

# Messy Jesus Business Episode 87

## Dr Ann Garrido

### Transcript

**Julia:** [00:00:00] Dr. Anne Garrido, thank you so much for coming to Messy Jesus Business.

**Ann:** Oh my gosh, thank you for having me.

**Julia:** Thanks for all that you're doing in the world, in the church, and all the ways you're helping people to have difficult conversations. I'm not sure, but as long as I've known of you and your work.

I've become curious if you're one of the global experts on conflict.

**Ann:** Okay. That might be a little bit of a stretch, but I'm doing, I'm doing my own tiny part,

**Julia:** we'll get into that. And, and our listeners will understand why I might have even come up with that title for you. As we proceed here, but before we get into that topic, into conflict and difficult conversations and, and so on, I'd, I'd love to hear about you and your story.

How did you know how you were called to share your gifts with the world and to serve God and God's people in the ways that you do? Well, I guess

**Ann:** probably the place to start is I'm the oldest of eight children, uh, in a really big Catholic family from South St. Louis, and to this day, you know, my siblings and the people that they married and their kids, these are just some of my favorite people to be around in the whole world.

And all of us are the product of a thoroughly Catholic education, uh, with the school sisters of Notre Dame. So my high school years at the all girls, Notre Dame high school, the sisters were so great about teaching us and the whole of the faculty, right? That they taught us as women, we could make the world a better place and that we had the power to do that.

And Because of that, the school, we were the kind of place where like the senior year, your yearbook for that year, they didn't do that kind of silly stuff like, Oh, most likely to succeed. And still, we would have things like most likely to land on the moon, or, you know, most likely to get a patent. And I remember my [00:02:00] senior year, I got voted most likely to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

Oh, I know. And it was funny, because I guess you could say I've been on that quest ever since then. That from childhood, the education I received gave me an understanding that world peace was possible and something worth striving for. And that, that has never left me. Though now, definitely as an adult, I continue to have a much more whittled down sense of what I might be able to contribute to that cause for sure.

**Julia:** Yeah. For sure. So you could have ended up a peace activist or leading some nonviolent revolution like Gandhi or something, but somehow you ended up a theologian. This is true. This is true. So how did this happen?

**Ann:** Well, I guess part of this quest for being part of peacemaking I always knew that early on in the effort, there was going to need to involve getting to know people from around the world and being in conversation with each other across spaces of difference.

So I spent some time in college, actually in Africa, both in East and in West Africa. I lived in Sierra Leone, right on the edge of their civil war. And I think that made me even more committed to the cause of conflict management, because there were towns that I was in that shortly thereafter were just decimated by the war that happened there and people who I encountered there who had to flee for their lives.

Then the desire to continue to build bridges took me after college to the island of Guam to teach in the Notre Dame schools there, and that's where I ended up meeting my husband, who's indigenous Chamorro, and then also where our son was born. And then after several years, my husband and I both decided that we would move stateside to pursue graduate education and ministry.

And one thing led to the next. And for the past quarter of a century now, I've been working from one angle or another to help people try to work through differences and try to have better [00:04:00] relationships with each other and to create healthier environments where people can thrive and be their very best selves.

A lot of that has included being at Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis where I'm on the faculty. I also have done a lot of consulting and mediation with a group called triad consulting group, which it was founded by two members of the Harvard negotiation project who wrote the book, difficult conversations, and who just, I learned tremendous amounts from, and then a lot at this point in time of doing that work independently.

I've got just a real particular passion around doing difficult conversations with people who are in, in Christian leadership around tough, tough conversations. I have a couple of books that I've written. I'll call them the redeeming series on like Christian leadership on what makes it tough and how do we manage that?

So redeeming administration, redeeming conflict and redeeming power.

**Julia:** Can we take a deeper dive into the discernment? What are the things you've learned and discovered that have clarified for you that this is the particular way that you can share who you are and give of your gifts? I'm aware that some of the people that listen to Messy Jesus Business are really just actively discerning their vocation.

**Ann:** That's a great question. Because one of the things underneath it is vocation, something that is pursued, or is vocation something that pursues you?

