

Coffee with Phil. 41. Watching for the signs.

Introduction.

We're going. Welcome to the podcast. Welcome to my studio. Welcome to Coffee with Phil, my name is Phil, and it's my delight to be with you today. I wonder what time of the day you're listening to this. Some of you listen to this in the very early hours of the morning, so welcome to those guys that are sweating it out in the gym, and welcome to those of you that listen to it in your car, and I find the car's a great place to binge on podcasts. So, right at the beginning, I'd just say, don't forget to share the podcast with your friends. The whole goal of this podcast is to reach people, to help people to live a life of purpose on purpose, and I need you to share the podcast so that your friends can discover it.

Thanks for joining me today, we're going to talk about watching for the signs, and so this is podcast episode 41 Coffee with Phil, and I want to start by saying, you know the old saying, red sky at night shepherd's delight. Well, it's a way of recognising that we can see things around us that help us to understand what's about to happen, or what's happening around us. So yeah, the old idea that red sky in the morning, shepherd's warning, means that watch out because often when there's a red sky in the morning, it indicates that rain is coming, and look, it's not always true, it doesn't always prove to be true, but it's certainly a sign that we can take notice of. Here in New Zealand at this time of the year, I'm recording this in September, which is springtime, and so all around us we see the signs of spring. In fact, it's been like that for a month now, you drive along and you see the beautiful coloured blossoms, see the new growth on the trees. Jackson, my son, and I were talking about his rose bushes at his house, and there is new growth coming through on the rose bushes, which means that spring is here and he's anticipating lots of new growth and some amazing colour as the summer arrives. What does this mean? It means that we can look around us and see the signs of what's happening and that's what I want to talk about today, but not so much about the blossoms or the roses or the weather forecast. But I want you to think about how can you know or how can you discern and understand the seasons in the time that you might be in?

Now Jesus himself chastised the Pharisees, the biblical scholars, in his day. He said guys, you can read the signs and you know the seasons, but will you discern the time we are in? And what he meant was there is a time of the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, and these people who thought they were wise didn't have a clue what was happening. So it's important that we know what's happening.

But here's where I want to drill it down for you today. For each one of us what I want to say is we need to be self-aware, we need to be aware of what's happening around us. And so what I want to start by talking about is just how can we notice what's going on? And I wanna share with you what I see in myself, but this was really sparked by a conversation I had with someone just this morning and just saying, look, I'm, she was saying to me, look, I could see the signs, I could recognise what was happening, and I could feel a crash was coming, was possible, and I want to avoid it. And I know that I've been on a journey of self-awareness more recently and I was just doing this actually over the weekend, I was thinking about what I've got going on, just this week, and I started to notice a feeling of overwhelm, and so, for me, what I'm recognising is that is a symptom, or a sign, just like the red sky in the morning, it's a symptom or a sign that something's not quite right. And so when I start, because I have a high capacity for work, I manage multiple projects at the same time, I'm literally, those of you that know me well you understand that I'm literally in four conversations at the same time, and I'm quite happy about

it. I'm multitask and I enjoy multitasking, I get bored if I'm just doing one thing, so I've got projects overlapping, and that's my normal. And I'm OK with it until I'm not OK with it. And sometimes when I'm tired or I don't have the strength, or there's too much going on. Look, I've got too much on my plate, I've been too ambitious, or perhaps had pressure come on, because of time, constraints, restrictions or imposition. I start to feel that I'm out of balance and the first sign for me is that I get a feeling of overwhelm. And overwhelm for me, looks like I don't want to make decisions, I don't want to hear what anybody has to think, or say, about my circumstances. You know, Kathy might say, are you sure you should be doing that? And like when I'm not coping, or when I'm overwhelmed, I'm not very receptive to her supportive input, which is also a sign that things aren't going well for me. The other thing that I notice in me is that I get a lot less tolerant of what's happening around me, I don't have the desire or the willingness, commitment, to be tolerant of what the circumstances are around me, and that shows in how I respond. So what I'm sharing with you is that I've got to recognise when the balance is not in balance. I've gotta watch for the signs that things are outside of my safe zone, and I've got to take responsibility for that, and I'll talk about it in a minute.

How can we “notice” what is going on?

