

Becky L McCoy ([00:00](#)):

You're running a nonprofit encouraging and helping women around the country. Then a global pandemic hits. You're single living alone and mostly isolated due to an autoimmune disease. This is Sucker Punched.

Becky L McCoy ([00:21](#)):

I'm really excited to have Holly Stallcup here with us today. Welcome, Holly.

Holly Stallcup ([00:26](#)):

Hi Becky. Thanks so much for having me.

Becky L McCoy ([00:29](#)):

YEA. So we're gonna jump right in and I am curious to hear how has the development and spread of COVID 19 affected you?

Holly Stallcup ([00:38](#)):

Yeah, so I am single and live alone and then also have an auto immune disease, so tend to be a little more high risk in a situation like this. So it's kind of had an interesting intersection of those things, something that you and I both share is that we're single and, and I think this has been particularly unique as a single person in a society that often revolves around nuclear families. It's not surprising that the way that we would know how to navigate a crisis would also be pretty nuclear family central, right? The assumptions that would be made about who people live with and what resources they have and what kind of support they have, right. All those things would be within the same context as how we normally live our lives. That's obviously where my eye has been drawn in the midst of this is watching how social distancing, self quarantining the economic crisis that we're in.

Holly Stallcup ([01:42](#)):

How are those things impacting single people and those not in a traditional nuclear family unit and so I tend to see things really relationally and so I am watching how cutting single people off from their supporting relationships impacts their mental health, their emotional health, how single people who only have one income are impacted in a very unique and often more difficult way during an economic crisis than people who have the benefit of either two incomes or the ability for two people to seek income. Watching the church obviously navigate this brand new landscape out of nowhere, right? And not a lot of prep time, time for strategic planning meetings. One of the things that I think has been said around a lot of marginalized groups of people is the pandemic is not creating new instances of injustice, right? There were already injustices in our healthcare systems towards people of color and in particular towards black people, right?

Holly Stallcup ([02:53](#)):

There were already ways that the church was marginalizing single people. It's just more thrown in your face. Single people can't leave their homes, and when you're trying to build an online church experience where you're asking everyone to turn to their family and take communion, and then you realize that the single people living alone don't have anyone to take communion with. And so I'm really lucky I have family nearby and they've been able to stay at home. And so I have created some nuanced guidelines for myself that try to love my neighbor and protect my own health and protect my neighbor's health, but

also identify that I cannot sustain mentally and emotionally. I'm not seeing any other humans not having any physical contact with any other humans for four months at a time that isn't humane to ask that of people. I think we're asking single people to hold a really large burden without knowing that we're doing it right. Partnering people aren't meaning to ask more of single people than they're asking it themselves. But that is what's happening, especially when we shame people for leaving their houses. Right. That shame is often coming. I've noticed from partnered people, right? From adults who have other adult contact every day.

Becky L McCoy ([04:18](#)):

You've given us like the big picture of your response of like where, where the gaps are, like where we're seeing some really particular challenges. What for you personally, like when you saw the writing on the wall that this was going to become a time of self isolation to protect yourself and neighbors knowing that you live alone. How does your like your mind, your body, your heart react? What were those like visceral responses?

Holly Stallcup ([04:52](#)):

Yeah, so thankfully because of other crises in my life over the last decade, I have this like really great support system in place, both of medical professionals and mental health professionals and good friends who understand kind of the intricacies of the way that my brain and heart work. And so I needed to and still continue to at some level just do a ton of out loud processing. I can get very little productive thinking done on my own and that's very annoying. It's very frustrating but it is also a reality that I've come to just kind of respect, like respect the way that I'm wired and know that it doesn't serve me well when I just keep it inside internally and often what I need is just someone to listen. I joke with my therapist that she's making a lot of money to just sit there and just listen to me figure it out on my own.

Holly Stallcup ([05:50](#)):

I'm like, I came up with all those answers and she's like, you did, but I need that space to carve out for my, you and I were talking before we started recording that our our response to people when they ask how we are is that we're hanging in there because it feels like that's a good description of the kind of extreme up and downs that I think this season has caused for so many of us, and so there are days where I feel really motivated and feel like I can move and get stuff done and then there are days where I feel like I'm on my, on my death bed and I'm very grateful that I have many a guest bedroom that would be open to me. But something that was important for me was to try to keep normalcy as much as I could and to be in the space that I know and that I have really worked hard to create for myself in a way that that is healthy.

