

WYF_Ep85_LisaFields

Rasool Berry: [00:00:00] Hey y'all, it's Rasool Berry. Thanks for joining me on this special "Best of Where Ya From?" episode. We went back and selected some of our favorite conversations to share with you, so that no matter when you started listening to *Where Ya From?*, you could check them out. Today, I wanted to go all the way back to our very first episode featuring the one, the only Lisa Fields.

I love this conversation because Lisa opens up about the reasons why she sought to examine her faith more closely and encourage others to do the same with her work at the Jude 3 project. She also shares candidly about what it was like to enter into a field in which she was told she couldn't make it because she was a black woman.

Since we recorded this episode, Lisa also has published her first book, *When Faith Disappoints*. It's a great read which I highly recommend. Lisa's story and her work with the Jude 3 Project still inspires me all these years later, and I'm proud to share this episode again. So thanks for [00:01:00] listening and enjoy our very first episode of *Where Ya From?* with Lisa Fields.

Lisa Fields: I'll give you a quick story. When I first started Jude 3 project and I got a chance to meet with the leader of evangelical org that I had known from working on another project, we were on a call. He said, Lisa, what you're trying to do is great. But he said, you're going to have three issues. He said, your biggest hurdles and your biggest problems to fundraising and raising money is you're Black, you're a woman, and you're young.

And he wasn't even trying to be rude. He was just talking about the landscape. And so he was like, you have everything working against you. Your gender, your race, and your age. And so it's going to be an uphill battle. It almost will be impossible. So, all of those things have been challenges, but they've also opened up unique opportunities. [00:02:00]

Daniel Ryan Day: This is *Where Ya From?*, a podcast for those who believe it's important to stop and listen before we speak. Join us as we ask another Christian thought leader where you're from, and discover how their life experiences and expertise. Even if we may disagree with something they say, they offer us an important perspective that's worth thinking about.

Rasool Berry: Welcome to *Where Ya From?*. I'm Rasool Barry. What do you do when someone questions your deepest beliefs? How do you respond? What does

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it feel like to hear someone challenge core ideas that you not only believe are true, but you've built your life upon? For many of us, these doubts can cause us to question who we are.

And maybe make us wonder if we've even wasted our life believing a lie. Well, my guest today, Lisa Fields, found herself in a similar experience. And in just a moment, we will hear her describe how this season of doubt played tricks with her mind and forced her to re [00:03:00] evaluate what she believed. Eventually, this journey even led her to a new career that would not just be difficult, but almost impossible for a young black woman.

But that's getting ahead of the story. Before we jump into the show, just a note about Lisa Fields. She's the founder of the Jude 3 Project, an organization that exists to help the Christian community, and specifically those of African descent, know what they believe and why they believe it. She has degrees from North Florida and Liberty University, and she is one of the world's most sought after Christian apologists.

It's such an honor to have her on the show today. Here's Lisa Fields on *Where Ya From?*

Lisa Fields: I'm a PK, pastor's kid. So, uh, been in the church all my life. It's funny cause when I wanted to go to college, I was like, I know what I'm going to do when I graduate. I'm going to be a stockbroker, move to New York City, and then I'm going to join a mega-church [00:04:00] so I can leave church right after it's over because I never got to do that growing up.

Rasool Berry: That's funny the aspirations you had it all planned out, like yo, I'm just being able to leave right after. That was the goal. What's it like, tell us a little bit because you said that was off the gate PK. You know, what is it like being a pastor's kid?

Lisa Fields: It's not like bad, but it's just like church, I think it's all-consuming. So it's members coming to the house. So you never. . . it's like church and home kind of merged together in a sense. I felt like it was normal childhood outside of that portion of it.

Rasool Berry: Gotcha. Now, oftentimes that dynamic of a PK, like you, it's not just people coming over. It's you get to see the man of God, right? The first lady, when they get out of the public eye into private. Tell us a little bit about your relationship with your parents.

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Lisa Fields: Uh, it's pretty good. They're pretty much the same people at church as they are home, which is good. I think that [00:05:00] helps my, my relationship with Christ, not to be crazy. And so there's no resentment there. They're very committed to the local church. And I very much aspire to have the level of care that they have for people. Like an example of that recently, I called my mom and she was crying and there was a member in the church whose son had died, and she was crying as if it was like one of my brothers. And so that level of care inspires me, and it gives me like something to aim towards. Because I mean a lot of people are great orators, but there's a difference between someone who's able to speak and preach and then someone who's able to care for their flock.