One of the things that I've had to come to terms with is I've got to be comfortable with what is my normal. And I've mentioned this before on the podcast several times, I've said to people, please don't put your limits on top of me, please don't tell me what I'm thinking, or what I'm feeling. Please don't make decisions on what you think I need. Let me do that. Let me do that. But I've got to be comfortable with my normal. And so this is how I've learned to watch for the signs. This is how I've learned to understand where am I at? What's happening in me and around me? What can I recognise as my behaviour? And then, obviously, I need to do something about it, which I'm going to talk about next. The other thing that is vital in this is, again I've shared this recently, what I'm recognising is I've gotta learn to identify and respond to the feelings that are going on, because God uses our feelings and emotions as signposts to help us to point to something, to see something, to recognise something. So if we're gonna watch for the signs, we've got to recognise and identify our feelings, because they are helpful to us.

So, let me go back to what I said to you before. One of the signposts that I've recognised gives me an indication that the balance is out of balance, is the feeling of overwhelm. It washes over me, it's like I can't cope with this, I can't deal with this, I don't think I'm gonna get through this. Now these are other voices in my head that I need to learn to manage, but it's the feeling of being overwhelmed that I'm saying that I'm recognising, and so when I see that I take notice of it and I say to myself, what is happening that is out of balance? What do I need to do to shift the balance so that I can be back in balance and able to function as a healthy normal person, and not kill every person that's close to me, or certainly destroy the relationship, because that's a risk, it's a risk when I'm out of balance.

So, here's my point. I'm sharing this with you because I think we all need to watch for the signs. We each need to be knowing, and discerning the time, and the season that we're in. We need to become more self-aware so that we know our space, our physical space, our personal space, our emotional space is going to impact other people, and so the responsibility is on us to respond to that. So, watch for the signs, red sky at night, shepherds delight. I feel good. I feel peaceful. I feel happy. I feel relaxed. I feel like I'm in control of my circumstances. Red Sky at night shepherd's delight. It's going to be a sunny day tomorrow. Red Sky in the morning, shepherds warning. I'm feeling a bit of overwhelm. I'm feeling frustrated. I'm feeling short tempered. I'm feeling uncertain about my future. I'm feeling like I'm gonna

crash and burn, and I'm just gonna have a meltdown or heavily medicate myself with a bottle of something that is not good for me. These are the signs. Red Sky in the morning Shepherd's warning. So we've got to learn to recognise the signs, see the signs, and know what to do about it. So how can we notice what's going on in our world? And that's the first part of watching for the signs.

What do I do to get the balance back in balance?

The second part is what do I do to get the balance back in balance? Sounds silly because you're not balanced, if you're out of balance, but you can get the balance back into balance, by doing things that help you be balanced. So, what helps me? And I want to share this with you because again, my goal here is to share my journey, my ups, my downs, the good, the bad, and the ugly, in order that you might pause and reflect and have a look at yourself. So, what do I do to get the balance back in balance?

What I'm learning to understand in this season of my life, now that I'm an old man, is what helps me to rest. What brings rest into my world. The feeling of rest. So what do I mean by the feeling of rest? Well for me that's a sense of calm. It's a sense of balance. It's a sense of energy, so having enough strength to get through the day. And so what I've gotta do is say, what gives me rest? What helps me find rest? And I've started creating opportunities in my day to centre myself on the person of Jesus and how close he is to me, and this helps me find rest.

Matthew 11, verse 28 to 30, somewhere around there, Matthew 11, Jesus says. Are you tired? Are you weary? Are you burned out? Is your balance out of balance essentially. This is, come to me and you will find that rest, and The Message Translation is just such a beautiful translation, I'm gonna find it for us, so hang on a sec, don't go anywhere, I'll be right back. Yeah, are you still there? Good. I had to just go away and do the clicky clicky thing on the computer thing to find the verse I was looking for. Matthew, Chapter 11, verse 28 in The Message Translation, by Eugene Peterson, Jesus says this. Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me, get away with me and he'll recover your life. I'll show you, Jesus says, how to take a real rest. Walk with me. Work with me. Watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. Jesus says, I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you, keep coming with me and you'll learn to live freely, and like me. Now that verse is just such an encouragement to me. I find that verse centres me on the person of Jesus and how close he is to me.