Holly Stallcup ([06:39](#)):

I don't tend to be an angry person, but I have gone through bouts of that. You asked about how it's manifested physically. Like I, there was one day a couple weeks ago where I was like, I want to throw my plates and crash them, but they're like nice plates like that I saved money for. And so I was like, that's not a good plan. And so I went to one of my, one of my safest things in the world is if I just lay down on the floor, there's something for years that I've felt very grounding about. The earth is spinning literally and figuratively, but the ground is, is a solid resting place. And so I told a friend my two choices right then were to break my nice crate and barrel plates or to lay on the floor. And so I chose to lay on the floor to try to calm my anger.

Holly Stallcup ([07:29](#)):

And not that anger isn't a completely valid response to what's going on. One of the things I've experienced in the last week and a half or two weeks is almost this fear that this is starting to feel normal, right? Like I want to feel uncomfortable. I want to, to not get used to this. Right. And our friend Molly kind of pushed back on me when I expressed that fear to her and she said, I think what you're describing is that we're learning to cope. Not that we all are like this is normal, let's keep fun. And I thought that was a really good reframing of those first few weeks. Again, it's like there wasn't much heads up and obviously on a political level there was heads up. But for, for those of us just kind of figuring out how to keep our kids at home and how to get groceries and there wasn't a class we could take to prep us. And so now we are kind of figuring out this new and temporary normal. Although I don't even know that I like the idea of a silver lining in this.

Becky L McCoy ([08:35](#)):

Oh no, that's not my favorite.

Holly Stallcup ([08:37](#)):

Yeah. When tens of thousands of people have died, which means hundreds of thousands of people have suffered via that grief. Like I'm not looking for a silver lining, I'm looking for repentance and redemption has kind of been the framework I've been using.

Becky L McCoy ([08:53](#)):

Cause I feel like a lot of times when say I'm just trying to find a silver lining, what they're really saying is I'm trying to figure out the purpose for this pain so I can make it end and that's not going to happen. We can't just make it stop. We have to adjust.

Holly Stallcup ([09:11](#)):

Yeah. I'm afraid if we tie this up with a bow one, it completely denies the privilege that you have. If you're able to tie this up with a bow and two, I think then we don't learn from it for the longterm, right? Like we don't think about the injustices that led us to this place. We don't think about the policies and the way that we think about government that led us to this place. We don't think about global health, right? Like we're just like, well this was really great. We learned that we want to spend more time with our families or do less activities or get out in nature like, okay, but we could have learned all of those things without a global pandemic.

Becky L McCoy ([09:53](#)):

What about for yourself? What are the things in non-systemic ways? Just kind of ignoring the big picture for a minute. What are the things that you are afraid of or how do you feel your body responding?

Holly Stallcup ([10:07](#)):

Yeah, I think for me the unknown has probably been probably my biggest recurring feeling. In addition to, I realized last week that I have had really good experiences in life with having leadership in my life that I trust and I think I'm experiencing and this is a lot of privilege that it took me till I was 32 to have this experience of I don't trust the people that are making decisions that impact my life right now in regards to this pandemic and I don't know what to do with that because this isn't just a matter of, Oh, I would do this before I did this or I would change this. It's like, Oh, I don't believe that you are for me.

Right? Like, I don't believe that we're trying to accomplish the same things. And that suddenly did feel like it grounded me even more in my physical body to know like, okay, at the end of every day I'm going to watch what mayor Betsy Price has to say.

Holly Stallcup ([11:13](#)):

And I'm going to think through like, okay, what does that mean for me? And because it can feel like everything is spinning and where is my place in that? Where is, what's my role? What's my job? How do I love myself and love my neighbor? Well, I think for me it has helped a lot to calm my heart, calm my mind, calm my body, to kind of pinpoint for me. Like, here are some leaders that I'm going to trust and listen to. And that doesn't mean that I take everything they say and don't sort it out. But these are people that feel like their hearts are pure and good and want the flourishing of society. And yeah. So I think that has been a really good recent epiphany was like, Oh, part of these bad feelings I'm experiencing. And not, no feelings are bad. They all teach us something, but feelings that I did not want to keep experiencing was to draw me to some good leadership to listen and look to you.