Rasool Berry: Got it. Now, I got to tell you, just full disclosure. I did do my research. I did do some homework about you. So I have some intel. So I heard from a little birdie that you had some interesting aspirations one could even say some hoop dreams. Could you tell us a little bit about that?

Lisa Fields: Yes, so when I was younger I was obsessed with basketball. And my parents bought me like a Fisher Price Basketball goal.

Rasool Berry: Okay,

Lisa Fields: And I used to play on it like all the time in the front yard. And I thought I was so amazing. Back then there was no WNBA, but I was like, if somebody sees me, they're going to put me in the NBA.

Rasool Berry: They're going to see you on that Fisher Price hoop in the yard. Like, yo, we got to sign that girl.

Lisa Fields: I thought I was so good until I went to tryouts in seventh grade and I realized, like, playing by yourself, you think you're amazing, but when you start playing with other people, you realize maybe I'm not as good as I thought I was. I was good enough to make second string, but I was like, oh, okay, not NBA.

Rasool Berry: That is classic. And just to give the people a picture, right, so how tall are you?

Lisa Fields: I'm 5'1, 5'2 depending on what day it is.

Rasool Berry: There it is, there it is. But you were like, yo, I'm gonna make the league anyway. [00:07:00] But I think that does say a lot about the hope and the

belief that you have in yourself, that says a lot. I think that's pretty cool. Okay. So you're in church high school. Was it comfortable being in high school? And was that a challenge for you to have that kind of image or reputation at a time?

Lisa Fields: I was more so always been an introvert and quiet, and I would make friends in classes and invite them to church. So it didn't bother me because I've always been, like I said, introverted. If I wasn't the most popular, as long as I had, had a group of people that I could talk to I was okay.

Rasool Berry: Got it. Got it. Tell us about that transition from high school to college. You know, what was that like? Where'd you go? And what was your college experience like?

Lisa Fields: So I stayed in Jacksonville for college to go to University of North Florida. I stayed on campus so I could pretend like I was getting a college experience. It was like 30 minutes from my house so I could still have a college experience and do laundry on the weekends. And so in college, I felt like I went [00:08:00] deeper in my faith. Like critically thinking about why I believe what I believe in, not just accepting it because it was the faith that I was taught. And that came actually from Christian hip hop, listening to Flame's CD *Rewind*. And in *Rewind*, he started using terms that I had never heard before.

Rasool Berry: Exegesis?

Lisa Fields: Yeah, that was intriguing to me. And so I was like, well, I'm going to take a New Testament course. Thinking it would be like Sunday school. And so I was like, this will be an easy A. I'll get to learn some new terms. And so my professor said, the first day of class, I'm going to change everything you thought you knew about Jesus. I realized it wasn't going to be Sunday school and I really struggled during that time with my faith.

And I didn't know what to believe because I was like, I've never thought like about where the Bible came from. I think the most I thought critically about my faith was like when I was like five and I was in church and they took up offering and they were like going to give an offering to God. And I was wondering how they were going to get him the money. That's the most critical thing.

Rasool Berry: Like, yo, are they going to Venmo him? Like, how does this work?

Lisa Fields: I was like, is it going to be a sacrifice? Cause I remember hearing stories about sacrifices in Sunday school. So I was like, is that all be like a sacrifice with fire in the back where he comes and gets the money?

Rasool Berry: Okay. So do you remember like the toughest day? Like was the toughest day that first day or another moment where you heard something or read something that really kind of shook you?

Lisa Fields: I can't pinpoint a toughest day, but it was just kind of rethinking everything I believed. And you start thinking about it and start playing tricks on your mind, and then it sits with you. And then because faith is at the core of who I am, and it was what I had grown up with. If I take that away, who am I?

Rasool Berry: Right.

Lisa Fields: And so it's the core of your identity, like that's how your identity is formed and shaped. You're made in the image of God. Your purpose comes from God and you know, all of that. And so if you strip that away, then your identity at the [00:10:00] core is shaken. And so that for me was the biggest thing. Who am I? What do I believe? Has all this stuff been a lie? Have I devoted my life to certain disciplines for no reason? You know, you start just rethinking all of those things.

Rasool Berry: Right.

Lisa Fields: And that was really a struggle.

Rasool Berry: So when you started to struggle with those things, did you talk to your parents about that? Or were you too like, maybe intimidated to have that convo?