So I've had to learn what helps me find rest, and that verse is like a guide post for me. So that's what I do. The second thing is, I ask myself what brings me peace? Peace being defined in my world as the absence of anxiety. So peace is a feeling of calm and sense of, not so much control, but not being out of control, or being controlled by external manipulative forces. What brings me peace? So, I find music helps to bring me peace. I find rest, and quiet, solitude helps me to find peace. And also I use, I said music, but I what I mean by that is worship music. I find that really brings a connection with the peace of God that surpasses all understanding, that guards my heart and my mind by bringing me back into the peace which Jesus brings into my life. So I've got to find, what do I do to get the balance back in balance? I've gotta find what helps me find rest. I've gotta find what helps me find peace.

And then I've also learned to embrace what I call the power of safe people. I mean that such a good phrase, I should do a podcast on that. The power of safe people. So I want to be around people who are safe, who pour back into my life, who energise me, who love me, who don't judge me or try and fix me. But just what I call safe people, and for me that's family. There's a group of friends that I would classify as very safe, and I search that out. So if I feel that I need to get the balance back into my balance, I will

go and spend time with safe people. And sometimes I'll tell them I need their help, and other times their company is like a tonic, a health tonic that restores my balance.

The other thing that, I've got a list here, what do I do to get my balance back in balance? The other thing is just focusing on the whole person. Understand that we have body, soul and spirit. Sometimes I need to go for a walk, I need to go for a long walk with the dog, or with Kathy. Sometimes, I don't often go by myself, but I like to walk because I find that it gets me in the fresh air, and quite frankly, I gave up running years ago because it's hard work and not enjoyable. But walking is good, you know, whether it's walking in the bush, walking around the lake, walking up a mountain, I don't mind, it's going for a walk. Look, body, soul, what's the soul doing? You know, I've got to find healing for my body. I've gotta find healing for my soul. And I've also gotta find healing for my spirit. And there is only one source of healing for our spirit, and that is the Holy Spirit. And so for me, what do I do to get the balance back in balance, is I understand, if my body is out of whack, it's going to affect my soul and spirit. If my soul, my emotions, are out of whack, it's going to affect my body and spirit. But also I challenge you, for those of you that don't think you need to focus on your spiritual life, if your spirit life is out of whack, it's going to affect your body and your soul. So I look at the journey of the whole person and how can I take care of the whole me to get my balance back in balance.

And the final thing under this heading, what do I do to get my balance back in balance? Is I've learned to appreciate the journey of healing, and this came from a season where I was deeply involved with, and actively involved with, the learning around inner healing, and the Greek word for salvation, which is SOZO, which is S O Z O, SOZO, and it means saved, healed and delivered. And what that helped me to understand is that my journey of healing has multiple layers, and it has multiple focus areas. So, it's not just one fix, one band-aid, she'll be right mate, and it's not a one time journey, it's a lifetime journey. And so to get my balance back in balance, I recognise that sometimes I need to go back to the story of my healing and find the next layer that Jesus wants to bring his healing to. And I think, I'm just picturing some of you right now, that I know listen to this podcast, some of my friends, and I'm thinking, you need to do another lap around that and come back to Jesus and ask him to help you with your SOZO. What can I find that Jesus would want to touch today? I'll leave that with you.

Why is this so vital?

The final thing that I want to finish with here is just the challenge around why is this so vital? You know, I'm saying we gotta watch for the signs. We've got to look for the red sky in the morning. We've got to see the signs that are on the trees. Or know and discern the season that we're in. If you're in a rebuild and reset season, you need to know that that's what you're going through, and you've got to become self-aware in doing it. And so why is this so vital? Well, I read this book recently that just explained it to me in a way that I've never heard someone say before. It was a conversation in the book, I think I've quoted it before, John Eldredge, in his book Resilient, and he was observing on the socio drama of the pandemic season that was three years for most of us, and he said, look, in the past, he says, our troubles would line up like carriages on a train and they're back-to-back, you know, you get one, and then you get the next one, then you kind of hope that you'll sort it out. But what's different about now is these troubles stack on top of each other, and then on top of us. So, you can imagine a train wreck, have you ever seen a movie of a train wreck? And the front of the train hits something, and then the carriages behind keep going, and they crash, and they stack on top of what they crashed into. That's kind of what's going on in people's world right now. There's people that are having troubles, stacked on top of

troubles, stacked on top of troubles, and you know, I've been honest with you guys, you know that I've shared some of this, that I feel like, you know, there are some things that I just haven't got out from under, and that's why I'm doing so much work on the ME project. Like what do I need to do to watch for the signs, and go through the healing, and look at the whole person, and embrace the power of safe people, and find peace and rest in my day. Why? Because I've got troubles, stacking on top of troubles. And if I don't learn how to deal with them, I don't see the signs, then my balance will get out of balance. So, this is vital for you, because I think maybe if you just stepped outside of yourself for a minute, stepped back and had a bit of a look at your life, you might go, ah, my troubles are stacking on top of themselves, and then the stacking on top of me, and you can start to identify what needs to be focused on. What needs to be dealt with. What might need to be healed. What might need to be extracted, or cast out of your life, might be a good way to say it, I don't know.

