

Transcript for the podcast “Worthy: Celebrating the Value of Women.”

Hosts: Elyse Fitzpatrick and Eric Schumacher

Episode 44 — Guest: Lucy Crabtree

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Eric Schumacher 00:06

Welcome to Worthy Christian podcast celebrates the value of women. Each week, we'll bring you conversations with women and men, on the value of women in the church and society. We will not always agree on everything. But we do agree that God is glorious, the Bible's true, women are valuable, and respectful conversation on this topic is essential in our day. Hello, and welcome back to the Worthy podcast. I am Eric Schumacher, co-author of the Worthy book actually titled Worthy: Celebrating the Value of Women. And this is the podcast inspired by the book and I'm here with my co-author co-host. co-belligerent - and I don't know that we have any new titles yet...

Elyse Fitzpatrick 01:32

Co-moving person.

Eric Schumacher 01:34

Co-moving person. Yes, yes. My wife and I bought a house which hopefully will have closed successfully by the time this podcast airs. So not co weather. The temperature is half here in Iowa, what it is in California. But there's no danger of our state setting on fire. So that's a positive.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 02:01

Yes, yes. And for all my friends who live in Southern California - now we're in the gorgeous season. I decided we have two seasons one is gorgeous. And one is fire. And that's where we live.

Eric Schumacher 02:20

So in Iowa, we have two seasons, which is gorgeous, and the air hurts my face.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 02:32

We're here today with our friend Lucy Crabtree and Lucy, welcome.

Lucy Crabtree 02:39

Thank you.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 02:42

Lucy lives in the Kansas City area where she advocates for communication access for people with hearing loss. So now everyone you know where we're going to go with this today. We're so happy to have her. She's a former English major. She writes about disability, singleness, church, gospel, and one anothering on her blog, which is called To Live Quietly.com. That is a great name. And on twitter at @LucyCrabKC. So welcome, Lucy, we're happy to have you today.

Lucy Crabtree 03:20

Thank you so much for having me.

Eric Schumacher 03:22

Yeah, it's good to have you here. Lucy. Why don't you just tell us a little bit about your life, who you are and how you came to faith in Jesus?

Lucy Crabtree 03:29

Sure. Hi, I'm Lucy. And I was named Lucy after Queen Lucy of Namia. So that's my claim to fame. And as you both said, I live in the Kansas City area. I probably disappointed my family by settling on the Kansas side rather than staying with them on the Missouri side. I am single and the proud aunt of four awesome kids. And I became hard of hearing when I was four years old. And next to Jesus that is probably the thing that has shaped my life the most. It just changes how I see the world, how I experience it, how I understand life. I have a degree in English literature and I started my career as an editor. I'm not in the field in more but I do still love the Oxford comma. That's important. Yes. And in both professional and volunteer capacities, I've had many opportunities to advocate for communication access for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. How, for example, I used to help lead the local chapter for the Hearing Loss Association of America. And I'm currently on my state commission's Board for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. And so you're asking how do I come to know the Lord? Well, I grew up in a Christian home and I just can't remember a time where I didn't know God, I didn't know about him. I was baptized when I was 15. And I thought that I fully understood what it meant to be a Christian and understand that God saved me. And he's in charge, you know. But then when I was in my mid 20s, I started going to a different church, and just heard the gospel in a different way, and kind of realized that up to that point, my view of God was more about he was someone who was someday make sense of all the difficulty and frustration and even suffering that I had experience up till then as someone who's hard of hearing, but living among people who are not - who we're hearing. And I think that's not a wrong way to understand the Lord. Because he will do that, like he will make sense of our suffering, he will make everything right someday. But my view of my sin was more that I had to fix that, no, I had to, there's a lot of striving on my part, I have to fix this, I have to do better, I have to do this and not do that. So at this church, hearing the gospel, it was like hearing it for the first time and it was a life changer for the first time. And so that was just a big turning point for me. And I have wondered off and on since then, well, was I not saved before that time? If so, then what was my baptism and you know, kind of God thing? Well, when was the moment his salvation, and I've heard is that that salvation is both a process and an instant. And I know what the process is, I don't know if I could tell you when the instant is when the moment of salvation was. But God knows. God knows when that moment was. And I know that the only reason I'm a Christian is because he holds me fast. Like, when I was going through the membership process for my church, you know, they were asking how do you know you're saved. I said, Oh, if I could have not been a Christian, I would not be a Christian. If I could have walked away, I would have walked away a long time ago. And I can't do that.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 07:13