Lisa Fields: Yeah, I talked to them about it and that's when my dad introduced me to apologetics. And that's kind of where my inroads to apologetics started.

Rasool Berry: Wow.

Lisa Fields: I didn't even know what apologetics was when I got to school. And I was still bent on being a stockbroker. As I was exploring it, it was like, really, I was just exploring it because I wanted to find something to help me stay in the faith or be able to trust the Scriptures. And as I dive deeper into it, it helped me navigate and help me push back on my [00:11:00] professors. It gave me the tools I needed and it gave me other resources. Because when you hear like

somebody say, well, scholars think you think, okay, all scholars think. But then when you hear about people like Daniel Wallace, then you get a different perspective. There's a whole group of scholars that say something differently. And so it kind of helped me to see like, there's a wide range of thought on these ideas, but there was also a defining moment for me. I was in my room and I was just struggling. And I was like, God, I don't know what to believe. And I was crying and I played Bible lottery.

You know, Bible lottery is when you open the Bible and hoping to land on something good. Sometimes it works. Sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes it lands on Zephaniah. And you're like, oh, this really has nothing to do with my situation. But this time it landed on the passage, where Jesus looked at Peter and said, will you also go? And Peter said, how can I go? You have the words of eternal life. And that hit me like a ton of bricks. Because it was at that moment that I made a decision, like, where can I go? [00:12:00] This is what has been my foundation. This has kept me and I don't have all the answers, but I'm going to commit my life to finding them and helping others find them.

Rasool Berry: Wow. Okay. So you have this renewed awakening. How does that shape the rest of your collegiate experience?

Lisa Fields: So I feel like a faith that can't be tested, can't be trusted. And so I continue to test it and put it under scrutiny. Because I believe that if it was truth, it will always be found to be true. I got in a lot of back and forth with professors. Yeah, because I think from once I had that experience. And I started to get more in my faith., I had a level of confidence that I always tell young people when they're in college, never let your professors intimidate you. Just because they have a PhD doesn't mean they know more than you about your faith.

Rasool Berry: Wow.

Lisa Fields: And I think that confidence came just from me spending time in the word of God, [00:13:00] spending time studying that. Okay, you can say what you want, but there's also counter-evidence to this narrative. And you're not going to sit here and let us think that your perspective is the only perspective.

Rasool Berry: And I'm sure they love that to hear that from their student challenging them.

Lisa Fields: No, not really. Not so much.

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Rasool Berry: Do you remember a particular exchange that kind of got interesting?

Lisa Fields: Yeah. So me and my professor were going back and forth and then he just goes from reason to emotion. And he says, why did God let my daughter be born with Down Syndrome?

Rasool Berry: Whoa.

Lisa Fields: At that moment, that really also taught me something about why people have their doubts fortified is because God allowed something that is very difficult for them to process. And so at the core of his reasoning, he was upset with God for his daughter's condition.

Rasool Berry: Hmm. That's a moment right there. Like you having a discussion and debate, and then all of a sudden he takes it there, like all the emotion. Man. And like you said, [00:14:00] sometimes the issue that we're talking about is not the actual issue that is happening now. And I got to ask you this too, were there temptations? Were you struggling with just the other aspects of campus life or was it just like this sense of like, yo, I'm just growing in my faith and that's what I'm about right now.

Lisa Fields: Yeah. I mean, I had a bit of a radical campus college experience. When I was in college, that experience with God radically shifted the trajectory of my life. And I became very zealous and radical. Like I'm talking about listening to sermons all the time, listening to Christian hip hop all the time. My Saturdays, I would spend from noon to about three. I would get a group of friends and we would go to the worst neighborhood in the city, and knock on doors and share the gospel with people.

Rasool Berry: Okay. Yes.

Lisa Fields: And then at night from 11 PM to two in the morning, I would go to a club parking lot with my friends and share the gospel with people.

Rasool Berry: Wow.

Lisa Fields: So I was [00:15:00] just, I had a very radical approach. And I just wanted people to hear the gospel message. And I've believed that we had to go where people were. We couldn't wait for them to come where we were.

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Rasool Berry: So you were going to the club on Saturday night. It was just, it was a different whole situation.

Lisa Fields: That I would see people that I went to school with, yeah.

Rasool Berry: Wow. That's amazing. I mean, how did your parents feel about this new zealous Lisa that they were seeing?