**Julia:** Exactly. It's a great mystery to me still. And I, I'm a professional vocation minister, apparently. And I, I don't know, is it call or choice or is it a nudging?

Is it inevitable? Yes, there is free will. We can say no, but you feel so Taken over by it sometimes, right?

**Ann:** I am a big fan of the line from Frederick Buechner that your vocation is where your own deep joy meets the world's deep need. And I think for me, obviously from childhood, there has been this golden thread that's run through my life that has been an absolute love [00:06:00] for.

The world that could be I think what Jesus called the reign of God or the kingdom of God I mean that has been an abiding It's just a deep love and it gives me great joy to feel like i'm participating in it The particulars in which the doors have opened in front of me or a carpet's been rolled out and has been like here Come do this and I think for me a lot of figuring out vocation has been being responsive to the Invitations as they've opened and trusting, perhaps that's where the voice of God is.

I did finally do the 30 days Ignatian exercises, and I think learned a little bit more about sorting out then is that the voice of God beckoning you forward? Or is that just a distraction from what it is? You're really called to do because one of the great dangers is. When your sense of vocation is that it's whatever comes to you and invites you, you can end up getting involved in all kinds of things that probably aren't yours to do.

What is it? Is it Martin? He says, it's not about choosing between good and evil. It's about choosing which particular goods are meant for me. Gosh, that's a lot tougher because yeah, I can choose between good and evil, but it's like, Oh, but when there are so many needs that the world has, which particular one is the one that I'm supposed to be responding to?

That's sometimes that's been harder for me to figure out too. Me

**Julia:** too. There's really endless options and opportunities. You're, you're an empowered, educated women because of that Catholic education you had years ago.

**Ann:** I'm not twiddling my thumbs. That's for sure. Yeah. I think that was my fear when I was growing up though.

My fear was I would never find my work. I would never figure out a place where I could actually contribute in the world. And I did not know that the greater challenge in life would be figuring out which particular work is meant for me. That's an ongoing discernment.

**Julia:** You said you have a passion for really supporting Christian leaders in particular.[00:08:00]

What is Christian leadership for you? Like leaders who are Christian, sure. But like, when you think about the characteristics of a strong Christian leader, what are you hoping to notice in someone?

**Ann:** Oh, that's a good question. Let me back up just a little bit by like, what am I meaning when I say that term?

Because it might be a little different than like what I want to see in the person. Like a little more in the motivation for the person. I actually am partial to Parker Palmer's definition in terms of a leader is one who, whether they want to or not, is having an impact on other people, has other people who are being impacted by them.

When I say a Christian leader, what I actually mean by that is that the person's commitment to their Christian faith is part of what they want to integrate with their leadership, and they want their leadership to be informed by their faith, and they want their leadership to be an expression of their deepest sense of affiliation to Christ.

I think it manifests itself in the world in lots and lots of different ways because people lead in a variety of different spheres and each are finding their own embodied expression of their Christian faith, but it's their commitment to Christ that is the animating feature underneath. The work that they're doing in the world.

**Julia:** That's a beautiful articulation. And you know, what's coming to mind for me as I hear you say that is how incredibly complicated it is because we're so diverse, even in our theologies from tradition to tradition, but even within traditions, there are. Such a different understanding of what even Christ is and what it means to be animated by Christ, to be integrating what Christ's vision for the world is, right?

And I wonder if you have to do a lot of, like, preference checking? I don't know how else to say that. Like, if you're like, When you're [00:10:00] angry, like, this is the way I prefer you to be angry, or, you know, like, I really prefer that you not get so hyper focused on that one issue and really understand things more comprehensively.

Are you open to all the ways that this can be expressed within church spaces?

**Ann:** Hmm.

**Julia:** So my question must make sense, since you're thinking.

**Ann:** No, I am. I'm thinking very deeply and in part because, you know, my own notions of what some core Christian concepts are. They keep evolving over time, the longer that I'm in the work.

So, you know, like for example, I listened to an interview you did earlier with Kaya Oakes and I like, like my definition of forgiveness over time has changed from my earliest understanding of what forgiveness looked like to where I would be with that now as someone who's trying to live Christian leadership, even my notion of what.