That's so interesting to me, Lucy, thank you for talking about that. I really want to ask you two questions, maybe one you can answer very quickly. And then I want you to flesh out a little bit what you mean, about hearing a different kind of gospel message, because I really resonate with that. But when you were four, did you lose your hearing all at one time in a distinct day? Or was it over a period of

time? How was that for you? How was that for your family? And then I want you to just talk a little more about the gospel, if you will.

Lucy Crabtree 07:59

So when I was four, we don't actually have a documented reason for my hearing loss. Like we know, my parents realized what had happened. We had a neighbor who just happened to be an audiologist and became a good friend of the family. And I don't think they were ever able to legitimately pin down what happened. But I do know that I was very sick right before that happened. I have a high fever, I was hallucinating. And so it seemed obvious to me that that's what happened and I got sick with whatever it was. And that probably led to the hearing loss. And I was four I don't remember very much at all you know. I have like maybe two memories of being able to hear without hearing aids. One of them is my grandma had called. And she wanted to sing me a song on the phone. And I remember that, you know. I remember my parents taking me to different doctors to kind of figure out what had happened and they get fitted for these hearing aids. Not always that way. Now that was well over 30 years ago. I've had a few different ones since then. But I remember my biggest concern was, am I still going to be able to watch Sesame Street because I have priorities? Like am I not going to be able to watch TV or do other things I enjoy. I was four years old when that happened. And I'm in my 30s late 30s now. Like more of my life has been marked by hearing loss than not so in many ways. I don't know what I've lost so to speak because I don't have that many memories of been able to hear. And I suspect that many people might look at me and look at my life and think oh, that's so sad. She's missing out on XYZ. But it doesn't quite feel like missing out to me because I never fully had it to begin with. I can look at other people and say, oh, they're able to do this or able to do that I don't feel as able to do this or that. So that that's not quite the same as having had something and then lost it. And then the gospel: I think my emphasis and my initial understanding was more on I was suffering and I wanted relief from it. Or I wanted a God who would, who promised that at some point, maybe not in this life, but it will come, someday I will be rewarded for my suffering. And then the sin was almost like a secondary issue. And I was more concerned with other people's sins than with my own sin. And when I did think about my sin, it was more, sure Jesus died for it but I... there was an element of shame in there like Jesus died for you. How dare you keep sinning? Do you need to shape up you know? And I'm, I think in some ways, that's a lifelong process to unlearn that and to realize that Jesus died for me, he said it is finished, meaning it is finished. And you work from our salvation. We don't work for our salvation. It's just been a process, that kind of shifting from of you're always wrong and only wrong to now I'm wrong too like I'm a sinner too, and I have to I have done things wrong also that have contributed to, you know, frustrated relationships, or hurtful situations. And I need someone to answer for me. No, someone needs to answer for my sin, and I can't do all of it.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 11:58

That's so good. Lucy. Thank you.

Lucy Crabtree 12:00

Thank you.

Eric Schumacher 12:01

Yeah. That's great. I love that you mentioned Sesame Street. Because I grew up watching Sesame Street every day. And I think Sesame Street is where I first encountered a deaf person.

Lucy Crabtree 12:17

Oh, Linda, Linda Bove.

