

## Season 4 Episode 1: What is shalom and how is it like dirt?

**Speaker 1** [00:00:05] Welcome to the Embedded Church podcast, where we share stories about reweaving the connections between place, the built environment and the mission of God.

**Speaker 2** [00:00:15] Season four of the Embedded Church podcast is produced in partnership with the Ormond Center at Duke Divinity School. The mission of Ormond Center is to foster the imagination, will and ability of congregations and communities to be agents of thriving.

**Speaker 1** [00:00:28] I'm Eric Jacobsen.

**Speaker 2** [00:00:30] And I'm Sarah Joy and will be your host on today's episode of the Embedded Church podcast.

**Speaker 1** [00:00:41] Hey, Sarah Joy, what if I were to tell you that shalom is actually a dirty word?

**Speaker 2** [00:00:48] Eric, that's insane, how is shalom a dirty word, as I've heard it thrown around in so many different contexts and means so many different things. But please tell me, how is it a dirty word?

**Speaker 1** [00:00:57] All right. All right. We can get back to shalom just a little bit, but bear with me for a second. I've been reading a little bit of Wendell Berry, and if you don't know who he is,

**Speaker 2** [00:01:05] how can I not know who Wendell Berry is? I don't know. A lot of he's like one of my favorite authors in the whole world. And I've always said, if I could marry Wendell Berry, I would. That might be a little weird, that's a little

**Speaker 1** [00:01:17] weird, I'm agreeing with you there.

**Speaker 2** [00:01:19] I think he's pretty old and married. You know, we could look into some grandsons.

**Speaker 1** [00:01:25] Does Wendell Berry have any grandchildren? And are they single? Anyway, let me pull this back to my initial point. But Wendell Berry is a Kentucky farmer who does a lot of writing about community and the health of communities and draws a lot of parallels between the health of the soil and health of communities. Hence Shalom, which is kind of about well-being and flourishing and all that kind of stuff seems to me to be somewhat analogous to the health of soil. So Shalom, is my contention a dirty word?

**Speaker 2** [00:01:57] I like it a little bit of a stretch, but I like it.

**Speaker 1** [00:02:00] All right. All right. And then, Barry, in addition to just talking about soil, gets into a little bit of the details of how soil is made and some conditions. It's not just a sort of preexisting condition, but it's made.

**Speaker 2** [00:02:11] You can't go by it at the store at Home Depot, the top soil

**Speaker 1** [00:02:15] where you can go buy it. But what Barry is really into is how it sort of made naturally. And he uses the analogy of a bucket that collects materials from the environment and then over time converts it into soil and uses that as this analogy of sort of the human task of producing local culture. And I see so many connections between how the church can be contributing to and participating in the health of the local community by thinking of themselves like a bucket. So what do you think about this season, us using this bucket analogy as a way of getting into some of our discussions about the embedded church this year? Are you game?

**Speaker 2** [00:02:53] Totes. Do you like my bucket pen tote

**Speaker 1** [00:02:57] bucket is a kind of the same thing. Yes, I love it.

**Speaker 2** [00:03:01] Let's do it. Let's get our hands dirty.

**Speaker 1** [00:03:04] I don't know if I love it as much as picturing you getting married to Wendell Berry, but I like it. Yes.

**Speaker 2** [00:03:10] Awesome. Well, I like it. And first, I'd say we have to discuss. What do we even mean, Basiline? So, Eric, we decided to send our season four around the Bible verse in Jeremiah twenty nine, verse seven, to be exact, which states but seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile and pray to the Lord on its behalf for its welfare, you will find your welfare in some translations. The word welfare actually shows up as shalom. So this can be translated a couple of ways, obviously. And shalom often gets translated as peace in the Bible. So I would be curious to hear from you as a pastor who obviously knows Hebrew and Greek better than I do. Is that a good translation when we use it as peace? And should we only be seeking the peace of our citizens? Talk to us more about that.

**Speaker 1** [00:04:12] Yeah, I mean, it's a fine translation, but as in a lot of translations, it's it's not adequate. It probably warrants some explanation because I think we think of peace in a couple of ways that are somewhat inadequate. One of the more common ways we think of peace is just simply absence of warfare when there's not violence going on the way we have peace. And that's not entirely true. You think about a parent driving in the car with two kids in the backseat that are like totally beating up on each other and use the parent to turn around. And you say, everyone quiet down or I'm stopping this car and they stop fighting, but there's no peace. They're just sort of like there's a subtle difference. The civilian side, there's a subtle truce. And so I would say in the same way, shalom is peace in the sense that the absence of conflict is one of the conditions, but it's not sufficient to explain the whole thing. We also want to have the flourishing of relationships of all kinds relationships, human relationships, our relationship with creation, our relationship to ourselves, and then most importantly, our relationship with God. So one of the ways we can talk about peace is these these healthy and thriving relationships that are all fundamental to who we are.

