

00:00:15:01 - 00:00:20:02

Vanessa

Hey, everyone, welcome to Peace Talks. Brave Conversations About Formation, Justice and peace.

00:00:20:09 - 00:00:29:06

Suzie

Today's conversation is with Curtis Zackery, Speaker, author, and pastor. CZ's passion and enthusiasm for rest and Sabbath is so inspiring.

00:00:29:23 - 00:00:34:10

Vanessa

Our conversation digs deep into what Sabbath means for all created beings.

00:00:34:19 - 00:00:38:10

Suzie

We trust that you will get as much out of your time with us as we did.

00:00:39:06 - 00:00:42:09

Vanessa

Susie, thank you so much for joining us. It's an honor to have you with us.

00:00:43:00 - 00:00:44:05

CZ

Excited to be here.

00:00:45:01 - 00:00:51:09

Vanessa

Hey, we'd love to start out with a couple of free association questions. Just fun things to get us going.

00:00:51:23 - 00:00:52:14

CZ

All right.

00:00:52:21 - 00:00:55:07

Vanessa

If you would, tell us what you had for breakfast today.

00:00:55:23 - 00:00:59:16

CZ

Today I had a Lara bar and some coffee.

00:01:00:08 - 00:01:01:09

Vanessa

Is that like a standard?

00:01:02:17 - 00:01:08:04

CZ

Pretty regularly. Not a heavy breakfast guy, but sometimes I'll break out of that.

00:01:08:12 - 00:01:12:16

Suzie

What's your favorite, Lara? Bar It's a big argument in our family.

00:01:12:21 - 00:01:14:04

CZ

Peanut butter cookie.

00:01:14:04 - 00:01:14:18

Suzie

Really?

00:01:15:03 - 00:01:16:17

CZ

Yes.

00:01:17:19 - 00:01:19:19

Suzie

We are an apple pie family.

00:01:21:01 - 00:01:24:00

CZ

Too sweet. I need to keep it in the middle of the road.

00:01:25:01 - 00:01:29:21

Vanessa

I love that. I love that. Second question. What are you not good at?

00:01:31:08 - 00:01:53:19

CZ

Man, I am not good at self-promotion at all. I'm really not good at building and marketing when it comes to promoting my own ideas. It's both a challenge and just the part of who I am, but it is what it is.

00:01:53:21 - 00:01:56:06

Vanessa

Such a catch 22 when you're in.

00:01:56:08 - 00:01:57:08

CZ

It is a danger.

00:01:57:10 - 00:02:02:01

Vanessa

Of writing and putting ideas that are so, so good out there.

00:02:02:01 - 00:02:04:12

CZ

So simple, man. Thank you.

00:02:04:23 - 00:02:08:10

Vanessa

And last but not least, what is your current indulgence?

00:02:09:20 - 00:02:37:23

CZ

Indulgence. You know what? I just started watching the show Lost again. I watched it whenever that was however many years ago. And I told a friend about it, and I wanted to see the first couple of episodes just to make sure that it still holds up. I started watching it again, and the most incredible gift in the world was given to me....

00:02:38:00 - 00:02:44:09

CZ

I cannot remember anything.

00:02:44:09 - 00:02:45:19

Suzie

Are you watching it with your boys?

00:02:46:15 - 00:02:49:00

CZ

No, they're not there yet.

00:02:50:09 - 00:02:50:17

Vanessa

Okay.

00:02:51:16 - 00:02:54:05

CZ

Yeah. That's a bad dream waiting to happen.

00:02:54:05 - 00:02:54:15

Suzie

Yeah.

00:02:56:06 - 00:02:59:06

Vanessa

Awesome. Well, thanks for playing the game. I appreciate you. No doubt.

00:03:00:10 - 00:03:02:20

CZ

I don't really think I had much choice, but, you know.

00:03:03:07 - 00:03:05:21

Vanessa

You didn't. You didn't. None whatsoever.

