

EPISODE 006: BOOK | ANONYMOUS

BY NANCY RAY

Intro

Welcome to the very informal Nancy Ray Book Club. Every once in a while, an episode will be comprised of my thoughts on a book worth reading and my top three take aways from that book. Today we'll be looking at the book Anonymous and the ideas that have really stayed me with me since reading it.

You're listening to Work and Play with Nancy Ray, Episode 6.

Much of our daily lives can be divided into two categories: work and play. Simply put, that is where our life and our legacy take place. This is a podcast all about learning to work and play well, which leads to a healthy soul and a fulfilling life.

Listen in.

Content

I recently read the book, Anonymous by Alisha Britt Chole. I love reading books that are recommended to me. A few months ago a pastor from our church and his wife sat down at our table and he said that this is one of the best books he's read in a really long time. Of course, I put it on my list for this year and wanted to read it and it did not disappoint. It is very rich in words, in meaning, ideas and thoughts and I loved her approach.

To give you a kind of a brief synopsis of the book, the title is Anonymous and the subtitle is Jesus's Hidden Years... and Yours. Because if you think about it, Jesus lived an anonymous life for most of his life. Nobody really knows what he did for the first 30 years of his life.

MY FIRST TAKEAWAY

The book opens up and it talks about the iceberg equation. This is my first takeaway. The iceberg equation is based on how an iceberg is made up: you've got this little bit of the iceberg poking out of the water at the top and this giant mass underneath the water that nobody can see. Icebergs are virtually indestructible because of what is hidden beneath the water, not because of what's showing. Alicia Britt Chole talks about the iceberg equation: how 10% seen plus 90% unseen equals an indestructible iceberg. But she kind of paints the picture as 10%

seen, 90% unseen equals an indestructible life and how Jesus's life was indestructible and he lived most of his life unseen. I love how she puts it in her book:

“Jesus was born in Bethlehem in a smelly animal pen followed by hidden days. He was consecrated in the temple on his 40th day followed by hidden months. Before turning two, Jesus received a visit from Eastern Wise Men followed by hidden years. At the age of 12 Jesus got in trouble for staying in the temple listening and asking questions when he was supposed to be with his parent’s family headed back home, followed by almost two entirely hidden decades.”

I think it's fascinating. We do have these little snippets of Jesus's life early on, but they are so small in comparison to the rest of his life. It's always been such a mystery. I've always wondered, what was Jesus like as a teenager? What did he do? What was he like as a young adult in his 20s? We really don't know anything about it, it was hidden. I think one of the things she talks about in this book is that those hidden years are so pleasing to God. Jesus lived his life to please the Father and he stayed hidden and that made God's heart so happy. There's a lot of character building, a lot of refining that went on in those hidden years. Like I said, my first takeaway is the iceberg equation, 10% seen plus 90% unseen equals an indestructible life. As I reflected on that in my own life and today, this day and age and how we live in a world of social media and how we live in a world where we feel like we have to share everything, a lot of time I don't really feel like I have an anonymous life. What I've realized is we actually have to fight for and choose those anonymous seasons or times in our life. If we live our entire lives as seen, which is what I feel like the world is telling us to do, if we share everything, if we're exposed, if we don't keep anything hidden in secret between ourselves and our hearts in the Lord, then it's easily destructible. I feel like I can just see this big wave just kind of washing us away. But, if we have roots that are deep and we choose those anonymous times, those anonymous quiet times with our God, then we can form an indestructible life. I don't know about reaching 90% unseen—maybe, maybe we could achieve that—but definitely trying to achieve more of an unseen life, of a life hidden in God than one that is on display for the world. That's something that I've personally taken away from this book and taken to heart. I don't have to share everything, I don't have to show everything, it's actually, it can be kind of unhealthy and it's good to keep things quiet and private just between you and the Lord.

MY SECOND TAKEAWAY

My second takeaway was about a conversation she had in the book with Marie, her mentor. This is kind of what sets up the book, it's the whole premise of the book. Her mentor was in the hospital after a very, very difficult, difficult time full of grief, full of hardship. She said, as they were talking about it, Alicia looks at her mentor and said something along the lines of “hey, I know this is going to make you stronger. I know you're going to come out of this stronger.” Marie, she said she's the kind of person that is so wise that when she talks you want to listen, you want to hear what she's going to have to say. Marie replied to her and said,

“I feel that trials do not prepare us for what’s to come as much as they reveal what we’ve done with our lives up this point.”

That’s the entire concept of the book. Once Marie said that to Alicia, our author, Alicia took that and said, “Wait a second, if trials reveal what we’ve done up until this point, what do the trials of Jesus in the desert reveal about Jesus during those 30 hidden years of his life?” She kind of unpacks that throughout the book.