Becky L McCoy ([12:15](#)):

I think it's so interesting that you describe that feeling of finding some trustworthy leaders as grounding. So can you describe what is the difference before finding, like what did the opposite of grounded feel like? So we can kind of get an idea of what grounded means for you.

Holly Stallcup ([12:39](#)):

Yeah, so I think what I was feeling was, because I don't know where to look, I'll just kind of float out here in space, right? And that's not what I want for myself because I want to be as a Jesus follower, someone who's tuned in, like tuned into people's suffering, tuned into the goodness that's happening in the middle of suffering, tuned in to science so that I can make wise decisions. And because I didn't feel kind of that North star leader, I would just end up feeling very disconnected from my body. Very kind of just floaty and in my head. And like I said, I finally realized that the best word to describe even when I was feeling physically was lonely and not because I lived alone, not because I don't have good support, all those kinds of normal reasons that someone might assume I was feeling lonely.

Holly Stallcup ([13:33](#)):

I was feeling lonely because I felt disconnected from society. Right? Like because leaders are one of the glues that hold a society together are good leaders, right? Like that's they, they give us direction, they give us information, they, and so, because I didn't feel like I had those good leaders, I ended up feeling disconnected from my own body, from my community, from society at large because that glue was missing for me. Like I said, even just that daily press conference of like knowing, okay, I'm going to hear this woman's voice who lives in my city, who has felt called to lead my city and I'm gonna listen to her report. The numbers like, and I think even listening to the smaller numbers of cases or deaths in my city has felt a little easier to connect with. Right? The numbers at people dying in our nation are so big that I, I'm working so hard to like see individual faces and remember their individual stories and not tune out and not disconnect.

Holly Stallcup ([14:40](#)):

But it's hard. And so I think something about bringing that down to like, okay, there were 22 people in my city, like within the streets that I drive within the churches that my friends go to. Like that then allows me to, part of following Jesus is to lament with people and I want to be someone who is making

space for that. But I was finding it more and more difficult to do a kind of that grand scale. And I think that's been even grounding in my limit, if that makes sense. Like, like, okay, like I can not lament this, this huge thing. I can't get my mind around it. And so I'm withdrawing like I'm just pulling out and floating in space. But maybe in my city I can like plant my feet and listen to the stories of these people who have passed away and honor them.

Holly Stallcup ([15:32](#)):

Like whatever that looks like, but just be present for the suffering like in my city, if the grand scale feels too big to get my mind around.

Becky L McCoy ([15:42](#)):

What are some of the boring day to day realities that have changed for you?

Holly Stallcup ([15:49](#)):

Yeah, so I work from home during non pandemic times. So one of the hardest things for me emotionally, that kind of first couple of weeks was trying to figure out why I was so off kilter because I was like, it's not like I have kids home from school. It's not like I suddenly started working from home. Like my life looks pretty similar. Like why am I freaking out? And of course that's because of grief and collective societal grief. You know all those things. And so, but I, I think what I've put together now is that even though I didn't have like a, a super full social calendar where I had something like every day of the week, because I am relational in nature, my relational moments were the touch points throughout my week.

Holly Stallcup ([16:35](#)):

Right? So all the stuff in between was just the stuff you have to do to be a grownup, right? Even work, which I love my work and I believe in it, but I still like I do that work and then kind of knowing like, okay, and then at the end of the day you're going to go have dinner with a friend, right? Or we're going to work on this big project at work and then like at the end of the month you're flying to Denver to see one of your best friends, right? Like my life is kind of built around my relational touchpoints and then everything else just fills in all the dead space in between when I can be with people in so many ways, my day to day rhythm has not changed. I'm used to keeping my house clean by myself. I'm used to working from home primarily on a computer with women who live, you know, all over the country but those things are fueled by these relational touch points that have been taken away slash moved digitally.

Holly Stallcup ([17:35](#)):

And thankfully I am one of those people who does get more satisfaction out of digital connections than or introverted people do or people who are having to work calls all day. Then the last thing they want to do is then do friend calls all night.

Becky L McCoy ([17:49](#)):

What kinds of ways can we care for people and show compassion to people maybe in creative and different ways. Right. It's not all about like unload the dishwasher for your partner. Right. That that's maybe that's not something that is helping the people that you are particularly concerned about.