Peace looks like, or what conflict looks like, like these, these are terms that continue to evolve for me over time. And maybe underneath what you're saying, the golden thread that again goes through this track is the pursuit of truth. So I can talk to people who hold really different views of Christianity.

I can talk to people who are not Christian at all. I can talk to people. Who come at the world from different political spaces, different moral commitments. I think what is essential for bridging difference is that both persons have a deep, deep commitment to truth, to trying to pursue what's true. So if both people in the conversation, regardless of how different they are, are entering into the conversation.

Trying to figure out what's [00:12:00] true and willing to renegotiate what they hold at any particular point in time if they figure out what's more true.

I think the conversation always has the potential of going places.

One of the great challenges, this is part of what makes my work messy, is what do you do when you're not sure that the other party has a commitment to truth?

So if I privilege anything in the conversation, I hope what I'm privileging The commitment to truth. Like if, if we got that in common, I think almost anything's going to be workable in conversation.

**Julia:** I'd love to hear tips about how to do that. First, I want to tell you a story. Just this past weekend, I was out with one of my friends who's a seminarian and we're just walking around Chicago.

We're at a museum and chatting about different things and I said to him, Hey, when you're ordained in like a priest and you have your own parish Are you going to be one of my priest friends who's like welcoming of women like me who like to come and preach? And it was just like a curiosity for me like I wasn't wanting any debate I just wasn't sure where he stood on this and I wanted to be honest, you know and have a Conversation a friendship about it.

I was very surprised with how For him it became like this button that I pushed and he then started to tell me that there's no scriptural basis for this. And if I could give him some scriptural basis, then he became incredibly passionate. And I thought we're in a public place. Like people might have perceptions of what's happening here.

And I know, and we just like. Stood in the side of the museum and, and I just tried to listen and hear 'em out and say, yeah, well, I don't know if you can really understand what it's like for me as a woman who feels called to be a preacher. And there's no [00:14:00] official way for me to do that at a pulpit. And I appreciate hearing your view, you know, , and it just didn't really feel like a conversation anymore.

So, in my question, which I thought was just a genuine, innocent curiosity, there was a truth that was obviously there, that, that I was sort of naive to, and maybe if I would have been more careful about that, I would have. Asked my question differently.

**Ann:** Yeah. So one of the tools that we oftentimes use in conflict management is something that's called the ladder of inference.

It came from two professors at MIT, Chris Argers and Don Shane. And they were regularly going into organizations, if you want to say like with a hundred people, who are in a situation kind of like yourself, like there's all these people that work with each other, they're in friendship with each other. And all of a sudden they end up on opposite sides of the room.

And how did that happen so fast? Like what happens? And what they note is that. The human brain works through scenarios very quickly. This process that I'm about to describe happens in about six seconds. At the very base level, All of us have contact with, like, through the senses, we've got contact with reality, right?

There's so much reality that we could be paying attention to at any one moment in time, that our brain selects for the data in this situation that's the most important for our own survival and thriving. Because we can't pay attention to all of it. Like, reality is so big. So vast. One of my Dominican friends is keen to say reality is like a bazillion volts of electricity.

Most of us have about 60 watt bulbs in our brain, . So like what we can take in of reality is small. And then we will spend some time interpreting that reality and adding reasons to it before we arrive at conclusions. A lot of the difficult conversations that we're in happened at the very top rung of that ladder.

They happen at the conclusion layer. So from your perspective, women should be able to preach. And from his [00:16:00] perspective, there's no scriptural data for that. And what we're just doing is we're trading at the very top rung, like the conclusion that each of us have reached about the topic of women preaching.

And what can be really interesting in those conversations is we could get into a debate about who's right or who's wrong about this. Should women be able to preach from the pulpit? Should they not be able to preach from the pulpit? Where the conversation begins to get richer is if we could let go of truths, like the conclusions that we've reached.

Because a lot of times we're not actually debating about fact. Neither of you is saying Actually, uh, the church says, yeah, women should actively be preaching at mass. Like, neither of you are disagreeing about the facts of the situation.