The book is really all about those trials of Jesus in the desert and what it reveals about him. One of my favorite examples she talks about in the book is how Jesus responded to Satan with scripture. Every single time, has a response with scripture. What does that reveal about Jesus? Well, back then they didn’t have Bibles in their pockets, they didn’t have Bibles on their iPhones, they didn’t even have Bibles printed at their homes like we do. We have probably 10 to 15 Bibles in our house. Instead, you would have to go to the temple, you would have to gaze upon the wall where the scriptures were printed and you would have to commit them to memory. You can see that through Jesus’s trials he had the exact scripture at the exact time that he needed it hidden in his heart, in his mind, to pull out right when he needed it. I just think it’s fascinating because this shows not only that Jesus memorized those scriptures, but that he memorized a lot of them. He had to know a lot of them. He probably spent a lot of time in the temple. I kind of imagine Jesus as a teenager just standing there, maybe his hands in his pockets. Did they have pockets? I don’t know. Hands in robe pockets? Just staring at the wall committing these scriptures to memory, reading them over and over, asking the Father, reveal yourself more, help me to understand them and in my human mind help me remember these and hide them in my heart so that I can know you more and I can walk with the authority that I need to walk in. Because Jesus, whenever he taught in the synagogues, they always talk about how he spoke with authority and he used his knowledge of the scriptures when he was teaching. I think that was such a beautiful illustration of his hiddenness that Jesus spent a lot of his time in the temple and a lot of time committing scripture to memory. That was my second takeaway: that I need to spending more time in scripture, I need to not rely on my phone as much and even the pages of my Bible, I need to know it. I need to really commit to memory because in those moments where the press comes in in our lives and the trials start, we might not be able to just grab our Bible in that split moment. It’s better to have it hidden in our heart so that we can know the truth exactly when we need it.

MY THIRD TAKEAWAY

The third takeaway I want to share with you is based on a section of the book called Reflections. She breaks up the book into a few chapters and in sections, and then at the end of each section she writes her reflections on what she just wrote. It’s kind of like she as the author writes all of this really great stuff and then there’s an extra bonus chapter called Reflections and she unpacks everything that she wrote. In one of these reflection chapters, it’s really just a few pages, she talks about a Chinese banquet. Hang with me here because what she’s discussing and as she’s looking back on what she wrote is just the value of time and of living in

the here and now. She recounts this story about when she went to a Chinese banquet. Here in America we have first course, second course, then the main course, and then a dessert. But usually those first courses are fillers, right? We get maybe chips and salsa at a Mexican restaurant or we're served bread or there's a salad. It's all kind of leading up to the main dish. Here she was at this Chinese banquet and every single course that was given to her was its own beautiful, incredible course in and of itself. As she kept progressing through, I think it was 12 courses, there was no main dish. She kept waiting for which one is the main one but every single course that she was served was its own main dish.

Now, I'm going to read to you from the pages of these reflections and how it relates to our lives:

"That experience has returned to my memory countless times because I, and perhaps we, have a tendency to think that "main" is out there, not right here. "Main" is on hold waiting to appear until after we finish our education, or get married, or find that dream job, or start a family, or resolve that conflict, or complete that task, or get out of debt, or retire, or slow down or, you fill in the blank. In moments when I am tempted to treat this gift called time as though it were some unfortunate filler, I hear a gentle whisper from God in my soul. 'Child, I am the God who wastes no man's time. To me, every course in your life is main.' Main is not behind us, nor is main way out ahead of us. To our God, this course, call it transition, further studies, unexpected illness, financial crisis, grief, or a desert, is as full of potential as any course every has been and any course every will be. Every course, and certainly every day, is a gift from God. Enjoy it while it's hot."

I loved that. When I read those words, I just felt in my spirit, "Yes." I tend to live my life thinking—I don't know if you do this—I'm always thinking about the future. I have a hard time just being here today. I'm always planning. I'm always projecting. I'm always thinking years down the road. Maybe it's because I've been a photographer for almost 12 years and for the last 12 years I've been planning out my life almost a year in advance because that's just how wedding bookings go, but I'm always looking ahead. I love the words, and this is my third and final takeaway from this book: that every course is main. Today is main. The season of life that you are in, that I am in today, is a main course. It's good and right for us to enjoy it while we are in it.

This book has so much more than just those three takeaways. I've really, really enjoyed reading it. There's links in the show notes if you want to pick one up yourself. I highly recommend it and I hope you've enjoyed a little bit from Anonymous today.

Thanks for listening to Episode 6 of Work and Play with Nancy Ray.

As always, you can find me at nancyray.com or follow me @nancyray on Instagram or Facebook almost daily. Today I encourage you to think about how much of your life is seen and how much is unseen and then choose the indestructible life.

I'd love to close this episode with a few words from the pages of Anonymous:

*“Such enduring spiritual strength is the fruit, not of movement, but of rest.
Not of activity, but of stillness. Whatever the context, Jesus could stand
strong in public because he stood still in private.”*