**Speaker 2** [00:05:26] Yeah. As you were talking about kind of that difference between peace being not just the absence of conflict, but something more, something flourishing. It also makes me think of kind of a difference between being a peacekeeper and a peacemaker. Right. Because if you're actively seeking to make peace, you have to be bringing things into their flourishing so that things are operating and correct synergy with one another, whether it be a relationship with another person or with God or with your community like you were saying.

**Speaker 1** [00:05:54] So absolutely. That's what really proactive term and. Right. That's a really good distinction.

**Speaker 2** [00:06:00] So then two, in terms of expanding this understanding of peace to really be larger than ourselves, we often also talk about peace, though, in terms of personal contentment, of just, oh, I'm so at peace with my place in the world or whatever people say these days as we pursue mindfulness. Yeah. How does that play into that? Is that a component of it?

**Speaker 1** [00:06:22] That's a really great question and super important distinction to make, because, again, it's part of it, but not enough. Like when we're experiencing, Shulem, in the world, we hopefully will have a sense of personal contentment, a sense of personal peace. But we need to be really careful not to read in sort of our American individualism into that concept that it's only about when I'm personally content. The Bible describes us as relational communal beings, not sort of as isolated individuals. And so it's really important that we add to personal contentment this notion of shalom as a community goal. We want our communities as a whole to feel peace. It's really easy for Americans to think about shalom peace, as you know, getting your living room set up just the way you like it and getting your back backyard just the way your family likes it. And nothing wrong with that. But but it's much larger than that. You want peace for the whole community for Shalom to really exist.

**Speaker 2** [00:07:17] Yeah. And I'm thinking, too, when the mindset is pursuing that personal peace as you set up your backyard, but actually can really lead to a lot of isolation, because if you're not thinking the peace beyond your own walls, then I think there's a lot of desire to retreat to your own walls because that's where you find peace, right? Because if you're not actively pursuing peace in the larger community, then once you step outside, you're faced with the brokenness and absolutely the dissolution that might be happening. Right. So, yeah,

**Speaker 1** [00:07:50] in addition to focusing on Jeremiah, twenty nine. One of our goals for this season, though, is to help pastors ask better questions. And so right away, I think we can start working on that goal even as we get into this discussion. So, yeah, one of the ways to play that out is for a church to think about Shalom. It's really easy to think internally, like, oh, our our our people happy. Am I happy as a pastor? Am I feeling comfortable with what I'm doing, et cetera, et cetera? And that's not the best question we can be asking. The better question is, is how is the community doing? How is the shallow in our neighborhood? And are we as a church contributing to it or are we indifferent to it having sort of a neutral impact on it, or are we reducing the shalom? And so asking a better question is getting outside of the walls or building and thinking about Shalom in the neighborhood?

**Speaker 2** [00:08:38] Yeah, I think you're so right.

**Speaker 1** [00:08:39] So speaking of that, I kind of got you thinking about a lot of what we do in the embedded church podcast is talk about the built environment. That's one of the lenses that that we enjoy and what is the built environment and how to relate to it.

**Speaker 2** [00:08:51] So the built environment, that's just simply a fancy word for the places where we live. I mean, it's where we have our lived experiences of the places and the spaces that shape us. And this really takes the form of networks of buildings, streets,

parks, things that make up our neighborhood gardens. So it's not necessarily all manmade. It's also the spaces in between these buildings, which I know Eric really likes.

**Speaker 1** [00:09:14] I was going to ask that. Yeah, I love the word space. So it's not it's not just about architecture, like the individual building, how how pretty it is or what style it is. It's it's this space between exactly.

**Speaker 2** [00:09:28] The networks of places that have been developed and then how that affects the ways that we run into each other, communicate, live our lives together. It also really affects the quality of life because it has so much to do with the access to things like affordable housing or healthy foods or different lifestyles that can be live dependent on the type of environment that's been created. And so it's really important to understand, because these are all things that contribute to our flourishing. Right. So there's been a lot of research, particularly in sociological circles lately, that show that zip code. And the way your neighborhood is designed actually has a lot to do with your health and your life expectancy. And it's really fascinating that something like 20 percent of your health is related to like access to like health care and those types of things. And the other 80 percent is what is called the social determinants, which largely are about kind of the environment that you live in and the social ties that you can form in the places that you live. And so it's pretty fascinating that all of this stuff is super related to what I would say, the welfare of our community, the shalom, like you've been talking about.