You're just, you're disagreeing at the level of, which facts matter? Which ones are the more relevant ones here? What should we do about the facts? Should we take a stand against this or before this? Should we advocate for women being able to preach? Or should we try to stick with what the traditional practice of the church has been? So you're not at the level of fact disagreeing.

A richer conversation between you is like, And I think you, you were coming to us like, holy cow, in 30 seconds, we just went from here to here. We really obviously have different ways of thinking about this. Instead of thinking like, who's right or who's wrong about this. It would be so interesting with the friend to slow down and to be able to say, wow, it sounds like I touched something there. This means something to you. Say a little bit more about why this is important to you or say a little bit more like, where's that reaction coming from? Because it sounds like this is important like this for you, you have some stake in this and wouldn't it be beautiful. If he, in response, was able to say, Sister Julia, it sounds like this means something to you.

Can you tell me a little bit about your experience as a woman in the church? Could you tell [00:18:00] me something about, what's that experience that you're describing of call? I wouldn't know more about that. Because it doesn't have to be a total question about who's right or who's wrong.

**Julia:** I mean, that would have felt, to me, more fruitful because I, what, that's probably really what I wanted is I wanted to get to know my friend better, right?

I wanted to explore some relational mystery there and if I could have just said, oh wow, I don't think I knew you were so passionate about scripture. How did she become so passionate about scripture? And then we would have explored that. That would have been really fun.

**Ann:** Well, it's the question of moving from who's right or who's wrong to why do we see this so differently.

**Julia:** Yeah, right. And I wonder though, how to do it, I mean, the messiness for me is all about the emotion. If someone's angry, if they're incredibly passionate, and I'm sure I do this to other people, if they're just responding or reacting in a way that I don't expect or anticipate, I can get all jumbled in my brain and confused.

I don't know what to say. Am I supposed to be arguing now? Am I supposed to be proving something?

**Ann:** I'm totally with you. No, I understand what you're saying. And this is the irony is, I think first is, can I translate in my mind in that moment? When the person becomes really angry about it, to recognize, when people start to give really strong judgments or accusations or even things like, and in scripture it doesn't say this, to be underneath when you can hear it, if in the conversation, the feelings are actually really critical to the conversation, and it wouldn't even be a tough conversation if there weren't feelings.

So being able to name the feelings Ironically, this is something I'm discovering of late. The feelings are actually often where we're going to find our common ground because sometimes it's like, it sounds like you're really passionate about this. I'm actually really passionate about it too. We both share a passion on this topic.

A lot of times it's, [00:20:00] if I understand correctly, you're feeling pretty frustrated now. I actually am feeling pretty frustrated by this conversation, too. The frustration's where we find our common ground. Because even though we might think about this in a really different way, we might hold very different truths about this, where we are finding a space to meet is we are having a shared experience of a feeling right now that probably neither of us like a lot.

**Julia:** When things like that happen, for myself, I feel such a need to process it and to think through and I come up with more questions about it all and I find myself losing all my courage and curiosity and almost closing down because now I'm afraid that they have all these judgments about me or I've upset them too much and I don't want to upset them anymore.

So it creates difficulty in having the follow up conversation too. Which would bring the relationship to a deeper place.

**Ann:** I love though what you're talking about is that half of what's a difficult conversation actually is what's happening in our own head and then the follow up to having the conversation. So part of it is not only learning skills for

negotiating with the other person. Part of the ongoing, and I would say spiritual work of being involved in this field is learning how to have negotiation with myself and my own sense of identity. So if I see myself as a kind person and someone else gets upset.

Then I begin to question inside of myself. Oh gosh, darn it. And you must not be as kind of a person as you like to think that you are. Maybe you're not really a kind person. Maybe you're not this. This goes back to what you were saying earlier. If Christianity is part of your core sense of identity, anytime that the person accuses you of not showing up as they perceive, a Christian should be showing up, which may be sometimes is always polite.

Always kind, never challenging, always [00:22:00] docile, like those kinds of things are actually going to be evocative inside and make one go, Oh, am I really Christian? Am I really being a Christian leader right now?

So that part of the conversation, sometimes the toughest part of the conversation isn't even with the other person.