Lisa Fields: Well, I think the club idea actually came from my dad. So my parents came to faith when they were teenagers and my dad used to do that when he was around that same age. So I heard stories of him doing that. And that inspired me to do it. It was a fun time. It was a fun season of my life. A lot of zeal, not a lot of wisdom.

Rasool Berry: Okay. Then we'll click on that. What does that mean? Like, what are some things you did with the zeal that you wish in hindsight with the wisdom you would have done different?

Lisa Fields: I think just being over the top in the message. You know, [00:16:00] like feeling like you have to meet a quota of sharing the gospel to a certain number of people. Like, you're not invested in discipleship. You're more investing in just trying to get people to say a prayer. And you're not thinking about like, the longterm relationships with people.

Rasool Berry: So people will respond sometimes like to it?

Lisa Fields: Yeah. So it was, it was so funny. One guy was like, man, I can't escape this. My mama been telling me I need to get my life right. I just run into random people, and now I'm at the club and you trying to pray for me.

Rasool Berry: Wow.

Lisa Fields: Hw was like, I can't escape this.

Rasool Berry: That was his sign. Okay. I give up Lord. I'm yours.

Lisa Fields: I wonder sometimes how fruitful that time was. I think it did a lot in me, even if it didn't do a lot in other people. And you never know. One plants, one waters, God gives increase.

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Rasool Berry: Exactly. You're going to see somebody in heaven like, yo, I saw you at the club. You prayed for me. I'm sure that'll happen. That'll be a fun [00:17:00] conversation. Okay. So you graduate. Decide to become a stockbroker. . .

Lisa Fields: No, I go into banking. The first job I got was as a banker for Bank of America.

Rasool Berry: Okay.

Lisa Fields: So I did that for a year. And then I continued to teach classes at my church for apologetics for my dad. And. . .

Rasool Berry: Now, was that something that had already existed or was that something that you started?

Lisa Fields: No, just. I started that because apologetics was a passion of mine, and I wanted to use my gifts and what I had learned from classes. So my dad was like, well, why don't you teach the church apologetics? So I would have Thursday night classes where people could sign up and come, and I would teach apologetics there to help our church be better at defending the faith.

And then one day after class, uh, one of the church mothers came up to me. She was like, when are you going to go to seminary? And I was like, well, later. Um, in life, and then it's like God used her words to spark, like, this is the next step for you. I [00:18:00] applied to Liberty and got in, quit my job without any plans, and moved to Lynchburg, Virginia. Cause I felt like that's what God wanted me to do.

Rasool Berry: So, wow. So from Florida to Lynchburg, Virginia. Liberty University.

Lisa Fields: Yes, that name is already scary for black people. Lynchburg.

Rasool Berry: Yes. Yeah. Was it scary for you? Did you pick up on the irony of that word?

Lisa Fields: Not till later. I think I was so pumped up on adrenaline about like, I'm about to make this big move. I've never lived away from home and I'm about to move to central Virginia. I've never even visited there before I decided to go.

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Rasool Berry: Wow. Wow. What is that like? Because, I mean, that's a pretty big culture shift, right?

Lisa Fields: Yeah. I was just like, what did I do? What did I just do? Like, am I being led by the Lord? Uh, for real?

Rasool Berry: Wow.

Lisa Fields: I just remember crying, like, oh snap, like, I don't have any family here, I don't know anybody here.

Rasool Berry: Wow. [00:19:00] Yeah. What's, what was your first experiences like?

Lisa Fields: So, uh, class obviously was, it was different. Um, not many black people there. And, um, but it was crazy because when I went to orientation and there's a, uh, the cofounder of Liberty, Elmer Towns. He's a very interesting man. But when he prayed during the opening prayer and he was like, there are some people in this room that are, God's going to use them to really change the world. And I begin to cry feeling the sense of the spirit of God, like overwhelming me, like you're supposed to be here. And his words really connected, uh, with me that day. And I remember feeling encouraged. Like I made the right decision, um, in that moment.

Rasool Berry: Wow. That's pretty intense. Now, the other thing that's different is that now you're in official classroom settings at a [00:20:00] university where they're teaching about religion and, and, and religious studies, but it's from a, you know, ostensibly Christian perspective. What was that like? And, you know, was it all that you had hoped it would be in terms of being in the classroom and learning these things?

Lisa Fields: It was still a very challenging thing. Because seminary you're constantly putting your faith under scrutiny. It's a different kind of scrutiny than the Bart Ehrman text, but you're still reading counter-narratives to what you thought what you're raised in. And so that was challenging. One of the richest parts of seminary for me was office hours with my professors.

