Hello everyone. This is not a normal podcast. I have some things on my mind. Do you mind if we have a little heart-to-heart talk?

For quite some time I have been sharing a crazy dream with you that won’t leave me alone. I have tried to walk away from it! Really, it’s an impossible dream on so many levels. It’s a dream of building a home campus for our heart work—the Belle Ame Center for Artful Living—built right in the heart of America. I hope by now you know that Belle Ame is French for ‘beautiful soul’. I know you may not yet fully grasp the vision of what will take place there and more importantly what it will do for you and your families… and ultimately the world. Visions take time. I have tried to start to paint that vision in a video at belleamedream.org. If you haven’t yet watched it, I hope you will.

The real understanding of the ‘why’ of this campus can only be found in the white spaces between the lines of the words I say. But let me try and say it this way. I have told you about a man named James Russell Miller. He would introduce himself by saying, “Jesus and I are Friends.” I like that. A lot. Sadly, Jesus is no longer welcome in many of our schools, our businesses, our culture, even in many of our churches. But I noticed that in all the gospel stories of hatred and bigotry against him and even desertion by his friends, there is no story of a single woman acting mean or hostile towards him. His first miracle was performed for a woman and He first revealed His true identity to a woman at a well. In his final days, He sought the comforts of home and friendship with two women—Mary and Martha. Women ministered to the needs of the Twelve as they traveled about. It was women who were with him to the last at the foot of His cross after many of His disciples deserted him, and it was women who were the first to gather at His sepulchre before the sun rose. It was a group of women, the chief amongst them being Lydia, a maker of purple, who first welcomed His message in Europe.

In a world that is rejecting Him, it seems fitting that it would be through the efforts of women that a place would be created where He would feel welcome and loved and at home if He were on the earth today. A place where He would feel among Friends. He loved the water. He loved the gardens. It would be a place that would continue His work of healing the broken hearted, liberating the captive and giving sight to the blind. I think He would smile at such a place as that.

For Him who has given us so much, this would be our gift to Him as women. It would be created out of our love for Him. The thought of that is what makes my heart happy and makes me want to not give up the dream. Men have designed magnificent cathedrals and monuments and temples. What more fitting offering from women than gardens and homes and soft and open hearts?

Of course a vision like this needs funding. I’ve been given estimates of $10 to $12 million dollars to build out the campus as I have envisioned it. I’m afraid if you’ve hung out with me much, you know I like to give everything away for free. It’s going to be pretty hard to build a campus like this for free. And yet I find myself resisting the practical step of creating a fundraising campaign or seeking out large donors.

In the video, I shared a beautiful property with you that would be perfect in so many ways and came across my path so unexpectedly. Buying this property would make it possible for us to start bringing some of your older teens and young adults on property as early as this summer. But we have just a couple of months to raise nearly a million dollars. That figure should scare me away. But strangely, it doesn’t. I have become accustomed to God’s impossible math, as Dallas Jenkins, creator of The Chosen, describes it. I know nothing is impossible with God’s help.

Jesus’ teachings are opposite to the way the world does things. Things like loving our enemies. Doing good to those who despitefully use us, losing ourselves to find ourselves. The world thinks of grandiose ways. He thinks small and simple. A piece of leaven, a pearl, a candle, a mustard seed, a babe in a manger, a mother. We just had our first piece of artwork donated for our center. It’s a beautiful depiction of a widow, a mother--sharing her small and simple offerings, which, in the Lord’s eyes, were greater than the rest.

What a perfect expression of what I believe will make this Belle Ame Center for Artful living dream come true – women offering what they can.

 So I’ve taken this idea of small and simple to heart. Elsewhere I described the fundraising efforts of another women’s organization that raised the equivalent of $5 million dollars to build their home building through the small donations of 150,000 members. We need to raise at least twice that amount and we have nowhere near 150,000 members in our organization.

I was struggling with that reality a few months ago. Such impossible numbers. At the time, the idea of creating Belle Ame at Home as the fundraising arm had taken root. But I was unclear how many participants it would take to get the job done. As I was pondering these things, I was taken back to something I shared with you in the beginning of the Catch the Vision course.

May I remind you?

It was an article written by a man named Albert Nock back in 1936. He told of a friend who felt like he had stumbled on a truth that would save the world. And this friend intended to spend the rest of his life traveling the world spreading his message.

Nock mustered the courage to tell the man that the masses would not care two pins about his doctrine and he proceeded to paraphrase the job of Isaiah. In a time of great commotion and unrest, the Lord commissioned the prophet Isaiah to go out and warn the people. He said, in essence, “Tell them what is wrong, and why and what is going to happen unless they have a change of heart and straighten up. Don’t mince matters. Make it clear that they are positively down to their last chance. Give it to them good and strong and keep on giving it to them. I suppose perhaps I ought to tell you,” he added, “that it won’t do any good. The official class and their intelligentsia will turn up their noses at you and the masses will not even listen. They will all keep on in their own ways until they carry everything down to destruction, and you will probably be lucky if you get out with your life.”

Isaiah had been willing to take on the job, but now a new face was put on it. It raised the obvious question: Why, if all that were so—if the enterprise were to be a failure from the start—was there any sense to starting it?

“Ah,” the Lord said, “you do not get the point. There is a Remnant there that you know nothing about. They are obscure, unorganized, inarticulate, each one rubbing along as best as he can. They need to be encouraged and braced up because when everything has gone completely to the dogs, they are the ones who will come back and build up a new society; and meanwhile, your preaching will reassure them and keep them hanging on . Your job is to take care of the Remnant, so be off now and set about it.”