It's the toughest part of the conversation is what's going on inside of our own heads during and following up after the conversation. But how cool it would be if you were able to say, you know, last time we, I, we had a conversation and I just felt afterwards that went so quickly arise. And I know I got into a defensive space and I kind of sensed maybe you were in that space also.

I'm just so curious if we could figure out. Why did we look at that so differently? What, like, what was it that brought us there? That could be such an interesting conversation to have.

**Julia:** Some people perceive me as a really brave person, but this is me being very vulnerable. The reality is I would likely chicken out because now I'm like, Oh, I've learned not to go there in conversations with that person.

That was too difficult. So, so it's like almost this feeling of regret of like, Oh, I shouldn't even even mentioned to him that I love to preach when I can. But isn't that sad that like, that's me. Avoiding closeness with somebody I care about,

**Ann:** isn't that what we're most scared of in the end? And should I just say to you, Julia, I do this professionally.

And can I say it is way easier for me to listen to other people's difficult conversations than to be in them myself. Right? So when I myself am in these

conversations, I think my husband, my friends would probably tell you all of his skills go right out the window and the capacity to see things clearly and analyze them.

Yeah, all of us when we're in the middle of it. That, that's the reality. That's the messiness of it, right? Even us, we have hard time operationalizing the skills that we studied or whatever. And ultimately, [00:24:00] part of it is It is this fear of vulnerability, isn't it? It is a fear that if I go back, it might get messier because being close to somebody is inherently a little on the messy side.

I say that though also, just in, also full transparency, I don't at this stage in the game, 15 years into doing this professionally, I don't actually think that conversation always is the direction that it needs to head in. And that there are times when sometimes what we do is just You know, get a little bit of distance, might bring clarity, sometimes instead of talking about something that we know is a neurologic topic between us, maybe working on something together that we do hold in common ground.

I'm not sure at this stage in the game that everything that's painful needs to be immediately dove into. I'm just giving myself a little bit more grace there too.

**Julia:** What are you learning in your work about how culture, whether that's different races and ethnicities and so on, or even like cultures of generations and cultures of political beliefs and so on.

Like, what are you learning about how culture informs the skills that we're choosing or complicates it?

**Ann:** I appreciate that you're offering a broad definition of culture because I think each of us sits at the. intersection of multiple overlapping cultures in which we participate and are influenced by and shaped by.

And so knowing one facet of a person's existence hardly equips you to understand everything about what their perspective is going to be about that.

One of the most damaging things, actually, I would say, in managing tough conversations in a healthy way is to think that when one speaks, [00:26:00] one speaks for all women, or one speaks for all Catholics, or one speaks for all Latinos, or that one speaks for all, you know, like that, that each of us only really has the capacity to speak for ourself, who lives at the, a unique intersection of all the different cultures that we partake in.

That being said, We might recognize that the cultures in which we are handling things norm them in different ways. As you're speaking I'm thinking about an interaction that I had this past week when I was at a board meeting... I'm a pretty high J on the Myers Briggs. So I just need like a timeline and I just need to know like what's the next step

And the person who is actually leading the meeting, who comes from a very different ethnicity than my own, but also probably a different religious tradition than my own when he was speaking, my experience, he was, he was just beating around the bush and that I was needing to get more like director sort of just to get a clear answer around something.

And I recognized even in the moment I was like. Oh, we've got a cultures at play in this conversation right now. What I'm asking of him is something that it's just like the way in which I'm communicating is not his preferred mode of communication. It's not like direct is better than indirect. It's not like looking each other in the eyes is better than putting one's eyes down as a way of being respectful of another person of a different generation.

It's not like there's a better or worse. It's just that we're norming things differently. And we just got to figure out how are we going to negotiate between our two norms. But I think sometimes stepping out of the lens of who's right or who's wrong, or whose culture is dominant here or not, just stepping away from that and just asking the question, okay, so [00:28:00] we've got some differences and what we consider to be the norms in this situation and what we each need and how are we going to negotiate those differences.

In a way that each of us feels like we're being treated fairly.

**Julia:** It's requiring an objective view of the situation as much as possible. Even just naming it, like, I realize I want a timeline here and maybe that's not gonna work for you.