We really went deep in the questions I had. They talked me through a lot of stuff. I'm still friends with them today. They send me encouraging messages. And so I think that to me was the most beneficial thing about my seminary experience is the after-class experience, and talking to my professors and really

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wrestling [00:21:00] through, um, the texts and points with them and pushing back and then pushing back on me.

Rasool Berry: That's great. Now, what was your experience like socially on campus?

Lisa Fields: So socially, it was very interesting. I always say that the older white men, I would think they would be more ignorant, but they were actually more aware than the students. And so I would get comments from students like, Do you know your dad? Like, is your hair a weave? Like, stuff like that. Um, you know, one girl says she unfollowed me on Instagram because I talked too much about race. And so, um, one guy, he was like, the goal of my ministry Jude 3, cause I was telling him, I hadn't even started Jude 3, but I was just, you know, just sharing with students.

And he was like, your ministry concept is racist. Like you just want to do apologetics to black people. He was like, if I did apologetics to white people, you would say that's racist. Why I can't say what you're doing is racist?

Rasool Berry: Wow. So, I [00:22:00] mean, how did that feel like when you heard those things?

Lisa Fields: I was just like, man, get me out of here.

Rasool Berry: And when we come back, Lisa Fields will share how trips from her Christian bubble in Lynchburg to friends and family in DC on the weekends helped her find reprieve from fellow students, and also how those short trips laid the foundation for the organization she would later start. That's coming up on *Where Ya From?*.

Midbreak: If you're enjoying *Where Ya From?*, would you take a moment to write a quick review and give us some stars? Podcast platforms like iTunes and Google promote highly rated shows. So a one-sentence review of what this episode or show means to you, and a quick five-star rating, will help these important stories reach more people.

Thank you for your help and keep listening for more of *Where Ya From?*

Daniel Ryan Day: And now back to our episode with Lisa [00:23:00] Fields here on *Where Ya From?*

Lisa Fields: So because my classmates, and they weren't bad people, but I think they would just say ignorant things at times. Um, I spent a lot of time going to DC on the weekends. So it was a three-hour drive.

Rasool Berry: Yes.

Lisa Fields: Uh, I have a lot of friends in DC. DC culture is very black bougie. It fits me to the T. And brunch, I love brunch. And so I would go and meet my friends in DC for brunch. And my uncle lived there right outside of DC. And I would go stay with them and they would pay for my gas, uh, so I could come up on the weekends. So I would spend most weekends in DC as a way to escape.

So my experience with my professors, I cherish and love. And I, my relationship with the students, I mean, we were cool, but I mean, some of the comments were a bit unsettling.

Rasool Berry: Yeah. You know, sorry. You, you, you have these like [00:24:00] reprieves where you are in DC. And I mean, how do you describe why that was so important for you to travel three hours? Like, what were you experiencing in DC other than the great cuisine and, and whatnot that you needed to fill your tank with?

Lisa Fields: Church. I went to a black Baptist church when I was there. So it was a balance for me of all these different experiences. And also, um, in addition to that, I just, my friends and them, I have friends on the hill, friends that are attorneys, friends that, you know, are scientists. And attending that brunch, and hearing how their life is and hearing their work experience, also helps me filter what I'm learning, and how what I'm learning needs to be applicable to them if I want to make my education relevant.

Because I think if I was just stuck in that seminary bubble. And we're all talking about theological ideas. We're not really flushing it out with the rest of the world. And I think that's a real danger in that to get stuck in [00:25:00] that bubble and not be interacting with people who feel like they're more spiritual and don't really vibe with Christianity anymore to see like, how do I reached them. And I think that was as much as I was learning in class, I think what was equally important was that interaction with people that weren't in that Christian bubble.

Rasool Berry: And that's something of a theme that I, I see in your life. You know, obviously your relationship with your parents, which helped shaped you, your relationship with your professors. And then, you know, these friendships over brunch. When people think of apologetics, they don't normally think of

friendships, you know, as a key part. But you clearly do. What's important about relationships and friendships as it relates to understanding our faith and even being able to share it.

Lisa Fields: Relationships shows you what's going on in people's life and people's world. And it helps you not to have such a narrow view of concepts I think. Because you're, [00:26:00] you're like, okay, this is a great concept.