**Speaker 1** [00:10:37] So I've got a little example of you talking about because I think it's pertinent. So our church here in Tacoma, First Presbyterian Church, we've got a two buildings with a playground in between them that take up like it's one block technically, but it's the size of like three blocks. So on one side, there's a lot of housing is a large apartment building. On the other side of us. It's this lovely urban park that people like to get to. And we've got a school in our church with a bunch of kids and they play in the playground during recess. We close the gates to our playground to keep the kids safe. But when those gates are closed, neighbors can't walk through the playground for easy access from the. So the space between the buildings. Right. So in some ways, we're inconveniencing our neighbors when the kids are playing because they have to go all the way around the block to get to this lovely park. But when the kids aren't in recess, it's been really important to me to instruct the teachers to always open those gates again so that the space between the buildings increases. The shalom is very small way that makes it convenient for our neighbors to get from there where they live to this park they want to get to. And that's just a very small example. But thinking about the experience of our neighbors, I guess I'm trying to ask better questions myself as a parent to help the Shalom in whatever small way the neighborhood. So let's talk about Shalom is about thriving, about things getting better. To me, that sounds like investment. The more money, the more resources we pour into a neighborhood, the better things are going to get. Would you make that as sort of equivalent? Is that going to automatically increase the shalom?

**Speaker 2** [00:12:12] Yes, and no tricky question there, Eric Electric. Definitely the quality of these the social determinants is largely affected by investment in the local community. Right. So as you have dollars coming in and economic development happening in a particular neighborhood that usually provides for better infrastructure, better street trees, better gathering places at the same time, I think that it's really important to realize that a lot of these places where that type of thing tends to happen can cause displacement of local residents. And then that's

**Speaker 1** [00:12:45] gentrification

**Speaker 2** [00:12:47] that leads us into gentrification. And so I think one of the things is that's really wise, particularly as Christians, is to think about as we bring investment about in the neighborhood, how do we do it in a way that's healthy and values the local soil or the local good that is there and really seeks to augment that and to empower the people that are there that are active in these spaces to to really utilize the gifts that they have. And so I think that, again, that takes really knowing the context and digging into that they. Do you like that digging into that local soil a bit more?

**Speaker 1** [00:13:22] I love it. Yes. Yes. Soil keeps coming up. Yes.

**Speaker 2** [00:13:25] And it makes me think about like Jane Jacobs in her book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, where she talks about and slumming of a community really comes from within. And it really includes amplifying and empowering the change makers that are present. And I think that so oftentimes the way real estate development is done these days is kind of more of a fire hose rather than a slow drip type of approach. And so you get these big investors coming in with lots of money and kind of just a steamroller ring or fire hosing everything down. Right. And changing a place very quickly rather than that slow drip of bringing investment into a community, but working with the community that's there to really grow the the resources and the capacity of the people who are actively doing really good work. But that takes that takes a long view. That takes time and a lot of grit in some ways that a lot of people don't want to do. And so I think the church is well positioned to be in that space in a very unique way.

**Speaker 1** [00:14:22] Yeah, I think that's important. The slower pace, drip by drip rather than fire hose and working with what's there, the residents there is important on so many levels. I mean, one of the reasons it would seem is that then you don't have development that doesn't fit with the needs of the local population. Right. You might have certain kinds of businesses that really meet the needs of the local residents. But an outside investor, not knowing all those things might put in something that is going to attract a wealthier clientele or thereafter something different. But it's not what's needed for that particular population. Right.

**Speaker 2** [00:14:56] I read an article once that was really great, that there was a church that said maybe your neighborhood doesn't need another coffee shop, maybe it needs a laundromat.

**Speaker 1** [00:15:04] It's possible for a developer to kind of miss that and put stuff in the neighborhood that's not super helpful for that particular neighborhood. To me, it's going back to our soil analogy would be, you know, digging up all the soil and taking it somewhere else and then bringing in new soil from, like, home right now as opposed to just enriching the soil that's there. Can you see that? I feel like dirt under my fingernails just from talking about soil. Um, I don't I didn't actually.

**Speaker 2** [00:15:31] Have you failed to shower yesterday or something?

**Speaker 1** [00:15:36] All right. So I got one more question about Shalom, because I do love this idea. And you know, what's coming to mind so far we've talked about is kind of a snapshot of of a vibrant, sort of delightful kind of neighborhood and community. But I guess I want to get into the like what the dynamic view as these things progress over time. So much of my experiences, things that look nice when they're new, just. Fall apart over

time, they don't wear well, and so I find myself asking more and more what kinds of things wear well over time.

**Speaker 2** [00:16:06] I think that's part of talking about this investment in the local community of your working with the community and the stresses of the environment that are there. But then adapting to really bring out what is good and how you amplify that within that local community is really important. How do we find ways to adapt within our local community? How do we create diversity of resources and value the diversity of resources that are present? How do we amend the soil that's there? Not necessarily replace the soil, but create stronger soil? Right. By using what is there and what is present?