Holly Stallcup ([18:11](#)):

Yeah, so I think the first thing that I would go back to is like the fruits of the spirit, which sounds so cheesy, but I find them to be so helpful. I've come to often use just repeating them to myself when we used to drive and meet people. I would do that now, don't do that.

Becky L McCoy ([18:33](#)):

When that was the thing.

Holly Stallcup ([18:34](#)):

Back in the good old days when we would hang out with people in person, but just like, okay, these are the things that are of God, like love, joy, peace, you know, I won't repeat them all for us now to to minimize the Christian cheesiness, but there's something instructive about those things to help us know like this thing that I am about to say or do or did say or did do was of God or was, no, not so much God and I, I think that crisis can be such a birthplace of creativity if we make space for it to be Brene Brown tells this wonderful story and one of her books where it ends with her in therapy and her therapist making this absurd statement that what if everybody is doing the best that they can and Brene is offended by it.

Holly Stallcup ([19:29](#)):

And I think most of us that hear that kind of statement are offended by it. I know I am often, but I think that it's true. First of all, even though it makes me really mad that it's true.

Becky L McCoy ([19:42](#)):

Why does it make you mad?

Holly Stallcup ([19:43](#)):

Well because there are some really selfish people in the world and like there's evil in the world, right? There are evil, evil things being done. And so the people who are doing those evil things, I want to be like, you are absolutely not doing the best that you can, like try harder, do better. But then if I, if I break it down and think like, okay, why do they think that way? Why do they act that way? What did their parents teach them? What did their society teach them? What trauma did they endure? What neglect right now, listen, I want to be like very explicitly clear that that isn't an excuse, right?

Holly Stallcup ([20:27](#)):

Like that once we hit that adult part of life that we've got to show up and do our work and that we've got to go to counseling and we've got to rewire our brains to not be racist or to not be xenophobic, right? Like those things that cause us to cause harm in the world. We don't get to say like, well, I grew up in the South where my whole family was real racist, so I'm doing the best. I can like, no you need to do better. But I think for me going into the world every day with a belief or maybe not even a belief cause I don't know if I believe it with a premise of, okay, what if everyone is doing the best they can today? Like what if that could be true. I then enter spaces with a more compassionate lens, right?

Holly Stallcup ([21:25](#)):

A quicker to think about the kid version of all the adults that I'm around, that inner child inside of each one of us. Okay. Why is that person acting like that? What need are they not having filled? Why do they feel like they have to say things that way? Why are they lashing out like that? And again, like if you're in

a relationship with someone who continually lashes out and you confront them and they continue to lash out and you encourage them, like here's some resources to work on your toxic anger. Like we don't have to be like, well they're doing the best they can, so I'm going to keep hanging out with them.

Becky L McCoy ([22:01](#)):

Boundaries are a good thing

Holly Stallcup ([22:02](#)):

right? Like, I think one of the most radical things about Jesus is like his invitation into the both and instead of the either or, right?

Holly Stallcup ([22:10](#)):

Like it is both true that people may be doing the best that they can and it is true that we need to do better like both of those things. And so I think in particular in a crisis, trying to remember that everyone from the people living in our physical space to the people leading our government and I like want to throw up as I say this are doing the best they can. Now I need that lens of compassion to ever be able to get to a place where I could do something like pray for our president, right? Like that's like something that is like would be a good spiritual discipline would be to pray for the people leading our country no matter how much I like or dislike them, support or not support them. Like that's a good thing to do. It's a good spiritual discipline to view the people in charge of government as made in the image of God. Like, that's what I believe and I don't know how to even get close to putting those beliefs into action if I can't start with the lens of compassion.

Becky L McCoy ([23:12](#)):

If we all had this perspective of choosing to believe or at least give each other the benefit of the doubt that we're doing the best that we can and we all collectively decide to be compassionate with one another. Do you think that could cause like a cultural shift in how we view caring for each other?

Holly Stallcup ([23:37](#)):

I would just feel great if we could just start at like the church level. Like if we could just have a universal church that believed was doing the best that they could. But yeah, I think like there's a huge difference between compassion out of obligation and compassion out of like a deep belief in, in people being made in the image of a guide, right? A deep belief that everyone is walking around hurting. Like there's a difference in compassion based on, well this is one of the things that a good Christian does is to give to charity or serve in this particular way and compassion that is birthed out of like, Oh, if this person is suffering, it is not because it is their fault. And that's not to say like that choice doesn't matter or that sure.