Eric Schumacher 12:18

Yeah. Linda. Yeah. And so growing up in small town, Iowa, I believe that was the first deaf person I'd seen as a child. And, and most of my understanding in my childhood of what it meant to be deaf probably came through Sesame Street. And so we met over Twitter with a, you know, I wanted to tell our listeners this story. I had used the phrase in a tweet that people who (I forget the context), but people who weren't listening to, I think it was stories about sisters who were being abused. I said they were both deaf and dumb. And I said dumb, as in stupid. Hey, and then I got this direct message from a Twitter follower that I had never met, which is now a guest on the podcast. And it was very kind and gracious. And explain to me why dumb was an inappropriate word to use. And I did not know the history of the word, or why it was inappropriate. It was the common term that I knew when I was a kid, not from Sesame Street. But Lucy, would you? Thank you, first of all, thank you for correcting me there. And I was happy to apologize and raise some awareness. And actually that resulted in Lucy writing a guest series on my blog about how churches can be more welcoming to those who are deaf or have hearing loss. And we'll link to that in the show notes so that our our followers can can go read that. But can you explain where the term dumb came from and why it's inappropriate?

Lucy Crabtree 14:15

Sure. So I do remember that story, and you were gracious also. I was nervous to send you that message. I just felt strongly that no, you were someone who was gaining these followers and I thought no, like this can't happen. So thank you for listening and for taking the steps to correct that. So the phrase deaf and dumb is inappropriate because dumb might have once meant simply unable to speak like with your voice with your vocal cords like I'm doing right now. But language changes over time. And so since then, we've come to mean dumb as stupid. So to say someone is deaf and dumb is outdated. And second of all, it associates how much a person hears or doesn't hear with their intelligence, which isn't fair and isn't true. And even if we separate the intelligence from the dumb it still means silent as if to be deaf is to be completely unable to communicate also not true, aslo not fair, though some people use American Sign Language which is a full and complete language distinct from English. Some go back and forth Some of us are lip readers, we even have technology like email or texting. So using your voice is not the only way to communicate. So it just doesn't make sense to say that if someone is deaf they are not able to communicate.

Eric Schumacher 15:48

Yeah. So one of the things that was helpful for me, when we began communicating was having you explain these different terms that are often used in this discussion such as deaf with a capital D, Deaf with a lowercase D, the phrase hard of hearing or Late Deafened or hearing loss. Can you give us an introduction to that terminology and, and what it means

Lucy Crabtree 16:18

Yes. Let me first address the distinction between deaf and hard of hearing, because that's a phrase that you might hear more commonly, and you may or may not know about Deaf culture. And that's a situation where we spell deaf with a big D. To be culturally Deaf is to consider that is part of a unique history and heritage. People who are culturally Deaf communicate in American Sign Language, which remember, is a full and complete language separate from English, and has its own grammar and syntax and everything and, and some places you can take it as a foreign language credit. And so my friends who are culturally Deaf don't typically use the phrase hearing loss to describe their experiences. They prefer Deaf Gain. And they see themselves as a cultural linguistic minority, with a very specific identity tied to the experience of being deaf. So that's what we mean by deaf with the Big D. Hard of hearing is a little bit more nebulous. And so what I'm about to share, please understand that I am painting in very broad strokes. And there's lots of room for nuance that we're not going to be able to get into today. But on the surface, hard of hearing would then describe people who are experiencing hearing loss, but they don't share that sense of deaf identity. And there are people who would call themselves deaf, but they might spell it with a small d. And their reasoning behind that is gonna be different, like everyone is different. The hard of hearing community is not a monolith, we don't all experience life the same way, we all have different communication needs and preferences. So if someone said they're deaf with a small d, they might mean for example, that they they do communicate using sign language, but they don't have that cultural identity for themselves. I also have friends who would otherwise say that they're hard of hearing. But when they're in public and having to interact with like a cashier, or no restaurant server, or like a medical professional, they might just go ahead and say I'm deaf, because the hearing society has a lot of misconceptions about what it means to be deaf, or what it means to be hard of hearing. And sometimes if you say I'm hard of hearing people think if I just talk louder, they will understand me. And that's not always true. But if you say I'm deaf, then they will be more intentional about how they communicate. They might think, oh, they can't hear all I have to write this down, I have to tap it out on my phone or something like that. So people will have different reasons for using little D deaf. And I do want to make a quick note here that even in the spelling, there's some disagreement over whether it should all just be big D deaf. And there are some people who will say, if we keep changing the spelling, that will contribute to division within the deaf and hard of hearing community. So everyone should just be big D Deaf. And then there are others who will say no, I grew up with the understanding that big D Deaf mean culturally that I do not have an identity, but I'm also not going to call myself hard of hearing for whenever their own reasons are You're going to stick with little D deaf. So it depends on who you ask how how they spell the word deaf, and why. And then we also have late-deafened. And the technical definition of a late-deafened person is someone who lost their hearing after acquiring language. And I get that. But by that technical definition, maybe I am a late-deafened person, because I was four. I'd already started acquiring language. But I, but the sphere of late-deafened usually applies to young adults or older, someone who has lost their hearing after they established their life, you know, they'd maybe, maybe they're still in college, or they've started or are finishing a career. Maybe they started a family. They're really a part of and established in their community. I think of late-deafened, and I think that like someone who has had a life, and then they became deaf or hard of hearing. So that is the basic summary of some of those terms. And I personally choose to say hearing loss as kind of an umbrella term to encompass all of that. And again, because of all these nuances in any kind of community group, there will be some people who don't even like the term hearing loss, so I recognize that's not the perfect phrase to use, and that is going to bother some people. And if someone can come up with a better term, that would be good. But that's all I have right now. So that's how I use