In theory, how does this flush out in a person's everyday life? What is this person experiencing? I have one of my best friends and he has HIV. And he talked about getting HIV and contracting HIV. And hearing his experience, hearing how he got into the lifestyle he was in, it helps you be able to speak to some of the issues differently and with the level of empathy. Because you actually know people in these situations, and you're not making these rigid kind of statements that aren't considerate of other people's experience.

I lived in a bubble growing up, a Christian bubble. Like in the church bubble. And so I, being aware of that, I feel like relationships are my key to understanding other people's experiences that were not in that bubble.

I feel like if I'm not doing that, I'm not able to [00:27:00] effectively minister to everybody else.

And I think the greatest discipline that apologists need to have is listening. You can't be a great apologist if you're not a great listener. Like I once sat down with a guy who was about to leave the faith for four hours before he got to his real issue. When we started it was about God and Hell. When it ended it was about something totally different.

And had I not listened to him without countering everything he was saying, I would have never got to that issue. But that took four hours of listening to get there. And so I think the greatest discipline is to be a good listener.

Rasool Berry: I know you talked about the idea and the concept of Jude 3 with your peers. What is Jude 3 Project and why the name Jude 3?

Lisa Fields: Jude 3 Project is a Christian apologetics organization that helps the black community know what they believe and why. Uh, people always say, why did you choose the Jude 3 Project? And people think it's some super spiritual reason. Really, it's a very [00:28:00] pragmatic reason.

When I saw content, I started thinking of a boxing ring. And I was like, it'd be cool if our website had a boxing ring backdrop. And that's why I went with Jude 3. It really had nothing to do with seeking the Lord or anything. It was just, and looking back, the boxing ring was not good because it doesn't need to have this fighting situation. And by the time I had decided against that graphic, I had already named it that. So I was like, well, we're going to go with it anyway.

Rasool Berry: So one of the things that's interesting when you say Jude 3 is if people are not oftentimes aware that there's only one chapter in Jude. So this is what Jude 3 says in the New King James Version.

“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you, exhorting you to contend [00:29:00] earnestly for the faith, which was once for all delivered to the saints.” What is it about that verse that inspires you to do what you do?

Lisa Fields: Contending earnestly for the faith, uh, that's obviously one of my favorite parts. But I think the end of it is that the faith that was delivered to us, like, this is the message that we know is true. This is a faithful message and we need to contend for it because it is the truth. We're not contending on falsehood. This is a faith that has been given to us that we can trust and that we need to help other people understand that they can trust in it as well.

Rasool Berry: That's good. And you know, the other part that I never thought of that this verse reminds me of you is it starts with beloved, which is this term of endearment, right?

And it, and there's this, uh, intimacy, there's a relationship there that it models, which is, I think is something that emotional [00:30:00] intelligence that you talk about, but there's community there. And so it kind of reflects this value of community that you have to. It wasn't just delivered to one person is delivered to a group of people.

And so that therefore we have a responsibility to share it. Yeah, that's good. Now, when I think of, you know, classic apologists from CS Lewis. To Josh McDowell, there's something that's a common thread among all of those people, right? They're men. And so here you are at the intersection of race as a black person and gender as a woman.

Do you see those two things compound the challenge of what it means to negotiate in different spaces? And, uh, what do you think of that term intersectionality?

Lisa Fields: I'll give you a quick story. When I first started Jude 3 project, and I got a chance to meet with the leader of evangelical org that I had known from working on another project. We were [00:31:00] on a call. He said, Lisa. What you're trying to do is great, but he said, you're going to have three issues. He said, your biggest hurdles and your biggest problems to fundraising or raising money is you're black, you're a woman and you're young. And he wasn't even trying to be rude. He was just talking about the landscape.

And so he was like, you have everything working against you, your gender, your race, and your age. And so it's going to be an uphill battle. It almost will be impossible. So all of those things have been challenges, but they've also opened up unique opportunities.

Rasool Berry: Okay. Why did you specify, you know, uh, specifically wanting to acquit black Christians? What did you see was missing or that needed to be added? To have that particular focus, and what does that look like practically for people who may know about apologetics, but don't know about necessarily black apologetics. Kind of break that down.

Lisa Fields: Yeah, because I just saw [00:32:00] like there weren't any black apologists really that were known. There were like every now and again, you will stumble across someone who, you know, did a lecture, but not on the main stage. And so I just felt like we needed to see ourselves in that space. Because there is a way in which people handle things that affect us that are not helpful because classical traditional apologetics goes a lot to proving the existence of God.