Becky L McCoy ([24:36](#)):

there's still consequences.

Holly Stallcup ([24:38](#)):

Again, like you got to do your work, you've got to, you've got to show up, you've got to ask for help. But even the people who aren't showing up and doing their work who aren't asking for help, like there are reasons for that.

Becky L McCoy ([24:49](#)):

Like you had said, the unknown is so scary. So as we don't know how long this pandemic will last, it's not even about like when kids go back to school or when businesses reopened, but just in the big picture, we don't know. It's, there are so many unknowns. How would you encourage people to be resilient and to practice endurance?

Holly Stallcup ([25:16](#)):

Sarah from pantsuit politics, their theme and their home has been when the world is hard, we shrink the timeline and I've gone back to that a lot of like we think about today, we think about 20 minutes and that's a lot easier said than done, especially as someone who is a planner and can be very obsessive about thinking ahead and what's the next thing. I think that for me, giving myself things to look forward to so that the future isn't just a bunch of unknown sad things or scary things or hard things, but also like look in the future there are good things, you know, like, and, and even if those are little things like zoom game night with friends or saying that next weekend I'm going to go to the Creek or what, it can be really small, but that way the unknown isn't just an abyss of, of horrible, horrible things.

Holly Stallcup ([26:15](#)):

Here's what I think we're finding to be really, again, this was already true, but I think it's very evident is how different people need such different things. So I think there's some of us who like, I would rather you just tell me you're going to need to stay in your house til September 30th and then I would make paper chain. I would tear a day off one at a time and I would know like this is what we have to do. But I know like Layton Williams said the other day, no, I need them to tell me only 30 days at a time like I cannot handle. Right. And so that's a real problem when we all need very different things to tackle this hard thing that's been presented. And again, I think that's a place where trying to meet each other with just this insane amount of compassion is key.

Holly Stallcup ([27:02](#)):

But I think for me, yeah, like having these looks forward to having the things that I can know. So like I can wake up and start every day the same, right? I get out of bed, I take Jack outside my dog, I start one of my playlists, I make my breakfast and that like, okay, every morning that can be the same. And I know that is a lot harder when you have kids in the house or even for those of you that are working, whose bosses have not changed any level of expectations. Maybe for parents, a morning routine as a joke, but maybe a night routine after the kids are in bed. And it could be really simple. Like it could be like making myself a cup of tea and watching this one show that I've watched a million times, but brings me comfort. And that way in the midst of days that are just utter chaos, that every minute brings a new thing that then okay, but at the end of the day I always have this cup of tea and watch this show, right?

Holly Stallcup ([27:59](#)):

And that becomes this stabilizing force. And then I think the invitation to us now, but probably even more so once the crisis has pulled away a little, is to ask ourselves and to do our inner work around why the unknown was so hard for so many of us. And that isn't to minimize our feelings. That isn't to say they aren't Oh, legitimate feelings, but the world is always unknown. The world is always unsure. Nothing is ever promised and we love saying that phrase but no one ever actually is cool with it. And this is an opportunity where again, it's not new, it's just being revealed in this really stark way. And I do think once we're not in the middle of the storm with our therapists, with our spiritual directors, with our faith communities, like with our journals, with our guitar, however we process challenging ourselves and

asking ourselves like why was the inability to know the future? So triggering for me and what of that is like normal human like yeah, that's good to like be a little freaked out by this. And then what of that is like places where I want to grow and hold things more loosely and believe the scriptures when it says don't you be making plans, you don't know if you're going to the city tomorrow. Yeah, kind of again that, that both. And I think,

Becky L McCoy ([29:30](#)):

well thanks so much Holly.

Becky L McCoy ([29:42](#)):

Holly is a writer and speaker and the executive director of Rise. You can find her on Twitter or Instagram @HollyStallcup or on the Rise website NowSheRises.org you can find me anywhere on social media @BeckyLMcCoy or on my website, BeckyLMcCoy.com if you enjoyed this episode or think it will encourage a friend, please share it. If you enjoy listening to Sucker Punched, please subscribe rate and review this podcast on Apple podcasts or wherever you listen to podcasts. Let's continue to be resilient together.