

A LETTER FROM DR. SEAN LUCAS

August 13, 2020

My dear Friends,

I recently bought a book by a poet named Marilyn McEntyre called *Make a List: How a Simple Practice Can Change our Lives and Open our Hearts*. In this little book, she gives an apologetic for list-making as a means towards reflection and meditation. Not only this, she offers a range of possible topics for list-making, as wide-ranging from “what love looks like,” to “what concerns me right now,” to “things I want for the next generation,” and many other topics.

So, I’ve been using this little book as part of my morning worship time, giving myself space to think a little more deeply and to ponder what’s going on inside my soul. We live in such an age of information overload: from newspapers to 24/7 television news to social media and internet news. Sometimes it is hard to hear ourselves think. So far, making lists by slowly pondering the suggested topics has proven to be a good exercise.

I’ve known the power of list-making previous to picking up the book. One of the exercises that I’ve given couples in the past when I’ve done marriage counseling with them is to make lists on topics such as “Why did you get married in the first place?” “What did you admire about your spouse when you first started dating?” “What do you admire about them now?” “What would your life be missing if your spouse wasn’t there?” “What concerns you most about your marriage right now?” By getting each partner to make such lists and then to process them together with me as an honest broker, I’ve found that this list-making has helped us move forward toward sorting through a range of difficulties.

Making lists also helps to get so much of what we are anxious about out of our spinning brains and onto an “objective” piece of paper. Trying to list out “What is the worst outcome that could happen?” actually helps to de-scarify (I think I just made up a word!) situations we dread or that threaten to overwhelm us. I knew this too, but this little book and the practice of making lists over the past week or so has reminded me. Most things are not as scary when we write out the worst possible outcomes—or at least, if they are truly scary outcomes, we can see them, name them, and, best of all, present them to our God.

The Bible often makes lists. We’ll see such a list this coming Sunday: the Table of Nations from Genesis 10. But my favorite list is this one from 1 Peter 2: “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession” (2:9). This is God’s way of telling you how special you and I are to him—a list of how he sees us in Jesus Christ. His chosen people; kingly priests; a set-apart people, one that is treasured. Perhaps when things feel overwhelming or out of control, we should find these kinds of lists in the Bible and remember what God says. Perhaps then life wouldn’t feel so scary.

In the grip of God’s grace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sean".