**Ann:** I mean, and in some ways, like, it's important to me. It's not important to you in the same way.

And me needing that is neither good nor bad. That's Anne. You obviously don't have the same need for it. How are we gonna be in relationship with each other and work with each other given that we've got different needs in that regard? Because I don't want to undervalue, I think many times in conflict mediation, sometimes I've probably undervalued my own need or my own voice in

attempting to listen to and understand from the other person and be like, Oh, I get where that made you get sad.

I get that. I get that. I get that. And sometimes the danger is I've failed to assert my own need as an equally valid perspective. Again, it's not necessarily that it's a right or a wrong. It's more the question of how do we want to negotiate that we're looking at this differently. Okay. And that we might have some different needs here.

**Julia:** I've heard it said, for example, you know, I grew up in Iowa, I'm, I guess I'm very much just a Midwesterner, and I've heard it said that Midwesterners are. Just really— conflict, avoid it. So I'm in myself trying to learn like, am I, am I avoiding conflict here? Am I, I do want to please people. That's a reality.

**Ann:** And that's not a bad thing. No, that's not a bad thing at all. I want to be a pleasant person to live with.

**Julia:** But, but on the other hand, what am I compromising of myself? And I find myself a contradiction because I think I prefer it when people are really direct and just say, Oh, when you did this thing, Julia really bothered me.

I'm like, Oh, thanks for telling me. I had no idea. And so that doesn't feel conflict avoided. So, so like, there's all these things that are like confusing. Right. And I think that's part of us being. All of us are [00:30:00] carrying multiple cultures in us and even understandings of conflict or habits or preferences all at once.

We're all jumbled, all of us are.

**Ann:** Yeah, hence the name of your podcast. And I think the most magical word in those situations is “and.”

I want people to directly communicate with me. *And* I'm tender and I don't want to have my feelings hurt and the feedback that I'm getting is kind of like, it's going to take me a while to bounce back from.

*And* I want to be perceived as kind and I want to be a good community member and I want to be able to say things that are important to me and not feel like I have to keep my voice hidden in the closet all the time. And I think instead of,

oftentimes, one of the things that really helps is just shifting from wherever I would use the word but.

If the word “and” fits in the sentence there, I can communicate the same thing and hold both of those to be true at the same time. I think when I was speaking earlier about truth as being the core principle for having a conversation, I'm not actually talking about the fact that we hold different truths, but that at the data level, both of us are open to a deep commitment to try to figure out what's real.

So if I say, okay, they were actually 500 people at the event and the other person says, Oh no, there were a million people at that event. And I have a photograph that demonstrates to you, oh no, we can count together. And the other person is still saying, I think language in itself has a vocation.

We're talking about vocation early in the podcast, right? Language has a vocation. Yeah. And the purpose of language, the purpose of conversation is the joint pursuit of trying to figure out. What's real and that can be the reality of your experience and the reality of my experience Both of which have the potential of being you know, true at the same time but both of us have to try to be [00:32:00] pursuing what's real and open to changing our mind if Presented with evidence to the contrary

So if I keep saying no, there were a million people there and there's a I got photographic evidence.

No, it was actually 500 And I won't change my mind because for some reason holding on to the million allows me to try to make a point that's not actually connected with reality. That becomes where it's super, super difficult to have a conversation. So for me right now, the hottest conversations are Within the political environment in which we're functioning in, you know that one of the parties is lying.

Is conversation the way to go in those situations? Because all of the tools we have for Moving a conversation forward and making it constructive don't really work

**Julia:** unless there's openness

**Ann:** They don't have to agree and it's at the start of the conversation or even at the end of the conversation But as long as both parties are trying to figure out what's really going on. So if one comes into the conversation as an exercise of

Dominance or power then I'm not sure that Conversation is gonna help the situation a whole lot So, a lot of times I feel a little bit helpless in that regard.

**Julia:** Oh, you feel helpless. I was ready for you to say, and what I recommend

**Ann:** That's where for me it's getting particularly messy.

**Julia:** Yeah.

**Ann:** Because I can be in conversation with anybody. We don't have to agree on things. But I have to believe that they're also trying to figure out what's real and good.

