Introduction to Joel Salatin

pirates walking into this this sacred space and and irrigating to ourselves manipulative capacity that God never ordained us to have and then wondering why we're sick yeah and then wondering why we're sick or why it doesn't work or why this plant is more susceptible to frost or more susceptible to bugs or more or doesn't have nutrient you know nutrient density in it you know any any number of things Well, and I'm sure a lot of our listeners are thinking, oh my gosh, the seletons are doing it, but could we do it?

So I want to assure the listeners that there's a huge opportunity here for anybody who wants to just start small and have their own little regenerative farm.

So, Joel, talk about that because you mentioned at the conference that many of the current farmers are aging out. This is Doctor Talks, real talk from real doctors on the issues that matter to you most.

Welcome to Vitality Made Simple. This is the podcast that equips you to feel better, look better, and to enjoy better relationships. Life is all about relationships.

It's relationships that make us super happy or make us super sad. And it is my joy today to introduce you to the most famous farmer in the world. This is Joel Salaton.

Welcome, Joel. Thank you, Debbie. It's a real honor and a privilege to be with you. Well, you're so kind. I want to give you a brief introduction of Joel.

He is we, Mike and I met him at a Christian based health conference in Worcester, Ohio. He was the keynote speaker. He did five presentations. Oh my gosh.

He is a Christian libertarian, environmentalist, capitalist, lunatic farmer. You may know Joel as the lunatic farmer. He has an incredible command of the English language and a wonderful sense of humor and is an epic storyteller.

So Joel, you take the floor. All the books you've written, it was so hard to decide. But I think I want to kind of talk about this guinea pig culture that we live in.

Tell us about that. Well, I kind of articulated it in my book, folks, this ain't normal. I had a spate there several years ago of just doing a lot of college lectures, these endowed lecture circuits in colleges.

And the more I spent in college culture, I realized how myopic, how these young people think that the way things are has always been. I mean, they'd never, they'd never seen a manual typewriter.

They didn't know how to dial, you know, roll or a dial telephone, you know. They couldn't imagine, obviously, a time before the internet, when you actually sent letters and you made phone calls.

And, and, and, and when you actually, you know, cooked from scratch, you know, there was no lunchables. There was no hot pockets. In fact, I can remember when you couldn't even buy boneless, skinless breast from the supermarket in chicken.

Modern Culture and Lost Childhood

You had to buy a whole chicken, take it home, take a knife and cut it up. And so this, as I started thinking about all the things that are going on now with, you know, children with no chores, children consider it a liability instead of an asset because there's nothing to do around the house except go to the basement and sit on screen time.

the idea, you know, the whole animal anthropomorphism movement that, you know, my cat is my aunt, is my dog is a cow, you know, where you have a more moral equivalency between animals and humans.

And, you know, just all this stuff is very abnormal from a historical perspective. We are in a little time blip. you know, here experimenting with a lot of philosophies and things that, that humankind has never even had a chance to even think about, you know, before now.

And, and so, yeah, we, you know, we are, we are the, you know, we're, we're being vaccinated, medicated, fast fooded. It's, you know, television celebrity, you know, sports entertained.

And and and it's just it's just incredible. You know, I think the change I just in fact I just took a trip take do a lot of trips and take books to read and I just read two years before the mast It's one of the Harvard classics from 1835 to 36 and it was it was a it was a worldwide bestseller in the 1818 for an 1840 and when it came out.

And oh my goodness, it's so good to just read a historical tale that's nonfiction. Two days, you know, this guy was a sailor in 1835 to 36. And what a difference that was when you know, all those guys sat around the ship and they made up songs and had to entertain themselves and nobody was looking at a screen and just amazing times.

I can remember being on my parents farm as a kid and there were no toys, no TV. We would make these towns in the dirt, you know, and so we would have rocks be the houses and sticks.

And I remember that creativity, Joel. I'm sure it really built brain cells that that we don't build now and everything's done for us as far as the little kids go.

That's right. And, you know, when you look at our epidemic of teen suicide, the mental health issues, and you look at these people that go in and school shootings, every one of these young people who participates in a school shooting when they, when they get, if they survive, they get interviewed and every one of them says, I was bullied.

I'd never fit in. I never, you know, nobody liked me, whatever. And, and every one of them is suffering from terrible self image and self worth. And I believe Debbie that I'm not a child psychologist or anything like that, but, but as a, As an old geezer farmer now who spends a lot of time, we run a formal apprentice and stewardship program.

So I'm surrounded by 18 to 28 year olds, lots of them all the time. And I'm convinced that. Self-worth comes from successfully accomplishing meaningful tasks all four words are important successfully accomplishing meaningful tasks and so you have to successfully accomplish, but it has to be a meaningful task, not a trivial task, not a make-work, not a screen thing.

It's a meaningful task. How do you build something? How do you tear apart an engine? How do you shine up a spark plug? How do you sharpen a knife? How do you split wood, chop canned green beans, weed the corn?

These are things that kids grew up doing throughout history. And the most important human need is the need to be needed. And what a terrible thing now that we have reports showing the cost of raising a child.

My goodness. It's a cultural indictment that we are so uncreative that we have made child rearing a liability rather than an asset. And, and people who know me know I'm big on eight, eight to 11 years old, kids ought to have their own business.