**Speaker 1** [00:16:45] I love it. So the example I was going to use was. The ugliest part of Tacoma, from my perspective, is the transportation hub for the busses, and it's a big parking garage and it's a bunch of other stuff and it's kind of a massive, like, government built project from the 70s that just didn't wear well. I'm sure it looked really nice when it first built, but now it looks really like an eyesore. Whereas when you see investment coming in, the more more the way you were describing sort of incrementally and slowly that's responding to local conditions and lots of different players involved with that, seems like that kind of investment wears much, much better over time.

**Speaker 2** [00:17:23] Definitely. And I think during the pandemic, one of the things we've seen really is kind of the adaptability of particular buildings and businesses has been so important on the smaller scale because that's what actually gives people the ability to adapt rather than trying to steer a ginormous ship in the middle of a pandemic. You know, the small boats that have been able to kind of reorient and shift that have been more successful, that's awesome.

**Speaker 1** [00:17:47] Except you've really moved us away from the garden and the soil. Now we're in the ocean. I'm feel like our metaphors are getting overwhelming. So maybe we should stop stop talking about this stuff. We should bring in one of our partners from the Ormond center and see if they've got some insight into Chillum that can help our listeners make sense of this super important concept.

**Speaker 2** [00:18:15] Welcome, Josh Yates to the embedded church podcast.

**Speaker 1** [00:18:20] It's a pleasure to be here.

**Speaker 2** [00:18:22] So if our listeners tuned into the trailer, they probably got a little introduction of who you are, but if they're tuning in for the first time, they might not have a frame of reference. So Josh Yates comes to us from the ormond Center, which is based out of Duke Divinity School. And I'd love for you, Josh, just to share a little bit more with our listeners about who you are and what you're doing there at the ormond center. Yeah.

**Speaker 1** [00:18:42] Pleasure. So I suppose there's probably three important things to know about me. The first is I'm an accidental academic. So for the last 15 years, I have been on the faculty of the University of Virginia as a cultural sociologist. And then more recently, Duke. The second is that I'm an accidental social entrepreneur. So in that time, I've also found myself running a startup social enterprise called Thriving Cities Group, which has done work with communities around the country, about 20 different communities at this point. But the one thing that's not accidental is I'm originally from Montana, so I'm a very proud, very proud Montana,

**Speaker 2** [00:19:24] native to Montanans with me.

**Speaker 1** [00:19:25] Well, you're in trouble. I wish I was in Montana, but half of the Jacobsson clan was born in Montana. So we that's that's our strongest represented state in our household. So.

**Speaker 2** [00:19:37] I don't I think a Texan could take on two Montanans, probably.

**Speaker 1** [00:19:41] Texas is the Montana the South. I'll grant that. Yeah. I should also mention I'm a father and husband. And that's also, of course, crucial to who I am. Absolutely. Which is Joy and I were just having a really interesting conversation about Chillum. I know you've done a lot of thinking about Schwamm, so maybe we could kick it off with you. Just talking a little bit about why you think a deeper understanding chillum can be helpful to local church. Yeah, absolutely. Since I've just narrated who I am and some of the things that I do for a living or have done for a living, it's important to note that each of those have actually been pretty important to a quest that I've been on. At least that's how I've come to think about it. And the quest has been. Focused on a question that at first for a long time, I didn't really think of in terms of the word chillum, but in more recent times I've come to think that's exactly what it's about. And the question is this, what does it mean and what does it take to thrive today in our communities? And related questions like who gets to who doesn't? And so for a long time in doing the scholarly work, the research, as well as doing the work on the ground with communities who are in the trenches trying to help their neighbors thrive. And more recently in the work at the Ormond Center, where in fact part of our mission is to help equip congregations and their communities to be agents of thriving. This question has been front and center for me. And I would say about five years ago or so, I had an epiphany along this question, and the recognition was that the more I studied and learned about how the scriptures think about questions of human thriving, flourishing more and more, I came to a recognition that there is a rich heritage, a rich language for this in the scriptures. And that language has a number of related terms. But at the core, at the center, it is the concept of shalom that grounds a biblical view of what it means and takes to thrive. I realize one of the goals we have for this season is to help pastors ask better questions. And just as you are speaking, that notion came to my mind. I thought, OK, based on what you just said or what do you wish pastors would ask that connects to thriving or shalom? That's a great question. Here's what I'd say. I think there's certain things we have to unlearn and there's certain things we have to relearn and then there's probably things we have to keep learning. All right. So so here's what I mean by that. The thing we have to unlearn, I think, is that for most of us, this work to the extent to which we even think about the word shallow or use it right. It tends to be a word that we've interpreted pretty narrowly right now. I think often it's interpreted in the scriptures as an English, but certainly gets at it. Or it's primarily a kind of individual level spiritual thing right now, and I think we have to unlearn that. It's not that that is wrong, it's just incomplete. And so I think that sort of stands in the way of a fuller appreciation, a deeper, richer understanding of what this word means and what it can mean for us today. And that's where we then move to what we have to relearn. And I would say that, well, it is a straightforward concept, it is not a simple concept, it is a multilayered, multidimensional concept, which is why it's hard for our brains, I think, to kind of get a grip on it. But in fact, I kind of think of it as a super connector word, right. There's a cluster of things that get connected, that come together, that get unified by the word shalom,