that. And you will hear hearing loss more often from people who are hard of hearing or late-deafened, than you will from people who are culturally deaf, generally speaking.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 21:49

That's so good. Thank you so much for explaining that. That's really very helpful. So can you take a moment then, and maybe describe the effects that hearing loss can have on a person, especially when they're without an informed and supportive community,

Lucy Crabtree 22:11

One of the effects is isolation, which can lead to depression, even dementia and other mental health issues. However, I want to be clear that I am not saying that to be deaf or be hard of hearing automatically means that you are depressed or have mental health issue. It's not the hearing loss in and of itself that leads to that. What I mean is that our hearing society is not always supportive of or inclusive of people who are deaf or hard of hearing. So what I mean by that is like, yes, maybe I am the person who is hard of hearing. And there are things that I need to do to be included in something. I wear my hearing aids, I situate myself for optimal lip eating. But communication takes both parties involved. Most of us know that. So I've done my part. But now I need the other person or the other party to do their part. If they don't, or they won't, then I won't be included. So that's what I mean by society is what isolates us. So maybe I want to do something, I want to go somewhere. But it's not going to be accessible. And that's not my fault. I didn't do anything to make that situation not accessible. But if it's not accessible, I'm going to stay home, which is isolating, and that keeps happening repeatedly over and over again. It can be isolating. So that's what I mean by hearing loss can lead to isolation. And then that is the isolation itself that can be mental health issues, dementia and other depression, all that kind of thing.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 24:07

I'm thinking that during this time when everyone is supposed to be wearing face masks. That must be really hard.

Lucy Crabtree 24:20

It is very hard. I live in an area where we have a mask mandate. And when I go to church, we are meeting in person right now, but we wear masks the whole time we're at church, and it has been discouraging because it changed the way that I fellowship on Sundays. So I go to church, and if someone wants to talk to me, I really need them to take their mask off. But then that puts me at risk, right? Because now they're talking to me and I might be getting some of their COVID spit out or whatever. So that puts me at risk. And even when I go out in public I am being intentional about only going to stores where I can do the self-checkout, because I don't want to have to deal with the cashier or another store employee. And if I do end up someplace for whatever reason where I go through the regular checkout and have someone else scan my items, then that's the time where I will just... I normally identify as hard of hearing but for a few minutes I put on a more deaf identity. And I don't speak at all because if I speak, they think that I can hear if they just talk louder, and I can't because I'm a lip reader, and I need to see their face. So if I have to go through a regular check-out, they're going to check out mine. I don't say anything, I just pointed my ears and I shrug so that they know I can't hear we're not going to be able to communicate. So far it's worked out okay, the time that I've had to do that,