Now I still make no claims of being an Isaiah or a prophet—far from it! But the same feeling has been placed in my heart—to tend to and strengthen a Remnant, even if that number is very small. But, like I said, small is enough in heaven’s economy.

Throughout the history of the world, in the middle of chaos and destruction, the Lord is always preparing and preserving seed for a new planting. I know from the seasons that winter is necessary for an abundant spring. I’ve seen the seasons in history. There is no question in my mind that we are living in a day of great harvest, but winter is coming. And the seed must be preserved if there are to be green shoots in the spring. This is the purpose of the Remnant.

 The writer goes on to say that in any given society the Remnant is always an unknown quantity. He said when you are called to tend to the Remnant, “Two things you do know and no more: first, that they exist; second, that they will find you.” In fact, they will find you without you doing anything about it.

I have experienced that.

As I have shared messages placed on my heart, I have watched thousands of women gather from around the world to this work. For example, I have been receiving letters from a woman in Brazil who is translating Catch the Vision into Portuguese. She said our families need this. I’ve heard from groups in Australia and countries I haven’t heard of. I was crossing the street in Paris in front of the Eifel tower and someone called out, “Marlene Peterson? We are doing Well-Educated Heart.” Yet I never market. I never promote. I just share the things placed on my heart. Often women write and say, “I have no idea how I found you, but the things you say resonate in my soul.”

So let me take you back to April when I was overwhelmed with the thought that we needed to raise millions to build this Center for Artful Living. And there are so few of us. And the scriptural conversation between Elijah and the Lord crossed my mind. Do you remember? He, too, had been called to tend the Remnant. Elijah had fled for his life and was hiding in a cave because he thought he was the only one left that still clung to the Truth and if he died, the truth would die with him. The Lord responded by saying “You are not alone. There are 7000 you know not of. But I know who they are.”
The Lord knows who the Remnant is! He numbers them! He calls them!

As that interchange passed through my thoughts, the question posed in my mind: Marlene, if you had 7000 families sent your way, would that be enough to generate the necessary funds? I put a pencil to paper. After budgeting for teachers and expenses, I felt confident we could use at least $50 out of every $79 contribution towards building the center. If we had 7000 participating families, it would generate $4.2 million a year—and the building phase of the campus would be fully funded within 2 to 3 years.

But even that was beyond what I thought was possible, so in my mind, it was broken down further into smaller and simpler steps. And here is where God’s impossible math comes in. Where else does 2x2=7000? Let me show you.

We opened Belle Ame at Home with nearly 1000 families last August. If each of those members invited two friends into the community, we would now have 3000 members. If those 2000 new members invited two friends, it would add 4000 new families, giving a total of 7000 families. Two by two. And the campus could be fully funded in two levels.

 Belle Ame at Home is a value packed offering. If you love it, isn’t it natural to want to share it with a friend and invite them into the community? Even more importantly, it serves as the prelude to the work that will take place at the home campus. We are not just building a conference center or a family retreat center. It’s not the buildings that will make this campus fulfill the purpose of its creation. It will be the hearts of all who participate there.

Belle Ame at Home is an important part of building community and creating connections and aligning visions. I often tell of the Sunday I asked what my family wanted for dessert. They all said ‘Coconut dessert!” So I served coconut dessert. It turned out every single one of them had a different dessert in mind.

We don’t want coconut dessert when the campus is built. Belle Ame at Home aligns vision.

So being part of Belle Ame at Home not only raises funds, but it prepares the families who will most benefit from what will take place there and also prepares the hearts of the mentors who will serve there. For those of you who are grandmothers or whose children are older—we need you. Belle Ame at Home will prepare you to serve. Let me say that again.

Now, I know that there are families who would love to participate but honestly can’t afford it. I get letters from moms whose husbands are out of work. I just got a letter from a mom whose child is facing a terminal illness along with all its high medical bills. There are Single moms doing their best to put food on the table; married moms struggling to put food on the table with the rising costs of groceries.

My heart goes out to them. They are often the ones who will benefit from this community the most.

So this is my appeal to you today. If you believe in the Belle Ame Dream, the most important thing you can do is join and participate in our Belle Ame at Home community and then invite a friend or two to join you.

And then, if you are blessed with the means, consider offering a scholarship to another family who would love to be part of this, but who simply cannot afford it at this time.

An act of selflessness like this is in harmony with our motto, “Not for ourselves, but for others.”

The spirit of Belle Ame is to gather with others. I remember something Rachel Mohlman taught us in the music session of the Simple Joy Conference. Solo voices are lovely, but the magic of choir is that you can gather many voices that are ordinary on their own, but when joined together, they produce music that is exquisite. It’s another way of saying Organized mother-love works miracles.

So that is what is on my mind this morning. Can we pull this off? Now I realize my words have been directed to you women and mothers. That is intentional. After all, this is the Well-Educated Mother’s Heart podcast. Belle Ame Center for Artful Living is meant to be a gift from women. The Board of Directors is comprised of three women. That doesn’t mean that your husbands and fathers and sons won’t be part of this because they play an important role as well. But I believe the force and power that will drive this dream forward will come from the desire and vision in the hearts of women and mothers.

We are Mothers of Influence, after all.

This is a place for us to shine.

To learn more about the Belle Ame Dream or to join Belle Ame at Home, please visit belleamedream.org.