**Speaker 2** [00:23:35] the hub on the tire.

**Speaker 1** [00:23:37] It's a hub. It's a hub on the tire with lots of space. Right. That's what we already have. One metaphor go in the bucket, but we think time. That's it. That's in the hub. It's fantastic. Yeah, but it's a surgery that's help us super helpful because I think that's right. And and in fact, one of the things that that re learning of being able to use that word to then see all the spokes that come off of it and bring a coherence and unity to those things that otherwise I think we tend to pit against one another or we tend to focus on one at the expense of others when really we need to understand how they all fit together. But I think that part of what we have to relearn is this is a unifying, integrating concept.

**Speaker 2** [00:24:24] So I have a question going back to the unlearning that you said needs to be done. Are there ways that you have challenged yourself to unlearn?

**Speaker 1** [00:24:34] Well, yes, and that that's a never ending process.

**Speaker 2** [00:24:38] I'm wondering whether the people can take to kind of unlearn or work back from that.

**Speaker 1** [00:24:44] I think I had to unlearn. I've tended in my life to pick just certain binaries, certain sort of to use a more academic jargon, kind of dualistic thinking, but not even because I was because I thought through issues it just by default. So think of words versus binaries like sacred, secular or faith and versus works or evangelism versus biblical justice. Right. In so many ways, these are words that our society wants to sort of against each other and we just fall into these grooves. But as we dig into the word shalom, what you realize is these each have a place, these things are more of a fabric. These kind of really stark divides are kind of embedded in our mindsets. They're hard to unlearn. And I've had to work really hard at that.

**Speaker 2** [00:25:36] Yeah. And I think that raises a question, too, of understanding. Are there hierarchies within these things are. No. And then how do you bring them all together in kind of coherent membership together like you've been talking about? And that's a struggle. That's a really hard thing to figure out.

**Speaker 1** [00:25:51] Yeah, that's a great question. I think when we start thinking about things that fit together in holistic ways, you do have to ask this question, what's the ordering principle? Right. And I do think ultimately we have some clues to that in scriptures. How do you see something against the whole narrative of scripture? And of course, at the heart of that is. Jesus Christ, yeah. And so I think that we have some clues, we have some things we can begin to sort of that give us a hint or a lens to look at how those things ought to fit together. But I think as we do that, just the retraining, the mind to not see these things as opposites, that in of itself is a really important need at this moment. It's. So I've got a question for you, Josh, so I'm thinking about the last couple of years, if I had like a shallow meter so our listeners can't see it, but I'm doing a thing with my hand, you know, kind of the fake applause meter that youth leaders do. It's like I will retire. Exactly. It's like, OK, thank you. Back to that metaphor. We have competing metaphors today, but if I had a Schlomo meter, it would definitely be going. It would be I would look back on the last couple of years is going down. Feels like our country is in crisis. There's a lot of angst about all sorts of things, from racism to politics to the isolation due to covid. I mean, just like it's been a tough, tough climate. So what does that mean for us as we're talking about Chillum? Do we just kind of lament the fact that Shalom's on the downward spiral and waiting for it to pop back up, or are there opportunities there that you think the church could kind of play into? Yeah, I would say that one of the things that, Shulem, digging into this concept of Chillum has taught me is the importance of context. OK, this



gets to your question, too. I would say we'll get to this probably at some point. I don't think there's a formula for Shalom. It has to be worked out in your context, I think wisdom and discernment are at the core of it, and that's only done in context. And I'm sure we'll get to all kinds of questions about what we mean by context. But at a society level, and this is true all the way down to our community, we know this in our communities. Our communities are going through massive disruptions and dislocations in so many different ways, pretty much every any way you can think about it. We have compounding crisis. We're not just experiencing a number of Perello crises or something, right? They actually all feed off of each other in complicated ways. Right. I was thinking about as you were asking me that question, take the question or the issue of trust in our society. You look at trust in our institutions right now. They're at an all time low. Almost any institution you can think of from the press to Congress to small businesses, right? There's only a few that have even above a 50 percent approval rating or higher than 50 percent level of trust. Everything else is way below that. And it turns out that we've been on like a 40 or 50 year slide, this isn't a momentary blip on the on the screen because of covid or something. There's lots of things to worry about for sure. Being a cultural sociologist, we can tend to be a bit on the gloomy side when you start looking at all the fractures in our society. But I actually think I am hopeful because I think that there are three things, three cultural shifts, you might call them, that I see playing out right now that I actually think gives me hope for society more broadly, especially if the church can see these as opportunities for its own engagement. And I actually think they're perfectly suited for the church's engagement. OK, want hear them now? Have your attention now. Yes. All right. There are three that I see that are especially for I think for the purposes of this podcast anyway worth calling out, I'll call the first one the turn to Holness. The second one to turn to well-being. And the third one, the turn to the local mom, I was hoping they would all start with W. But to is fun.