maybe one or two times, they just started talking louder, and I just stare at them till it gets really awkward. And then, then we move on. It's usually a fairly simple chain of action. I know that they're probably asking paper or plastic or something, something simple. But it has made me much less willing to go out not just because of the virus itself, although that is certainly a reason. But because I just don't want to deal with everyone wearing the mask. If I have heard from some friends who are Deaf or who are hard of hearing that going out in public just raises their anxiety more. And I feel that, too. Like I just, it's already a little bit. It can be a little bit anxiety inducing to be out in public anyway, because you're constantly having to watch your environment, watch people's faces, trying to figure out if someone getting your attention or figure out what's going on around you. But at least we can see people's faces and kind of guess what they wanted or figure out what they were trying to say. And now we can't do that. And now it's a public health hazard, right, if you say take your mask off. So yeah, so I just stay home, stay home a lot more than I maybe normally would. And I am single and I do live alone. So I do have my own little COVID pod that I've chosen intentionally. So I do make sure to spend time with people but it's the same people. So anyway, long, long story short, yes, people wearing masks does change how I interact with the world right now.

Eric Schumacher 27:49

Well, right now, we're in the middle of national discussions about prejudice and inclusion. And I'm realizing that I don't see, I can't remember seeing much discussion about those who are deaf and hard of hearing. Why do you think that is?

Lucy Crabtree 28:10

So that's a great question. First of all, that's a wonderful question. And I think it's actually a bigger question about disability... it's a larger question about disability. And disabled people are so much alike, that we're often not even on the list of people who are marginalized. So when do you see tweets or articles, and they're talking about, you know, inclusion, oppression, they'll list, often they'll list like people of color, they'll list gender as an issue or, you know, aging, sometimes they'll list aging, but they rarely mention disability at all. So right off the bat, like we're not even on the list to begin with. And there are a lot of reasons that may be I don't know all of them for sure. I know that even within those marginalized groups, they themselves may have recognized disability. So if you're talking about, for example, you're talking about you know, a community of color like they are already marginalized right? They're already oppressed, but you don't often hear them talk about the disabled people of color in their communities. And I am not 100% sure why that is. There are lots of theories about it. My theory is that when you have a disability, you do not fit society's ideals of perfection of beauty of production or being productive. And they would rather just not deal with us at all. Maybe they see us as a drain on their resources or they don't see us as being oppressed so much as they feel sorry for us. There's an element of feeling pity and not in a compassionate way but in a condescending way. But again, that's part of a much bigger conversation to have about disability. But, but my point is that right off the bat, disability is not even part of the conversation. With hearing loss specifically, I would say, first of all, there's still a lot of stigma related to hearing loss. And when I say stigma I have in mind, especially people who identify more as hard of hearing or late-deafened, people who don't have a strong sense of identity related to their experience. So they may not feel comfortable disclosing their hearing loss or be ready to participate in conversations about it. They don't want to draw attention to it. I experienced this often, whereas, especially someone who's late-deafened, and they may not know what

accommodations exist, and therefore may not know to ask for them. And finally, the events where these conversations are happening, whether, you know, a podcast or some sort of, you know, citizen forum or zoom call or whatever, like those events themselves, are often not accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. So even even will know that we can request a certain accommodation, the organizers are often so unaware of the need, that to request the accommodation often also means that we have to educate the organizers about what the accommodation is, how it works, where to get it, how much it can cost, why it's important. And that's really exhausting. You know, that takes time out of our lives to have to do that. It really does something to you, when you constantly have to make the case that you matter and should be at the table. So sometimes, you weigh the amount of work that it might take just to be part of the conversation, sometimes it doesn't feel worth it and you feel like just forget it. It's gonna be too much work, and I can't even get to the conversation.

Eric Schumacher 32:12

Well, I want to thank you for being patient with us in conversation. Because as you and I started talking about doing this podcast, one of the things you asked was, there needs to be a transcript of this of this episode, if I'm going to do it so that is accessessable. And you very patiently helped point me to transcription resources. And they've worked great. And so by now, by the time this episode airs, we should have transcripts of all of our past episodes.