I think where Christianity keeps me going is that Christianity in the long haul says somehow. For all eternity we are linked with each other and we're going to have to figure this out, but it might not be right now. Sometimes sitting on a [00:34:00] situation for a little while it becomes clearer, the emotions tap down a bit and something will reveal itself like a new option or a new path forward that I couldn't have seen in the moment.

**Julia:** That makes sense. I've been introduced to the phrase productive conflict recently. I was wondering if that's a phrase you're familiar with and if you have thoughts on how conflict can be productive.

**Ann:** I think where conflict can really be productive is whenever it, well, opens me to the fact that reality is bigger than what I had known before.

So Any conversation, kind of like the one you were having with your friend, where all of a sudden you're like, whoa, I didn't know you felt that way around this, or that data point I hadn't considered before, or, oh, you've got information I did not have, or you've got feelings about this that I was not aware of.

So anytime that conflict It puts me more in contact with the bazillion volts of reality. That to me is a productive conflict because it's putting me more deeply in contact with truth. And what I mean by that is by the fullness of reality. It's opening up aspects of reality I was not aware of before.

And sometimes I think it's entirely appropriate to let a situation escalate. In discomfort, I think sometimes that's really important because it will become clearer where the problem lies and who's going to need to act in order to move the dial on this. So sometimes escalating, and when I say escalating, actually, I

mean just like letting it ride itself out a little bit longer to get to its natural conclusion.

I think sometimes those can be really, really good. What we'd also want to then look at are what are markers of conflict that's becoming non constructive. So conflict that gets circular and it becomes a tit for a tat where both [00:36:00] parties are actually getting more hardened into their perspective. They're hanging out more and more with only their own circles and the broadening impact is not happening.

And then definitely any conflict that I think begins to escalate toward violence is where I'm like, that's not a constructive conflict. We used to use, when I was first starting in the field, sometimes we would still use a language of conflict resolution. And a lot of places will still say, hey, could you come work with us? We're trying to, we need to resolve this conflict. Most conflict, deep seated, like long lasting conflict, not a technical problem that we could negotiate through this in a weekend and we could actually resolve it. Most conflict that's ongoing isn't actually going to be resolved. The question is not conflict resolution.

The question is conflict management. How are we going to manage the conflict in such a way that it doesn't fragment our relationship with each other, but actually, like you were talking about earlier with your friend, use it as an opportunity to actually deepen our friendship.

And help us understand each other better. At the end of it, we still probably aren't going to agree. Like you're probably still gonna think women should be preaching in pulpits and he probably still is gonna be thinking maybe not in my parish But it doesn't mean that the conversation Wasn't constructive.

**Julia:** Right, right.

**Ann:** Because you learned a little more about each other and why you hold what you hold and why it matters to you Maybe we've got too high of bars about what we expect is gonna happen at the end of the conversation If the only way that I think this conversation was successful Was if you agree with me, well, that's like too high a bar.

Like I can't make that happen. And sometimes I think if we think that's conversation successful, if I just let you have a piece of my mind, that's probably too low a bar, but like in between there, there is space. For a

conversation, which is, I could figure out why you hold what you hold, like, understand your perspective better.

I could [00:38:00] share with integrity my own perspective better. We could do some problem solving with each other. Those are manageable aims for a conversation. And they're not necessarily going to be resolved, but it's a way of managing.

**Julia:** One of the other threads that's underlying all this that we haven't touched on yet is trust.

If we're really trying to explore what reality is and discover how the other person is experiencing reality, right, then there must be some trust in the other person's perspective and belief that the way they see things is valid.

**Ann:** This has been helpful to me in being in the middle of tough conversations.

I don't actually have to agree with your perspective of reality. I'm just trying to figure out why it makes sense to you. If I had the same socioeconomic situation as you do, if I had the same educational background, if I came from the same family that you did, I probably would also hold the exact same point. But I don't.

But I'm trying to figure out— Okay. So why within your world does this make sense? And if I'm able to summarize back to you what it is that you've been trying to communicate in a way that you're able to nod at the end of it and be like, yeah, you heard me. You got it. They're not going to want to listen to my story unless they're pretty sure that I've first heard what their story is.