**Speaker 2** [00:30:20] Eric is a good pastor and he likes alliteration.

**Speaker 1** [00:30:23] Yeah, you got those. So starting with you. Let's let's let's hear about these

**Speaker 2** [00:30:29] things, starting with the well being. Tell us more about that. What does that include?

**Speaker 1** [00:30:34] Yeah. Think about it this way. A lots of people are feeling the disconnection. From meaning and purpose in their work and their families, and so there's been a kind of counter push, almost relentless obsession with things like happiness, right? With with

**Speaker 2** [00:30:54] fulfillment,

**Speaker 1** [00:30:55] self fulfillment. There's a really shallow and bad versions of this. And we can point to those things. But there's also, I think, quite legitimate impulses here. All right. There's there's a plenty of the self centered stuff. But I think if we dig a little deeper, scratch that a little more, what you'll find is that people know in their bones they were actually created to flourish.

**Speaker 2** [00:31:22] Yeah, they were made for more.

**Speaker 1** [00:31:24] They were made for more. They were made for relationship, meaningful relationships. They were made to grow into the kinds of human beings and creatures that are capable of contributing to the world around them, to the love of their

neighbor in all kinds of different ways. And so I think there's a deeper hunger, even if it gets misdirected in all kinds of ways that we might want to criticize. And I think that's something Christians not only should can affirm, but should offer.

**Speaker 2** [00:31:55] Right, right.

**Speaker 1** [00:31:56] I think we both are history at our best anyway. We've been the people who say, no, we're made in the image of God. Yeah. We're the kind of creature that has capabilities, that has a loves and desires

**Speaker 2** [00:32:10] and our work matters and

**Speaker 1** [00:32:12] our work and craftsmanship and creativity and innovation. These all matter. They're not incidental or beside the point. They matter for sure. I love the the way that the Yale theologian Miroslav Volf puts it. He talks about in his book called For the Life of the World. He says that the Christian story in its entirety is about flourishing life, good life, true life, or in biblical terms, abundant life. And what else is the gospel? But the good news that Jesus came to bring life in that more abundantly. So I think Christians have something to say here, to actually point to the deeper yearning and hunger beneath it of a beautiful that'll preach. Let's talk about Holness then, second second term. Yeah, if you think about the well-being as really a kind of deep desire for fulness, for abundant life, this is really, I think, a term that people see. Of trying to bring things that have been divided, broken, separated back together, I mean, obviously there's lots of things that are broken, fractured, divided in our country. And if the election season and things that have followed haven't made that abundantly clear, I don't know what will. But I actually think it's it's actually even worth getting away from the political ways we think about fracture and even get to a particular mindset that has been powerful in our culture and society for about one hundred and fifty two hundred years. This is like the civics one on one. But think back to when you first learned about Henry Ford and the assembly line. Yeah. All right. What was the assembly line? Why was it so powerful, this industrial process? It's because they took a complex reality. They broke it down into its constituent parts, isolated the different pieces and then created efficiencies, right. Optimizing those installations, mechanization, right. Whenever we faced a complex issue. Plus, Henry Ford was building cars, which helped to separate us in a whole different way. But yes, that's a different subject. Had to bring that in. I had to come out and I had to. I was setting you up.

**Speaker 2** [00:34:39] Yes, they were going to say. Jane Jacobs to you, though, in her critique of urban planning and the built environment, is that same critique of the separation of parts and mechanization and scientific approach to how we design our cities.

**Speaker 1** [00:34:51] Designing the city like a machine, not like an organic or a city isn't a machine. Yeah, it's an ecology. So here's what I would say. And I'll bring in I'll come back to Jane Jacobs, because I think she's a perfect example of this, which is to say that what people know is that it's not that that process of breaking things down and separating them in and of itself is is wrong or bad or whatever. It really matters on what you're trying to apply that to. Yeah, if you're trying to do that, then what are, in fact, machines that that has its place, its role. But when you're doing that to living systems or just human culture. Right. Then you're doing harm because you can't divide living systems in that way or try to control them. And when you try to do that, you actually often create way more harm than good. Yeah, Jane Jacobs recognized this. Then you will both know in the last chapter of her great book, the kind of problem the city is, the kind of problem the city is. Right. It's one of complexity, organized complexity, organized complexity. And I think that she was onto

