amy Poehler's book, *Yes, Please*. I don't know if you've ever read that, Katherine?.

Katherine: Yeah, I love it.

Tsh: I do too. She has that phrase she talks about, especially in relationships with women to embrace this idea of just because they do it a particular way doesn't mean it's true for you. That also frees you up from feeling like they are "wrong". Not necessarily, that might just work for them. To embrace this phrase, good for you, not for me, whenever you are learning from others, be it a book or in real life, just to keep that in the forefront of your mind, that grace is all an abundance for both you and the person you're learning from. You might think they're wrong, but that doesn't mean it's wrong universally. It just might be not true for you. Also, you might think they're right, but it might not be right universally. It just might not be right for you. It might not be right for you right now. If you're reading some kind of book about, for example, starting a business and you think of all these things that you "should be" doing and yet you've got maybe three

children under five or you're in the midst of some major move. It just might not be true for you right now. To embrace this idea of good for you, not for me, I think really frees us up from learning from others, but in a healthy, safe distance and trusting our own intelligence, our own wisdom that we have acquired over the years to be smart enough to get what's necessary and true in our life right now and what's not. Those are the four things I'm learning.

Katherine: [37:55](#) That's so helpful. I all I can think is I wish I would have, I wish we would've had this conversation 10 years ago. I would toggle back and forth between reading the attachment parenting and then the opposite of attachment parenting. I would like put myself into this tizzy that I I couldn't do it right, according to everyone all the time. If I was following advice A, I was a failure to the folks who were writing advice B. Why do we give up so much of our, put so much trust into these gurus and lose that sense of gut instinct. This is really good for me. I'm going to cling to that one.

Tsh: [38:36](#) I feel the same way about my 10 years ago self as well. I would love to tell her this more and more that you've got this, you know what you're doing and to come full circle with this. I think this is one of the reasons at the end of the day, I really love fiction and I think we all learn so well from storytellers. I've mentioned this before on the podcast. The reason we can months later remember an illustration or a story we heard in a sermon on Sunday, but maybe not the point that it was making or the verse that you are extracting it from. It's because we learned through storytelling so much better. Humans are hardwired to learn through stories.

Stories give us the nuance we're craving. We can read even if it's not true like fiction and learn about our own lives.

Katherine: Absolutely. I mentioned in my I'm and my day in the life, the book that I'm listening to right now is *On Reading Well* by Karen Swallow Prior and she has all these different chapters about virtues, but through the lens of great novels, great fiction. I'm listening to it on the heels of having just returned to *A Tale of Two Cities*, which was one of my favorite books in high school English. I just thought, I haven't read this in 25 years. I wonder how I will experience this book now. It is very heavy nonfiction, especially for an audio book. Sometimes I have to like back up and listen again to a section, but I intentionally wanted to spend some time with that so that I could go more deeper into the novels that are on my list for this year.

Tsh: [40:17](#) Yeah, that's so smart. I alluded to that in my posts this week as well. The classics that have basically stood the test of time are the ones that top my reading list every month so far. This is one of the side fringe benefits of being a high school English teacher now as you know, I get to reread *Jane Eyre*, I get to

reread *The Importance of Being Earnest* and I've got more coming over the next few months that there's a reason several hundred years later these books hold true still because they are really about the human experience and we can learn so much about our real life, day to day from storytelling that holds past and through various cultures and different time periods. That's because there's so much that's universally true that we can extract from.

Katherine: I just finished reading in January a book that, I learned this word from you twaddle, the literature that will not last, dumbed down. I read this book out loud to my girls and after a while I couldn't even hide it from them that I was so thoroughly being driven mad by this terrible, terrible writing. The storyline was bad. When we finally finished it, I was like, okay, next on the list, *Lord of the Rings*, get ready. We needed to read something that I wasn't dying inside at night. The thing is it is harder. It's harder for them. They have to work a bit to track but also, I find myself trying to live in to the voice of Gandalf and the hobbits and whatnot so that to help make it more engaging for them. But so far it's already been such a richer experience for our reading at night because it's a classic and it's a classic for a reason.

Tsh: There's that famous C.S. Lewis quote, something about a good children's book can be read by a 50 year old as much as a 10 year old. He says it a million times better, but I think of that. The books that we read aloud and the stories that matter in our family history, in our family legacy, need to be those, the ones that we as adults can't get enough of because we're constantly learning. I hundred percent agree with you there.