And to the point where I can just slow down enough. To make sure that I've got that story right in the way that they would want it conveyed goes a really long way I think in building up trust. Yeah, and can I say in the field of negotiation? One of our key mottos is be trustworthy not trusting. So always make sure that in all your dealings you are always trustworthy.

Don't ever tell lies. Don't fudge the facts. Don't pull a quick one over on a person in order to make a sale always be trustworthy.

**Julia:** Yeah

**Ann:** But don't always be trusting. [00:40:00]

**Julia:** Well, I think I've learned that the hard way in life.

**Ann:** I have to. I have to.

**Julia:** Oh my. This has been such a fun conversation. I've learned a lot.

I'm wondering what else you would like to talk about related to Christian discipleship and messiness and what you're discovering about the complexities of this reality.

**Ann:** I used to think that if you just got the right phrases down, just went in with the right attitude, everything was solvable, that I'd be able to fix some of these situations myself, and that the world was going to be a better place by the time that I died.

I think what I'm learning about discipleship at this phase in my existence is that the reign of God still is God's, and we collaborate with it, and we do the little tiny, tiny pieces Do fall within our hands to manage, but in the end, it's God's plan and it will be realized in God's time. When I stepped away from the consulting group that I was working with, which was doing really, really good work in the world, but the world, it can be a challenging place, right?

And I think sometimes the fact that some of the situations that we were working on seemed to be getting worse rather than better. When I stepped away from them, it was kind of like being at your own funeral, because they do a little eulogy for you while you're sitting there. You know, it wasn't that I was the smartest person in the room at all.

It wasn't that I was the most skilled negotiator. It wasn't that I was the best person to be leading the workshop. But what they said was, We liked working with you because you had hope. You showed up generally cheerful to work. And I [00:42:00] think what it was was that what my Christianity gives me in the end It's I have a very strong narrative in my head That the end of the story is already written and it's good

**Julia:** Yeah,

**Ann:** and it's in hands bigger than my own.

**Julia:** Me too.

**Ann:** And I have to do my part But it's not in the end all in my hands.

**Julia:** Yeah.

**Ann:** I think that's something that we as Christians have to bring into this field of conflict management is a deep knowledge that we can go to sleep and say, God, I did my work today and now I'm handing this back over to you. And to know that we're important in God's eyes, but we're small in the big scheme of things.

And that's okay.

**Julia:** Yeah. Amen. That's so beautiful. Maybe I'm projecting something, but what I'm gleaning there is like, peacemaking is, requires surrender.

**Ann:** Yes. Trinca Hamill, when I was interviewing her for my last book, Redeeming Power, she talked about the importance of Sabbath. Basically it's the remembering—Six days a week, I can work my fanny off to helping transform the world into the world that God dreams it to be. And that's within my human vocation and power to do. One day a week, right? Reminds me I have to stop and remember and I am lost rest and this is in God's hands and that God's placed this dream within me that keeps me longing for the good, even when the goods not realized in my time that has hung with me.

That's what we need. Like the Christian discipleship is an act of hope, the strength to keep longing for the good, even when we don't get to see it.

**Julia:** Amen. Oh, thank you so much, Anne. I have a feeling I'm going to be re listening to this podcast myself to give me encouragement and [00:44:00] remind me to be hopeful.

I'd love to amplify your voice and your work more, though, and that's why I had you on this show.

**Ann:** Oh, thank you.

**Julia:** Yeah, so I'd love for you to share how our listeners can find your books and follow your work and invite you to their churches and all the things that would help you to flourish.

**Ann:** Oh, thank you.

Well, my website is [AnnGarrido.com](http://AnnGarrido.com). Not very creative, but easy to find. So just A N N. And then my last name, Garrido, G A R R I D O dot com. Um, I

write a newsletter every two weeks. Feel free to subscribe to that. And links to books and, and so forth, it's, it's all there, including, oh, it's my podcast, Waking Up Goliath, which was talking to Christian leaders about what healthy leadership looks like.

**Julia:** Amazing. Thank you so much, Ann, for coming on Messy Jesus Business.

**Ann:** Oh, thank you, Julia. I appreciate the invitation.