something that people in the ecology or in other forms of thinking have learned the hard way, which is that those kinds of things, like a human community, like a family, you can't just break it down into its constituent parts. And try to reassemble, it doesn't work that way, and you oftentimes will kill it when you try to do that. And so I think that that's an important part. Yeah, I love it. I might just say one more thing before we get to the turn to the local, because I think this might be a bridge to that. And I think it's really important. I think with respect to what a chillum vision or angle of vision we might call it allows us to understand. The way all the way and it doesn't take that much. Reflection to see how your particular community, your town. Is full of various kinds of division fracture, separation, isolation. The way we're sorted in terms of where we live and who lives where, the difference is, I'm sure you've talked about it on the show, the differences of longevity between blocks from one place to another. Right. Which has led people to realize that your zip code can be as impactful on your life chances as your genetic code. So I think that I just want to commend that while we're talking kind of abstractly about the turn to wholeness or the turn to well-being. But Shulem starts training your vision. It starts helping you see things that you might not have seen otherwise, which I think is really important. Yeah, I love that.

**Speaker 2** [00:37:47] Based on that, then as you start to see those things, I think what's required for that is to be really invested locally. Right. And that was your third point. So the left for you to share more about that.

**Speaker 1** [00:37:59] So when I started off my scholarly career, I actually started it as a scholar of globalization. It was in the late nineties that was all the the buzz of how our world was becoming interconnected economically, technologically. And so I became fascinated by what that would mean for the world to be so interconnected. But one of the things I never expected this was the counterintuitive part, was that. At the same time, you get. Global interconnection. And the ability to do things on a global scale. It actually energizes the local Huso, so what ends up becoming is that in many ways and the challenges and the issues either require a global response. Where the things are so big that the nation states now have to work together to solve massive, big interconnected challenges, or the nation states often become too big for the very local kinds of issues. And so you need more local responses. And so you think about this phrase, think globally, act locally as an example that that's a cliché. It's sort of people have heard that maybe your sticker, it's a bumper sticker, maybe you're skeptical about it. But in fact, what we see is that at the same time and same period that we've become more globally interconnected, we see a renaissance on the ground of local activity, of people having agency at the level closest to them, which is their communities, their cities, their towns. There's a great book, if your listeners are interested, called *The New Localism*, which maybe you've talked about as well. But the basic argument follows this point, which is that what we see now is a devolution. Of power from the national level to municipalities, states, municipalities, local regions, and not just the devolution down to like your mayor's office, but also the reality that the challenges we face at a local level require more than just the mayor or the Chamber of Commerce. It requires a whole diverse range of cross-sector responses or efforts. So this is this becomes a moment where non-profits, the private public partnerships, universities, churches all have, I think, an increased ability. To contribute and to be transformative in their local communities,

**Speaker 2** [00:40:41] I think that speaks so well into the theme verse, the season of Jeremiah Twenty nine and the call to seek the welfare of the city of a place where you live.

**Speaker 1** [00:40:51] Yeah, absolutely. And I think there is the word I think is best translated, not peace or even welfare, but shallow. Yeah, that's a great biblical moment

where that word, I think now has resonance for us to seek the shalom of the land to which I brought you pray for it on its behalf. But I think what it does is it helps us as Christians and as the church understand that this isn't a nice to have. This is something we're called to. This is a calling. And I think that that that calling is also important at a moment where the church is arguably a pretty weak institution socially. Nationally, in so many different ways, we were divided, we're demoralized for the most part, with some exceptions. But what's interesting at a local level. Churches are actually incredibly strong. They've been some of the most important institutions in many places where all the other institutions have failed or disappear. Often the churches are the only ones that are left. Think of an inner city community or in a really rural community like either one, often the only functioning institution or churches or faith communities. And I think you begin to realize but you may have to switch your mindset if you think about churches have enormous assets to deploy locally. If they have a building and they have land building and they have physical assets. It's crazy. They have physical assets. They have finite, potentially financial assets. And of course, they have people. And I think one of the things I would say to pastors, maybe almost more than anything else, is to think of your congregation. As both a microcosm of your community and as a massive asset for answering this call from Jeremiah seeking the chillum of the community for the land I brought you to.

**Speaker 2** [00:42:52] So one of the things that you talked about in this opportunity that you see with churches in Christianity, you framed it in terms of Christianity's surprise. And I really like that because I think the element of surprise to me is a very compelling element as well. Right. There's a delight that comes with surprise. And so I'd be curious to hear unpack at Christianity surprise a bit for our listeners.