Lucy Crabtree 32:51

That's good.

Eric Schumacher 32:53

And so I, I just think of the number of women and men who haven't had access to these conversations that we've been having on Worthy, and then when I hear you talk about the potential for loneliness, it just makes me want to be able to include them in our conversations more. And so thank you for that. We want to shift the conversation a bit to relationships, particularly within the church. What are some ways that we can honor and respect our friends who have hearing loss when we are engaging in interpersonal communication?

Lucy Crabtree 33:37

Sure. My first suggestion is to simply ask the person how can you best communicate with them. They know their own preferences and needs best. As I said earlier, we are not a monolith. We all have different needs and different preferences. And then believe them and then follow through with what they tell you. And it's okay to ask, "Well, if I did this, would that work?" But the times that I've been discouraged have been someone just decided they knew what was best without checking with me, or without really even knowing me that well, and just doing what they thought was best. So it's fine if you think of an idea, just check with the other person and make sure that that might work. And, more practically, I would say, just speak clearly. Don't mumble, don't over enunciate. If you're typically a fast talker, you might just slow down a little bit to the point that you feel like you're over enunciating. But it just might feel that way to you. I know we were just talking about the masks, but ideally, make sure your whole face is visible and don't cover your mouth. You know, don't be wiping off your mouth or anything like that, if you're sitting across the table with someone like at a restaurants, for example. You know, sometimes at restaurants, they have no the ketchup and the salt and everything right there in the

middle, you might need to move that so that there's an unobstructed view of your face. Also, make sure that you're where you're sitting is well-lit. Don't sit with your back to the light. Sit where the light's falling on your face so that the other person can see you. Because a lot of communication is not so much on the mouth itself. But it's the whole face - the facial expressions - because whether or not someone's a good lip reader, and not everyone is not everyone who is deaf or hard of hearing is skilled at lip reading, they may still be relying on the rest of your face to kind of get a clue on the tone of the conversation. Whether you've asked a question or made a statement, and that kind of thing. I also cannot stress this enough to remove the phrase, "Never mind," from your vocabulary. I don't decide for someone else, whether the information they miss is important to you or not. So if someone says something and I say What did you say? If they say never mind they have decided for me what information I get or not. Now maybe they knew legitimately that the information was not that important. That might be. But that's not someone else's decision to make for me. If someone asked for information, and you withhold that, that is a form of oppression. I also suggest that people rephrase themselves rather than repeat themselves. So if we're talking and you keep saying something, and I keep saying what, just saying the exact same thing over and over again is not going to help. I'm not going to suddenly magically understand what you said. So sometimes it's picking a different word or rephrasing what you're saying is really helpful. And be patient. We're not trying to not understand you, we're not deliberately annoying you we're not not paying attention. And I know it doesn't look like it. But we're often working very hard to kind of fill in the blanks. Because even if we are good lip readers, whether or not we're lip readers is not point; the point is that when we're in a conversation, it's like playing Wheel of Fortune. You have some of the information there. And they're constantly trying to fill in the gaps of what the other person's saying, given the context and make it all make sense. That's a lot of mental work, we're working really hard, even if it doesn't look like it. So please be patient. And remember that we're just people too. We're not ministry projects, we're people with the same human needs for friendship and fellowship and a sense of purpose. So just treat us that way.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 38:14

Thank you so much for that. Thank you for that. And I just have to say, this has been a season for me, of realizing how utterly blind I have been to the oppression of other people. And it started a few years ago with people of color, with gender. And people now listening to you. And thinking to myself, I don't think I ever actually thought or gave a thought to the fact that there are people around me, my mother, now who's 97, who's almost completely deaf now, and, and I never really considered the courage that it takes, the perseverance that it takes, the faith that it takes for you, for my mom, to continue to say, please, I want to hear what you're saying. In essence, I want to hear what you're saying. But I don't understand. Please say it again. So thank you for doing what you're doing and for being courageous and for not giving up on us. Because we are just so out of it.