When we, you know, the black context, you realize, hey, like most black people believe that a God exists or how your power exists. Um, black atheism is growing, but it's still a minority of black people. And so we have to figure out what black people are navigating. What are the challenges, what the religions didn't bind into and meet them there. But for many white apologists, the things that were happening in our community just wasn't on their radar. And so we needed something that would bridge that gap.

Rasool Berry: Got it. [00:33:00] And bridge that gap you have. I mean, this thing has a global impact. But that's just how you drew it up, right?

Lisa Fields: That's how God drew it up.

Rasool Berry: So when you look at the current, um, black context that you really, you know, um, focus on, what are some of those core concerns that

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you're seeing being asked those questions, both in the, you know, broad human, just culture standpoint, and particularly maybe in the Christian space. What are some of those issues that you tackle?

Lisa Fields: I think some of the things that I see, I think in the African American experiences, do I matter to God? Does my black life matter to Jesus? Does he care? I think another one is Christian a white man's religion? Um, and how can I be spiritually connected without buying into the harmful [00:34:00] religion I felt like my parents were connected to?

So that's where you see people going into African spirituality. Because they want something. They want to be connected to God, but not in the ways in which they felt were toxic. And so a lot of people have negative church experiences. They're trying to get away from those and they're using other means to say, I want to be connected to God, but not that way.

Rasool Berry: Wow. And what have you found helpful in the way you approach it and respond to those issues?

Lisa Fields: I think, especially with people wanting to be connected to spirituality, but not connect to Christianity. I find that listening to their stories is important to see what traumatic things happen to them in religious experiences.

I did a tweet that went viral some time ago that said some parents are praying for their children to come to church, something like that, but they don't realize that they're their biggest obstacle to getting them back into faith because of the ways they lived as they were [00:35:00] holy in church, but nasty at home.

And so I think in that regard, we have to listen to people who've really have experiences where they experienced the duplicity of their parents. And they're like, well, if you spent all this time at church and they never transformed you, why go?

Rasool Berry: Got it. And so like, all right, so let's just double-click on that. So let's say that's what somebody sees. They respond to the tweet, say, amen. Yes, you're right. How would you encourage that person? What would you say to say? Yeah, but still Jesus is the way

Lisa Fields: At first I'll let them process their emotions and get out their frustration. And then we would move to how the person that offended them behavior was inconsistent with the scriptures. They have to untangle that in their mind.

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And so it's almost as if you're playing a therapist in a sense to listen and [00:36:00] help so they can untangle that. And I think as an apologist, in a sense, we have to almost double up as therapists sometimes when people have those traumas. Now, if you're not a therapist, don't lead people and give them bad information, but listen enough to help them untangle that stuff. Because all the experiences get tangled up, and trauma doesn't help you see reason clearly.

And so when you untangle that for them, that you're able to then speak truth about the distinctions between the human behavior and the biblical responsibility. And then once you help them frame that, then I think it's important to talk about overcorrection. Because the tendency for people that have bad experiences to overcorrect. And when you overcorrect, you're still not corrected. And I think that's what we What many young people, they're trying to overcorrect. They're like, when I saw my parents go this way, it led down destruction. But you don't realize that if you go the opposite way, it's still destruction. Your parents were on the right road. They [00:37:00] just missed the turn, but you go the opposite direction and you still don't make the turn.

Rasool Berry: Wow. That's good. Now, you know, you talk about getting to know people and, you know, empathizing with, you know, their struggle or their story. But I mean, are you saying that we should water down what we believe or how we communicate the truth? Cause I mean, at the end of the day, truth is truth.

Lisa Fields: Yeah. And I agree. Truth is truth. And I don't think we should water down our message. I think relationally though, it is easier for people to receive hard truths from people they are in relationship with versus strangers. And so it doesn't mean that I watered down the message. It means that when I share the message, people trust me enough to believe that I'm not trying to do them harm with the messages that I'm sharing.

Rasool Berry: And it also sounds like trusting God enough that even though that might take more time, That is actually a more effective way. Like it's not all on me. To just [00:38:00] kind of shoot people up with words, but it's also on God to soften their heart and to prepare them to receive it.

So, correct. Gotcha. Gotcha. That's good. Now, one thing that might be particularly puzzling to some is one of the first questions that you said is raised in the area of black apologetics is do I matter? Does my life matter to God? Why would that be a question that someone would have?