**Speaker 1** [00:43:18] I'm going to speak personally about it. But where I get the phrase from, I'm stealing. Stealing. Yes, right. So a colleague here at Duke Divinity School named Kevin Rowe just came out with this book, Christianity Surprise. And Kevin is a early church historian who writes about how was it that before Constantine declared Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire, it grew from a few thousand people in the backwaters of the Roman Empire to a few million people right at the heart of the Empire. What was it that made this thing grow so fast and become so culturally pervasive in a space of a few hundred years? And he outlines a number of things that are important to the early church. I'll just say a couple of things and then draw a personal connection to it, which is they had a certain vision of who God was that was radically different. And that vision then started to give them a what he says, a story for everything. Then that empowered them with that vision of God, the story of everything with a certain understanding of who they were as image bearers of that God, and then the kind of natural organic response was they started seeing things in their community that institutions that that didn't honor that image, the fundamental dignity as image bearers, they started seeing opportunities for both innovation. For response, for repair. For Shulem, and there was an outpouring of that and a whole bunch of different ways and a flourishing of new institutions and innovative ways of dealing with the poor, the creation of hospitals and hospices, the well-known story of when the Roman Empire had its pandemic, its plagues, the Christians were the ones running into the cities, not out of them, right to the point where you get certain Roman figures that are selling these Christians are making the rest of us look pretty bad. So it was surprising. No one expected it sort of broke into human reality in a way that nobody could have ever predicted. And of course, it's continued to surprise through the ages, and that's led to the rapid growth. If I could double back on something you said earlier, just to kind of round it out, as you had mentioned, these unlearned things that we have to do. And one of them was the false choice between evangelism and biblical justice. It sounds like this is getting us back to that unlearning, right? Because. Absolutely.

And that's the whole gospel. Yeah. It's not just pieces of the gospel and that these things are part of the same cloth. And I think in our moment, a time when I think the world thinks it knows the church pretty well, it thinks it's got the church's number. And I suspect for a growing portion of Christian believers themselves, I think we could stand to be surprised about the relevance or the maybe not cultural relevance, but the the poignancy of the church and the move of the spirit is still alive in our time, that we can still be surprising. And I think that would be a surprise to most of us. But it's one worth believing in and it's happened over and over again in Christian history. And when it does happen, it always is a way of holding together things that were otherwise broken apart. I think it's had a holistic. Full vision of Shalom at its heart, which is why I think Shalom and its sister concepts like Jubilee and Sabbath may in fact be the road to Christianity surprise in our time in our communities. I love it. I love it. Yeah, I would love to keep this conversation going, but I think we've got some really great stuff to chew on and stuff that we're going to continue to kind of chew on as we as we carry out season four, because it's a great foundation how we're going to go after this vision and encourage pastors to go after this vision in the various realms that are going to be talking about this seed. I think we got a really good foundation to work from. Hi again, this is Chris Eleazar from the Urban Centers Studio

**Speaker 3** [00:47:50] for Placemaking the Ormond Center is thrilled to be joining forces with Eric and Sarah Joy for the fourth season of the Embedded Church podcast. This is what hit me about Episode one. Shalom. It is an easy chillum isn't easy to understand theologically, conceptually, sociologically, politically. It's even more difficult to be animated by it, that is to live out, Shulem, as a Christian, as a pastor, as a congregation and Christian community. What makes some difficult is its comprehensive vision. Shalom is whole cloth, not threads, not bits of rag, but whole cloth. It's a vision of wholeness while being thriving. Is big, there's lots of different dots to connect up, especially when it comes to connecting the dots of Chalong to placemaking I don't know about you, but for me, Schlamme can be a bit overwhelming. And in the face of such a nominee, I know I am tempted to settle for good enough. Just a dash of Shulem there, a sprinkle of dust is there and a dab of thriving for you over there. So my encouragement to myself and to you is do the hard thing and seek shallow. The verse for the season isn't slide into shalom for the city, it's sike this year alone of the city, or seek this album of your neighborhood, town or rural community to dove deep into the book suggested in the podcast notes especially Brugmann, ask the hard questions and do the biblical work to understand its deep meaning. Dove deep into what's going on in your neighborhood, town, city or rural community, celebrate the shalom that's there but look hard for law. Shlomi's absent was not shared with others. Turn over the hard sociological, cultural stones that are uncomfortable and ask, how can children come and heal those situations and learn some things really? Shop and others, in other words, keep connecting the dots and weaving whole cloth of God, shalom. So that's one of my thoughts on Episode one. If you'd like to share your thoughts, but what you're writing about shallow, you can drop us an email or leave us a message on our feedback phone line. That's all for now. See you at the end of the next episode.

**Speaker 2** [00:50:35] Thanks for tuning in to another episode of the embedded church podcast. Be sure to check out the episodes, show notes for links to resources and other helpful information related to this episode. If you'd like to connect with us to share comments or ideas about the work we're doing. We'd love to hear from you. You can send us an email at info embedded church dot com or leave a voice message on our feedback line by dialing seven six zero five to seven three two six zero followers on Instagram Embedded Church podcast or visit our website w w w dot embedded church dot com. Finally, thank you to our season for partners at Ormond Center and to all of our faithful

listeners and supporters who have helped us make it to Season four. We are honored and encouraged until next time. Be well.