00:03:06:14 - 00:03:16:11

Suzie

All right, we'll see. Tell us how you're spending your days these days. Like, what makes up all you do? A lot of interesting things. So what makes up the work that you do?

00:03:18:00 - 00:03:59:03

CZ

Yeah, I think it's variable from week to week. A lot of times from day to day, I get to spend a lot of time with people opening the Word, sharing cups of coffee. A lot of conversation. But the reason for that might vary at different times. Most of my time is spent walking alongside people who are dealing with burnout, disillusionment, people who are spiritually depleted. Getting to spend a lot of time talking to staff, teams, boards and vocational ministry teams so that they can find sustainability and health and wholeness in their work.

00:04:00:02 - 00:04:05:11

CZ

Yeah. So it's kind of a variable from day to day, but that's most of what I give my time to.

00:04:06:13 - 00:04:08:18

Vanessa

That's awesome. That's so interesting.

00:04:08:23 - 00:04:30:02

Suzie

Are you finding that you're busier at this point in time just because of the landscape of vocational ministry? I can't tell you the number of the statistic that I heard recently, but, you know, a lot of people in vocational ministry, either they want to quit or just walk away altogether.

00:04:32:03 - 00:05:01:11

CZ

Yeah, the statistics are really extraordinary when you look at every sphere of ministry life and not just pastors, but you find people who are serving in executive director positions of non-profits who are doing ministry work. It's just really hard. So I would say appropriately so. Yeah. I try not to ever really be busy, to be honest, but I try to keep a regular rhythm.

00:05:01:16 - 00:05:12:20

CZ

But yes, this season definitely represents a lot of opportunity to be able to have conversations with folks in the landscape that we find ourselves so needed.

00:05:13:20 - 00:05:45:05

Vanessa

Well, in your book *Soul Rest*, I'm going to quote you here. You say, To dig into Sabbath is to shape your life, the people, the calendar, the disciplines, to shape them around the idea that obeying God is a marathon, not a sprint. And this marathon has scheduled rest stops that will guarantee you finish in one piece. Would you give us your best case for why every human needs this Sabbath?

00:05:46:16 - 00:06:11:05

CZ

Well, first of all, that was a deep cut right there. That was a quote. I probably haven't thought of that since I wrote it down. I think it's so imperative for us to understand that **God created humanity with a rhythm of Sabbath in mind**. You know, it says in the beginning of the Bible in Genesis chapter one, the creation account, God's making everything he's speaking.

00:06:11:05 - 00:06:35:12

CZ

It comes into existence, says he forms the human, breathes life into his nostrils. And then in Genesis chapter two, verses two through three, three times, it says God rested from the work that he had done. And it's really interesting because I think about that as somebody who's just a simple human being. And I asked the question, Well, **why would God have the rest at all?**

00:06:35:12 - 00:07:00:17

CZ

If he's God, he doesn't need rest. He can just tell us we're supposed to rest. And then it says in Exodus 31 verse 17 that God rested and he was refreshed. So that even deepens the plot for me. I'm going, Wait a minute, not only did he rest, but there was something that was so refreshing that it was refreshing to God himself.

00:07:01:08 - 00:07:20:19

CZ

And it goes back to those two verses early in Genesis, when it says that he rested from the work that he had done, he looks back on everything that he made with his hands, and he said It is good, it is finished, it's enough. He was satisfied. And he goes on later to tell the human beings that he created.

00:07:21:15 - 00:07:43:01

CZ

It's the same forever that for six days they should labor. On the seventh day, they should do the same thing, that they should stop to recognize the work that they do with their hands. Put that aside to remember the work that could only be done by the hand of God alone. So that's kind of a reflection of where God found his rest.

00:07:43:01 - 00:08:07:11

CZ

But some people might say, but isn't that the Old Testament? What does that have to do with today? What if you fast forward in the New Testament to Jesus bloody and beaten on a cross for sins that he didn't commit. He takes on the penalty from the human beings. They couldn't pay themselves. There's a work that he did on the cross that could only be done by his hand alone.