Segment Three

Tsh: [42:47](#) Haley, now that it's March, let's talk a little bit about what we can expect on the liturgical calendar. Just so everybody knows, Haley got a new computer and if you know the new MacBook Airs, they don't have the same ports. The same thing happened to me. She doesn't have her mic plugged in, but we can hear her just fine. I don't think it's a big deal. Moving onward. Haley, tell us what we can expect this month.

Haley: [43:16](#) This is one of my favorite times of year, actually. Which sounds weird because it's the beginning of Lent, right? I love Lent. However, before we jump into Lent, it might be fun to talk a little bit about Mardi Gras, partly because I just got back from New Orleans so that's what I've been thinking about. Mardi Gras, I think everybody in the US thinks about it as parades in New Orleans and crazy debauchery, but there's a lot more going on there. Fat Tuesday is called Fat Tuesday because during Lent there were different dietary restrictions back in the day. Now we have certain dietary practices during Lent but back in the day people didn't even have animal fat for the entire 40 days. Fat Tuesday was when

you were using up any fat leftover in your larder. You're making pancakes, anything that had tons of butter and so hence, Fat Tuesday, Mardi Gras, is the day right before Lent begins. My family was just in New Orleans going to parades. It's a weekend right before Fat Tuesday that we went. It's not as crazy as the weekend right before Lent, but we wanted our kids to get to see it. Unless you're on Bourbon Street, it is pretty family friendly. It's not crazy the way it's portrayed.

Tsh: [44:53](#) Right. Okay. Tell us a little bit about Fat Tuesday, ways we could recognize it at home because I have a few thoughts, but I would love to hear what you guys do.

Haley: [45:03](#) Sure. In England, it's called Shrove Tuesday.

Tsh: That's what we call it in the Anglican Church.

Haley: From what I understand, pancakes is the thing. Having pancakes is the big tradition. That would be one fun way to celebrate it. We will probably have Cajun or creole food just because of the New Orleans connection. That's where my husband's family lived for a while, so he kind of grew up there. Those are some ideas, but basically have dessert, you can have a king cake still. This is the day to go all out with food to celebrate because Lent is coming and I think that sometimes it's perceived as it's bad to have this big feasty celebration of eating all this food. It's kind of against the idea of what Lent's all about. I think it's okay. I think it's good to say, let's celebrate. Let's kick this off tomorrow. We're starting a new chapter, like New Year's Eve.

Tsh: [46:06](#) Honestly, what we do, a tradition in our parish is to get together and have a pancake dinner. It's like breakfast for dinner, which is always fun. Our kids always think that's like a big treat, you know? It's super simple and all we do is get together with a couple of friends. We just make a huge amount of pancakes and then people bring sides like bacon and syrup and fruit. Then we do the breakfast for dinner with friends and it's really fun.

Haley: [46:32](#) I love that idea. I think that is great. Mardi Gras, coming up March 5th, I believe because I think March 6th is Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday kicks off Lent. We covered a lot of that on the episode we did about Lent. We should just refer the listeners to that in the show notes because we really dive deep there. We won't go into the whole Lenten thing.

Tsh: [47:00](#) We can talk a little bit if you want about Ash Wednesday, maybe? I know we got into it a little bit, but since it's the day right after Fat Tuesday, do you want to tell people sort of what you guys might do as a family?

Haley: [47:12](#) Ash Wednesday is a day of fasting, we will not be eating very much on Ash Wednesday and we will go to church to an Ash Wednesday Mass where the priest will have the ashes from last year's palms from Palm Sunday and we'll make the sign of the cross on our forehead. Kind of like when you go up to receive communion. Everybody goes up, but they receive the ashes at that point of the mass. It to remember that we will someday be ashes again from dust to dust. It's partly a reminder that of our own mortality that everybody is going to die and so we need to live in a way that honors that truth that we are going to prepare ourselves for a good death. It sounds a little bit morbid but I actually think it's very positive and hopeful because I think our culture has trouble talking about death. There's something that really draws you in to that idea because I think we really lack that.

Tsh: I know we talked about this in our deep dive where we talked about Lent, but personally I find our Ash Wednesday service really moving, especially with kids because it's a reminder to me as a mom, that my kids will one day grow up, live their own lives as well, and then have the same experience of death just like everybody else. It encourages me to be more present in our family life as well.