Look, the other thing that I think I'd like to say around just why this is so vital, and again, I'm pretty sure I got this out of John Eldredge's book. Although, to be fair, I've had a lot of people tell me this lately. I've noticed that I've got a reduced capacity. My capacity is lower because of the, just the burden of the last five years, you know the season of life. It's, you know, we've had this, we've had that, we've had other troubles. And what that's done is it's reduced my capacity. So I've had to become self-aware and recognise that where I used to operate, I'm just going to use percentages, and let's say I used to operate at 100% of what I was capable of doing, and I was happy about it, I was constantly working at the limit, and competent, and confident that I could do that. But now I might be only operating at 50% of my capacity, because I've got trouble stacked on me, I've got healing I'm going through, I'm coming out of the socio drama of the pandemic, and I'm still learning which way is up and what my new normal is, what my world looks like. And so, if I'm now only capable of operating at 50%, if that's my new maximum, then I need to recognise, to put margin into my life I need to operate at less than that. Because if I operate at my maximum capacity for today, there's no margin, there's no space, there's no wiggle room. I can't take on an emergency, or I can't help someone that's in a crisis, I can't respond to my own crises if I've got no margin. And if I'm expecting that I can get myself back to 75%, but I'm physically only capable of 50%, then I'm hurting myself. So what's important? I've gotta look for the signs. I've got to recognise the red sky in the morning. I've gotta see the signs of spring. I've gotta know and discern the season that I'm in personally and become more self-aware so that I can get my balance, back in balance.

The other thing that I'm incredibly aware of is that my lack of self-awareness will ultimately hurt other people. If I don't know what's going on. If I don't see the signs, I'm gonna bump into trouble with someone personally that I love and care about, and I'm going to hurt them, and that's just something I'd be really, really keen to avoid. I was speaking with someone recently about this, they were sharing the journey they're on, and they said to me, look, I noticed that I was very fragile in some of those conversations, and then I noticed that it got quite hostile. And I really love that conversation that this person was willing to say, I noticed I was getting hostile and I needed to do something about it, because it's just a fantastic example of someone seeing the signs, recognising what's going on, and choosing to do something positive to fix it. And you know, for some of you it might mean time out. For some of you it might mean getting back on some antidepressants, or some medication that helps you. Or for some of you it might be going for a very, very long walk in the bush, and having a yelling match with the trees to just get rid of and process the grief or the emotion that you're carrying. But the point I'm making is this? If I don't choose to become self-aware then I will hurt someone, and that is on me, it's my responsibility.

What about you?

So, I just really want to finish by saying, I'm responsible for me, I can't, I don't want you to fix me, and I don't want you to take responsibility for me. And I wonder if you would take the same approach? You know, would you be willing to say that you're going to take responsibility for where you're at right now? You're gonna take responsibility for watching the signs of what's happening in your life for you personally? Your family life, your relationship with your loved ones, your relationship with your workmates, and ultimately your relationship with yourself. Are you willing to be responsible for that? And I'm saying to you, that's what I'm trying to do, and I'm really trying to embrace it.

So, look, I wanna just finish with an invitation to come back to Matthew Chapter 11, and I'm gonna be the minister here, surprise, surprise, and I'm gonna read Matthew 11:28-30 as a benediction. I'm going to read it with you in the close as an invitation from Jesus, so don't check out yet, I'm going to finish with this. But before I do, I just want to say God bless you guys, I really do pray for you, and hope that your journey with Jesus is going well. If there's anything I can do to help, reach out. You can track me down by however you found this podcast, you'll be able to find me. Make sure you check the transcript. There's notes and references there for you to help you, and I look forward to catching up with you on Coffee with Phil sometime soon. But for now, I'm going to read the words of Jesus and let them be the medicine that you need.

Here's the invitation of Jesus. Are you tired? Are you worn out? Are you burned down on religion? Come to me, Jesus says, get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me. Work with me. Watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. Jesus says, I won't lay anything heavy or ill fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

God bless you all.