Lisa Fields: Yeah, because they haven't seen it historically matter in this country. We were brought over here as slaves. We were stolen from our land. And we were treated as if our life didn't matter for the history of our people in this country. And then when they're seeing people get gunned down in the street that look like them, and there's no justice for them. They conclude that because my life doesn't matter to the majority culture, maybe my life doesn't matter to God. Because if it [00:39:00] did, he wouldn't allow this to keep happening.

Rasool Berry: Wow, that's heavy to think that the experience that people are having sociologically in society is impacting how they think theologically. And how do you respond to such a statement? I mean, let me guess because I already heard first, you're going to let them listen and process the actual experience. I'm starting to get this and then help them untangle that. And then, all right, help me finish, help me get the rest of the way there.

Lisa Fields: Then I think it's incredibly important to talk about justice throughout the Scripture. And God's heart for justice. That he wants justice like mighty streams, like oceans to flow from Amos. That He says it's not right to acquit the guilty in Proverbs. And that throughout Scripture, you can't read Scripture alone without running into a God that will vindicate people. And that he cares. Even when we talk about slavery. Slavery is [00:40:00] in Scripture in a way that I think often we miss two of the key characters in the Bible were slaves, Daniel and Joseph.

Rasool Berry: Okay.

Lisa Fields: And God favored them tremendously. And I think it's important that we think about how God has loved and cared for people on the margins. Um, even when people, the majority try to oppress them. And, um, so I think walking people through that, showing them that the Bible characters aren't white. That just because the picture shows them white doesn't mean they're white.

Now they might not be as dark as us African Americans. But they were people of color. And so I think that helps and then pointing people to early African history. I think it's a key contributions of black people, and I think really at the key of all of that is really showing people God's heart for justice throughout Scripture.

Rasool Berry: Amazing. Amazing. I could see why Jude 3 is [00:41:00] flourishing so much. Now, let me just you know kind of land a plane at this like you have swam upstream in many ways, your entire life, right?

You know, just going into this field of apologetics where one mentor told you, you got three strikes against you. Your age, your gender, and your race. Why have you continued? And what has brought you joy in the midst of doing this work?

Lisa Fields: I think what brings me the most joy is pulling, especially young people, out of the fire.

So Jude says, pulling them out of the fire, um, even hating the smoke or something, I'm forgetting that saying that stains their garments. I'm sure I'm misquoting that. But the point of that is pulling people out of the fire and seeing students saying, I was about to walk away from the faith, but running into Jude helped roll me back in.

Like, I just get that sense that I'm like running through pulling people out. And that just brings me so [00:42:00] much joy to hear that, especially from college students. And I think also my backup against the wall and having the odds against me brings me joy. I always think like I'm in like this basketball game. It's like five seconds on the clock and I got all these defenders on me and I got to shoot really quick. Uh, when my backup against the wall and people tell me I can't do stuff, I get that feeling and I'm like, okay, you said I can't do it. All right, let me show you how to do it.

Rasool Berry: There. I love it. So we're back to the hoop dream. That ain't never go away. It just. It just changed from a hoop dream to a Jude dream. You see that? Yeah. Well, that's so cool and amazing. So I know when you entered into these spaces, you didn't see anybody that looked like you doing it. Is that still the case? And what would you tell someone listening to this? They listen to your story and they're also, you know, a young woman, maybe a woman of color. Like, what would you tell them as a result of things that you learned about this [00:43:00] interest in equipping people and helping to defend their faith?

Lisa Fields: Yeah. Thankfully I see a ton of people that look like me now doing it, encouraged to do it. Like I saw you doing it now. I know I can do it. That is encouraging to me. I would tell any young woman listening, don't let people tell you you can't and whatever you do, do it excellently. And they may ignore you first, but over time you're going to do it so well that they can't ignore you.

Rasool Berry: That was Lisa Fields on *Where Ya From?*. I'm Rasool Berry, and if you'd like more information about Lisa, check out the show notes, which are located in the podcast description. The show notes not only contain the talking

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points of today's show, but they also include a link to Lisa's organization, The Jude 3 Project.

I'm Rasool Berry reminding you that it's not just about where you're at, it's also about where you're from. This show was produced by Mary Jo Clark and Daniel Ryan Day and was engineered by Gabrielle Bowerd. I also want to give a quick shout to Matt and Londa for their help in supporting and promoting *Where Ya From?*

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