Haley: That is a great point. I think that is very poignant to see, especially when I have a baby on Ash Wednesday. I think about this as the beginning of their life, which it is, but their life we'll also end and I want to prepare them to live a good, a good life.

That's Ash Wednesday and that kicks off the spiritual boot camp season of Lent. There are still some great saints during the month of March. I thought I would talk a little bit about Saint Oscar Romero because he is a favorite of mine and he's like a brand new saint. He was canonized in October and I really love him. I discovered him because my husband was traveling to El Salvador a couple of years ago and I didn't really know anything about him. I recognized his name, but I didn't really know who he was and I didn't really know anything about El Salvador. It was really cool to get to research for his trip and learn all about Saint Oscar Romero. He was a priest in El Salvador. Then he became the Archbishop in El Salvador and he was chosen because nobody thought he was going to rock the boat. There was a very bad situation in El Salvador where the campesinos were basically like agricultural workers that were almost like slaves. They were treated almost like slaves. All the power was in the hands of a very few wealthy families. The government was supporting these wealthy families. There was terrible poverty and treatment of the campesinos. Saint Oscar Romero, everybody expected him to not fight the status quo. But that is not what happened. Everyone was very shocked when he was very outspoken about the injustices. He was calling out the government for the corruption and treatment of the poor. He was tying all of that into his Christian faith. That made people

very, very angry. He knew that he was on dangerous ground, but he kept doing radio broadcasts, talking about all of this injustice in his homilies. One day he was assassinated during Mass, so he was actually saying Mass and he was martyred during the mass, he was shot. He's a really amazing guy. The way he stood up for the poor and the way that he emphasized that this is part of our Christian faith, that we cannot ignore this kind of injustice and we have to fight for the poor. He has some great, all of his homilies and radio broadcasts, they have transcripts of those. You can read some of his words and he's just amazing. I recommend, if you want to get to know him a little bit, there's a really short little book called *The Scandal of Redemption* and it's published by Plow Publishing, and it's a lot of his radio broadcasts and they're short little radio broadcasts or homilies, but they're really, really powerful. That helped me get to know his ideas and his voice and all of that.

I highly recommend that. There's also a great film that was made, I think in the late eighties, early nineties, called *Romero*. It's a biopic of his life and it's very good. I think it might be on Amazon prime right now, just streaming.

Tsh: We'll take a look and if it is, we'll put it in the show notes and even if it's not we'll link to it somehow so people can look it up. I don't know if you've read or seen the movie, or read that book, but are they a kid friendly? Are your kids aware of Oscar Romero?

Haley: They do know about Oscar Romero. I would not show them the film. It's pretty gritty just as far as it's really serious and there was a lot of violence and so it's true to that so I wouldn't show it to them.

Tsh: Understood. Actually, as you were talking, I just read that Pope Francis wore his rope that was stained with his blood during the canonization ceremony, I think that's really cool and interesting.

Haley: Wow. That is very, very cool. He's pretty amazing.

Tsh: Well, I am fascinated. I've seen you tweet about him some and I've always had this note to self, look up this Oscar Romero guy. I'm really glad you pointed him out because we all associate March with a Saint Patrick mostly, which we all know of. I think it's really cool that you've introduced us to, a new to most of us saint, so thank you for that.

You can find Haley on her blog at CarrotsforMichaelmas.com and on Twitter and Instagram @HaleyCarrots. You can find Katherine at KatherineWillisPershey.com and on Twitter @kwpershey. To keep up with me, I'm on Twitter @Tsh and Instagram @TshOxenreider and of course at TheArtofSimple.net. Don't forget to get my weekly email at fivequickthings.email. Follow us on Instagram

@ArtofSimple and to be extra awesome show your support of the show by becoming a patron for just a few dollars per month. As always, because I just gave you a ton of places to go, I've got all these things link in this episode's show notes number 184 so just head over there. The show was produced by Chad Michael Snavely and Jesse Montonya, and thanks also to Caroline TeSelle, Andrea Debbink, and my intern Ginny. Go see Ginny at thesimpleshow.com. Thanks so much for listening. I'm Tsh Oxenreider and I'll catch you back here soon.