Lucy Crabtree 39:50

Thank you. Thank you.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 39:52

So talk to us if you would, for a moment about your experience in the local church. Are local churches inclusive? How are they a safe place? Are they supportive? What's your experience been?

Lucy Crabtree 40:15

I have had good experiences, and I have had discouraging experiences, sometimes in the same place. So I come from, I run in circles that lean more theologically conservative, reformed, reformed-ish. So that's where I'm coming from. So I can only speak to that. I can't speak to mainline or progressive experiences. In my experience, most churches are not inclusive. I mean, the American with Disabilities Act was passed back in the 90's. Churches pushed to be exempt from it. Some churches may have voluntarily gone along with it. Most did not. And as a result, churches and individuals in them just don't think about inclusion or accessibility. It's not on their radar. And then this become kind of a chicken in the egg situation, right? The church is non inclusive, so the people with disabilities don't come and then the church thinks, well, there's no need for it. So we're not going to do it so they don't come. It's just all kind of feeds off of itself. I have had conversations with church leaders, where I have asked for a specific accommodation, or suggested a small tweak to like the way they do a program, only to be told no, like, no, we're just not going to do that. Or they will flat out say to me, the problem with that is and then proceeds to tell me what the problem is. And that just made me feel like I was the problem. Like I was a burden, I was a hindrance to their ministry version. Or they were telling me that I just needed to figure it out. They put the burden on me, well, maybe if you did XYZ, then you could participate. Or I've also had people say something to the effect of, "This is just the way you are. You have to set your own limits and realize you are not going to get to do everything." And in one sense there's an element of truth to that statement. Like we all have limits; we all can't do everything. But the timing in which it was said and the tone in which it was said often came across to me like it was all on me to figure out how to include myself, which is... you can't include yourself, like you need other people to include you. And I would say that's been a common theme across different churches that I've been in. I've been in several, you know, throughout my life. Um, churches can be reluctant to make changes in order to provide accommodations for just one person. And that's something that's come up again and again, for me, is that accommodations do cost money, like you can't get away from that. And churches in particular, often, if they do provide an accommodation, they want to do it for a fee for low cost. And on one hand, like I am sympathetic to that, because sometimes, especially small churches that have smaller budgets, I want to be sympathetic to that you just don't have a lot of money, a lot of money to spare. On the other hand, that's not the way of Jesus. Like what Jesus does is Jesus goes to people on the margins, he leaves the 99 to get the one. And he does that at great cost himself. If we are churches are not modeling that with our budget with our time then what are we telling people about who we value and who we don't value. Something that I appreciate about the church I'm in now is that my pastors will often say if it helps only one person, if you want to do this, that's really a blessing. For me. That is not something that I have heard often from churches. And the other hand my more positive experiences have happened mainly when I have built relationships with people and they've gotten to know me, I've gotten to know them. And they find ways to be more inclusive and more accommodating. So it can happen. But it takes a long time sometimes to get there because you're building those relationships and takes time to get to know people and for them to know what to do.

Eric Schumacher 45:08

I think that point you made was so great as, as I was thinking about, I was thinking, it was really sad, it may be sad just to hear what you've experienced. And I know you're not alone in that. And as I think about Jesus, he's somewhat famous for his ministry to people with disabilities. And you're right, it was the religious leaders, and the elite, who looked down on those persons, and we're happy to have them

excluded. And Jesus would put them to shame in how he went after the one and risks, you know, even lost his reputation because of what he was willing to do to minister to someone. And what you said about the sort of circular effect of, well, why would we put this in place? There's no deaf people here. And of course, they're not going to show up if there's no accommodation for them. So I'm thinking, like we're coming coming up on the end of our time, and I wish we could talk forever. But I'm thinking so as a pastor who is largely in a church where there's a hearing community, and we want to make ourselves accessible to and inclusive of people who are deaf and hearing loss, what are some steps that local churches can take to be more inclusive of those with hearing loss? I'm thinking services, Bible studies, small groups, that sort of thing.