00:08:07:22 - 00:08:37:22

CZ

And he, right before he died, says it is finished. And what is that? The work that only he can do. And after that comes significant risk. So I think for me, **the rhythm of Sabbath has been built into the creation of all things from the very beginning in human beings, not only get the benefit**

of the model of rest that God showed us, but we get the benefit from the same type of refreshment that he got as well.

00:08:38:03 - 00:08:58:07

CZ

We remember the work that could only be done by his hand alone. So that doesn't just affect us on one day a week taking a break. Right. Matter of fact, that can be infused into all of our thinking realizing our identity, our worth, our value are not found in what we make or what we produce, but ultimately whose we are.

00:08:58:12 - 00:09:07:05

CZ

Yes. And that is a gift to all of us that if we're not careful, we'll miss here on Earth, even as followers of the way of Jesus.

00:09:07:06 - 00:09:35:08

Vanessa

Yeah. I think about even the interconnectedness of all of life with the land. Obviously, there's interconnection between humans. There's interconnection with God. In people. There's also interconnection between God in the land and people in the land. And there's this beautiful quote that I love that says A ground that has not lain fallow cannot bear fruit. And that is just so true for us as well.

00:09:35:19 - 00:09:37:20

Vanessa

So thank you for that. Thank you for that.

00:09:38:13 - 00:10:04:08

Suzie

Well, CZ, the Center is hosting a retreat in September that we're all looking forward to. It's called Nourish, and it's inviting weary justice workers to come and rest. Given what you've seen, what is the unique weariness that those who are at the intersection of spiritual formation and the work of justice, what are they experiencing and what's unique to that weariness?

00:10:05:21 - 00:10:31:20

CZ

Yeah. There was a quote from Mother Teresa that really summarizes what I feel like so many justice workers that I have conversations with experience. She said, Pray for me that I not loosen my grip on the hand of Jesus, even under the guise of the ministry to the poor. Basically what she was saying is, pray that I not do a bunch of Jesus stuff without Jesus.

00:10:31:21 - 00:10:59:08

CZ

Right. And I think sometimes the function of what it takes to do the work that we are doing, which is good work, inherently can take over and become almost an autopilot type of situation. And we know how to do the things that are necessary to be done. But there's a set of verses in Psalm 127 that says unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.

00:10:59:17 - 00:11:34:03

CZ

And I think sometimes with good intentions, we attempting to do good work for God are not doing that. Work with God. And it happens subtly. It happens inadvertently. And I think sometimes, especially those who are inundated with challenges on a daily basis that are extremely heavy to carry. Like our justice workers. That is something that can almost feel like it's optional, that you would find some sort of respite and rest in the midst of your work.

00:11:34:03 - 00:11:40:08

CZ

But we all know it will not sustain unless it's connected to the source of life.

00:11:40:20 - 00:12:11:18

Vanessa

It's so good. So good. I'm thinking about just as we sort of shift a little bit and turn toward wrapping up our time together, we like to ask our guests, what are some of the categories around formation, justice, and even peace that are not part of the conversation? What are some of the questions that maybe we as individuals or as a community could or should be asking?

00:12:13:06 - 00:12:41:11

CZ

Yeah, I think we just kind of touched a little bit on what I feel like is the biggest one. We very seldom think about sustainability and longevity. We enter into the type of work that we do. There is an acute awareness of desperate need, and we want to jump in with both feet to serving people. Communities that are under-resourced, underrepresented, are voiceless.

00:12:41:19 - 00:13:27:07

CZ

There's an urgency, a rightful urgency to show up to that type of work. We want to spend ourselves for the sake of others, and I think it's exactly what the way of Jesus informs about our lives. But with that, there's a phrase that I try to utter to myself semi-regularly, and it's that God provides what he requires. And I think sometimes there's, again, a venturing into a good biblical work with great intentions, but we forget to grab some of the stuff along the way that will give us the ability to continue on for the foreseeable future.