Lucy Crabtree 47:01

My first suggestion is you need to look at your budget and the line item in there for accommodation. Just assume that anything that you want to do is going to cost money so start now. Maybe you need to do a fundraising campaign to save up? I don't know, do what you're going to do. But start with your budget and make sure that you have money available for accommodations. I personally advocate for live captioning when I can because that will indicate your willingness to be accessible and inclusive. Now some people who are deaf or hard of hearing might prefer a sign language interpreter even with the captioning available. But I like to start with the captioning. Just start there have it available. At my church we use this app called Otter to provide live captioning. It's like a voice recognition technology. You can do that. But you can pay someone, a professional transcriber who can listen and type what they're hearing from the sermon. You might provide someone just sermon notes before the sermon or after church. A lot of this depends on who's in the congregation or what they might need. If you really don't have anyone at all who is deaf or hard of hearing you can talk with your local community like maybe you have a local chapter of the National Association for the Deaf. Many states have the state Association for the Deaf; you can check with your state's Commission for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing. You can check with the Hearing Loss Association of America, they have chapters all over the US, as well as the Association for Late-Deafened Adults. You can reach out to them and ask them what is our community like? Are there any deaf or hard of hearing people around us? What do they need? They can better inform you of what your particular community might want or need. Shifting to Bible studies or small group settings. If you're using a video based study, make sure that the videos that captioned. If they're not, don't use the video. Find some other way to convey that same information. If you're not meeting right now, because of COVID or you're limiting in person gatherings, and you're meeting virtually, find a platform that supports live captioning. I use Google Meet for a lot a lot for this purpose, both professionally and personally. Or for a platform like Zoom, you will have to pay a third party to provide that captions. It might be an app like this voice recognition app, it might be a professional transcriber. When you are in a conversation a group conversation like a Bible study, talk one at a time. Keep your head up when you're praying. I don't do this in every setting but sometimes I will ask people to raise their hand or give a visual of "Here" when they want to talk so that I know where to look. And when possible, provide notes, questions, outline whatever it is ahead of time. This can either be a handout that you give people when they come in, then it can be something you email out before the group meets. And I really recommend making this as equitable as possible. If you have questions to share with people ahead of time, share with everyone, not only the person who's deaf or hard of hearing, and one of the things that I've tried to make the case for at my current church is that that things that we do, the steps that we take are for all of us. They're not, they shouldn't only be for me, like they

probably will benefit a lot of people. For example, when we have prayer meetings, instead of having someone stand up in the congregation and share their prayer request, we bring the microphone over to them, or they come to the front of the room to share their prayer request. And that's not just for me, that's for all of us. Who won't benefit from better communication, right? That's all this really is improving communication. That's good for everyone.

Eric Schumacher 51:26

Yeah, that's great. I suspect that in many to most churches, even that don't have any known Deaf persons in them now, that there will be many people who would benefit particularly who are experiencing, who are Late-Deafened are experiencing age related hearing loss, but won't say anything, these things could be immediately beneficial. Lucy, thank you for being such a great voice and advocate. And thank you for being a patient friend, who's willing to both correct and inform. You've been a benefit to my life. And I think this podcast will help you be a benefit to many more.

Lucy Crabtree 52:22

Yeah, thank you. Thank you so much for your willingness to listen and to do the hard things and do the work of inclusion. I really appreciate that. And thank you.

Eric Schumacher 52:34

Thank you, friends for listening to this episode of The Worthy podcast. You've been listening to our special guests, Lucy Crabtree. You can connect with her on Twitter at @LucyCrabbKC. That's all one word. And you can join her and her friends in pestering me about not having watched the West Wing.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 52:58

Or Hamilton

Lucy Crabtree 52:59

and Hamilton.

Eric Schumacher 53:02

Yeah, yeah.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 53:04

What's wrong with you?

Eric Schumacher 53:05

What is wrong with me? We don't have enough time left in the podcast to answer that question. Maybe someday we can have Jenny on and she can tell you.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 53:14

Oh, let's do. Lucy Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much for taking time.

Lucy Crabtree 53:24

Thank you for having me and encouraging me to have these conversations.