00:13:28:01 - 00:13:57:18

CZ

One of the things when you talk about the intersection of information and justice work that we really don't think a lot about is even in our practices, we don't think about sustainability. We grab what we get when we can. We'll grab a vacation, maybe a sweet run of seven or ten days of solid reading and Bible time, but we almost gorge on those moments and we try to eat as much as we can in store for the winter.

00:13:58:07 - 00:14:28:09

CZ

We don't stop and look at what can I do for the foreseeable future. That will afford me regular intervals of respite renewal. Because we know, like we talked about earlier, it's a marathon, not a sprint. And when I think about the marathon analogy, I've done it a couple times. I'm not a

great runner, but one of the greatest gifts to me in the middle of a marathon is those tables that have water in oranges and little gel packs or whatever they got.

00:14:28:12 - 00:14:52:17

CZ

I'll take whatever you got. I just need something to keep me going. And if there wasn't these little pitstops, I would probably drop and somebody would be waiting at the finish line for me and I would never show up. And I think that happens, sadly to so many of our justice workers. They're giving their all hoping to make it to the end and really with no respite along the way, wind up kind of fading.

00:14:53:04 - 00:14:53:11

Vanessa

Yeah.

00:14:54:10 - 00:15:18:13

Suzie

You know, I imagine that in your work, you find yourself in a lot of dark spaces with people and really difficult places with them. And I also imagine that those are some of the most holy moments that you get to experience with people. So for you, what are you seeing? What are you encouraged by either through your work or outside of your work?

00:15:18:22 - 00:15:22:09

Suzie

What's encouraging you where you're seeing God at work?

00:15:24:03 - 00:16:00:15

CZ

Yeah, that's a great question. I think if I was to summarize my ministry philosophy, it would be simple, small and slow There are beautiful benefits to operating according to that timeline with that type of scale. In mind, but there are also inherent challenges that come with it. I think one of those challenges is seldom when you're in those deep, dark moments Do you see the immediacy of a return of investment or, you know, that type of thing.

00:16:00:15 - 00:16:23:12

CZ

But the beauty is in tilling the soil I think there really is something to be said about, you know, I think when we think about breaks or that word is one that we throw around like faith spaces and churches and things like that. There's one thing that comes to mind for most people with breakthrough, and that's like coming up on the ground.

00:16:23:17 - 00:17:03:21

CZ

It's a flower blooming, you know, it's new growth but another way to look at breakthrough is the other way. It's going down and breaking through hard terrain. And I think for me, the gift is more than anything else. I feel like the things that I'm seeing as victories or wins are probably more around that kind of breakthrough where what has been hard and definitely solid for a long time starting to tenderize and maybe there's some open openings some cracks in the surface in order for water to get in so that new life can emerge.

00:17:04:14 - 00:17:33:13

Vanessa

Yeah, and I think so often people forget that in order for something to sprout through the dirt, it must survive the long winter. And in order to do that has to go deep and sort of just transitioning a little bit. I would love to hear from you about your new organization, your new nonprofit called Find Rest. Could you give us a little tidbit about what you're doing in that sphere?

00:17:34:17 - 00:17:43:13

CZ

I already told you what my one thing I'm not good at is we're at the very end of our time. So, yeah, we're promoting you.

00:17:43:18 - 00:17:46:18

Suzie

We are. Yeah, we're doing it. So you just go, I.

00:17:46:23 - 00:17:48:16

Vanessa

Just talk about what you want to talk.

00:17:48:16 - 00:18:16:06

CZ

Right now, I'm really excited and I feel like I have such a strong sense of why behind it that it really does make me excited to talk about the what of it ultimately. Just to kind of summarize, even getting to this place, I feel like I arrived at a spot where I was in so many conversations with folks who either had come across my book or I was just talking about what I'd learned in my own season of growth.

00:18:16:06 - 00:18:41:15

CZ

And they would say things like, I resonate so much with what you're talking about. The only problem is I still work at a church or I still lead a nonprofit, or I'm still an executive director, or I'm on a board and I don't really know where to turn to process some of these things. And so immediately I kicked into gear, trying to be a proxy to places of growth and learning, you know, connect them with friends maybe that I had learned from the books that I'd read.

00:18:42:06 - 00:19:08:17

CZ

But one of the things that I started to discover is there was this middle space that wasn't necessarily always going to be a getaway to a beautiful landscape for a retreat. Or maybe it wasn't even an intensive counseling situation for five days. Maybe it was just about having some intentional conversations and place to process about what you're experiencing and feeling to be able to pour back into those conversations.

00:19:08:17 - 00:19:36:08

CZ

Some restorative language and conversation and from there be able to, you know, redirect them and maybe put hands in the hands of others where help can be found. So I started this ministry called Find Rest, and it really is with that intention, three kind of concentric circles at the center is, I hope to have one on one conversations and people who are experiencing the spiritually depleted seasons.

00:19:36:22 - 00:20:16:06

CZ

The second ring would be smaller groups of people, some cohorts of like minded individuals from different spheres and spaces that might be experiencing burnout or disillusionment. Or want to even stave it off. Yeah. And then the third ring is creating resources to be able to pour into communities. And my primary focus honestly around this conversation are communities that are under-resourced and really I'm a biracial individual and people of color are not really in abundant conversation around self-care, social care and trying to look at sustainability and longevity by default.

00:20:16:09 - 00:20:23:15

CZ

It's not to say that it's not present, but I really want to fight for access to these resources for all people. Yeah.

00:20:24:05 - 00:20:26:03

Vanessa

Yeah. I'll let you take that.

00:20:26:03 - 00:20:48:20

Suzie

Well, we want to know, where are you finding rest currently? Because that's a big thing that you're doing that we're super grateful for as someone in ministry who's benefitted from your care. You know, it is a really great thing that you're doing, and so is as someone who carries the weary, who carries the brokenhearted to Jesus, where are you finding rest?

00:20:48:23 - 00:20:49:05

Suzie

Yeah.

00:20:50:09 - 00:21:21:04

CZ

Well, number one, I have to say, my wife is a gift. She is aware of the need for stewardship of a life that is given over to carrying heavy conversations. And so she is very gracious in helping me to find space. I love to read. And reading for me is a salve to many wounds at times. It provides water in dry spaces.

00:21:21:09 - 00:21:46:00

CZ

I have friends who I am able to have beautiful life giving conversations with, both locally and then also from afar. And I love to run. I alluded to earlier. That's a gift to me as well to kind of get out and nature a little bit and get some fresh air. And I feel like, just like I said, it's not really a desperate need for one large thing.

00:21:46:00 - 00:21:56:19

CZ

To be the respite that I need, but finding regular intervals to check in with myself, with others, to make sure that I'm living in a sustainable way.

00:21:57:00 - 00:22:18:08

Vanessa

Yeah, I love just the idea of rhythms, having rhythms that create momentum and create sustainability in the midst of the practice themselves. So thank you so much for the work that you're doing and it's been so nice to talk to you today and I'm looking forward to nourish.

00:22:19:08 - 00:22:21:17

CZ

Oh, I can't wait. It's going to be fun. Thanks for having me.

00:22:21:20 - 00:22:41:19

Suzie

We were really excited when we found out we were getting to talk with you and the work that you do is so important. And as someone who's not good at self-promotion, I would tell anybody to entrust some care with you because you're really great at what you do. So thank you for what you're doing. And we really trust God in you.

00:22:43:04 - 00:22:45:10

CZ

Man, that means a lot. Thank you so much. Yeah.

00:22:46:00 - 00:22:47:21

Vanessa

All right. Thanks for being with us.

00:22:49:22 - 00:22:54:17

Suzie

Thanks for listening to Peace Talks, a production of the Center for Formation, Justice and Peace.

00:22:55:02 - 00:23:01:01

Vanessa

Each episode is produced on YouTube. Cherokee and Shawnee Land by Brett Simmons and Creative Means.

00:23:01:09 - 00:23:10:13

Suzie

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00:23:11:05 - 00:23:12:00

Vanessa

Grace and Peace.