And there's tons of things kids can do as, as a little entrepreneurial business. I mean, obviously the classic lemonade stand, but I mean, they used, they used to deliver papers.

They used to pick apples. They used to chop wood and, and, and, you know, milk the cow and all this stuff. And today, I mean, there's everything from, you know, dog sitting to, you know, to, to lawn mowing and all sorts of things.

and feeling needed, like the world needs what I can offer. is probably the best mental health antidote there is.

Absolutely. Absolutely, Joe. And also the knowing that you need to make money.

You know, I mean, as a little kid, we had a long lawn mowing business early and we had to make our own money. We could never ask mom and dad for five dollars to go to the movie, you know, and that's so good for kids.

Yes, yes, absolutely. You know, this entitlement, this entitlement culture, which then also it acts, it acts symbiotically with the impatience culture.

So you, you link up entitlement with impatience and boy, you have a real, a real recipe for, for literally for depression, for depression, because everything doesn't happen all the time.

And it isn't effortless. Life is life is not easy and it's not fair and you have to you know you have to enjoy the slog and I think that we've done a great I think we've actually abused our kids these days by not by acting like all the adult interface realities that they used to do is some sort of child abuse.

No, it's actually child abuse to take all that away and not let them do anything. When we started our apprenticeship program many, many years ago, 30 years ago, we took 16-year-olds.

A 16-year-old that really wants to do something, there's no reason why they can't. But then we had to stop because they said that a 16-year-old, until you were 18, considered an adult, you couldn't operate a cordless drill.

Self-Worth, Chores, and Meaningful Work

And at 16, you can drive 3,000 pounds of steel down the interstate at 70 miles an hour, but perish the thought that you could actually handle a cordless drill to put a screw in a deck board.

And this is the insanity that we've come. And so kids, unfortunately, who could be very productive, and be developing self-worth and talent and what do I like to do?

What do I don't like to do? What am I good at? What am I not good at? All those things get delayed and you become an adult before you're needed and that's a terrible thing.

It really is, and I think you do such a fantastic job of including the emotional aspect of all of this with depression. In your presentations, you talked about the microbiome, and we forget that we're created as body, soul and spirit.

So we have to address all three of those in order to to live a balanced life. We have to have our our faith. We have to have a healthy body. And then in terms of soul, our mind, will and emotions and they all impact each other.

And the food we eat is so impactful for mind, will and emotions. You talked a lot about the microbiome at the conference, and how important it is to keep our bugs happy.

Expand on that, Joel. Well, if you look at any microbiome guru today, and there's now more and more of them every day that are studying the microbiome, because yes, exactly you're right.

We're finding out that that physical universe of bugs in the microbiome is a direct conduit to functionality, to mental and emotional functionality. And interestingly, every single person who is in this space The one, I mean, of course there's disagreements among them, but the one thing that every single one of them is in agreement on is that the single biggest dysfunctionality of the microbiome is not whether the food was organic or not, or whether it was growing locally or not, or even whether you got it from Walmart or not, it is how much diversity is in the microbiome.

How do you get this diversity in there? And so when you eat a very limited kind of food and sterile food, you know, when I go pull a carrot out of the garden, I just kind of wipe it off on my pants and eat it, you know, and I get a little bit of dirt and, you know, that that adds a tremendous amount of microbiome possibility.

Interestingly, there's an outfit called the Food Bionutrient Association, and they have been studying, they started

with carrots and they went to broccoli, and now they're doing beef.

So they're studying 150 nutrients in beef, and they're asking the question, what determines the most nutrient dense beef, the most balanced nutrients dense beef.

And it's interesting, what they found is has nothing to do with breed, season, climate, age, any of that. The number one determinant of nutrient adequacy in beef is how many different kinds of plants did the animal eat?

And I mean, that is really profound. And what they're finding is that there's a huge difference between 1 and 14. And once you go to 14 and above 14, it doesn't change very much.

So it's not like they've got to eat 100 different plants, but at least something more than corn. And so as we have simplified, I mean, if you look at the I've spent a lot of time in Australia and the aboriginal culture of Australia, they routinely ate something like 1500 different things.

Whoa. The average American only eats about 20 different things. Yeah. Oh, yeah. I mean, and vegetables, vegetables, you know, you got tomatoes, peppers.

Potatoes. Yeah. Yeah. Lettuce. OK. I mean, You know, onions, maybe I don't know, but, but there's like nine that are the, you know, the key ones. And that's about it.

There's, there's not much. And if you look at, if you look at like Dolly Madison or Martha Washington's, uh, they've got cookbooks. You can buy them at Montpelier.

I'm here in Virginia, you know, so we got all this American history here and, uh, you can buy these old cookbooks from these colonial, you know, matrons, matriarchs and.

half of the stuff in there, we've never heard. We've never heard of. Well, why? Because when there wasn't a Walmart, they had to have, they had to have, for example, berries or some type of fruit on their, on their farms that came in, you know, early in April and, and came in, you know, different one every three weeks throughout the whole season clear until, you know, November.

And then hopefully they'd have something that would keep well, you know, like, like a good old York apple or something, you know, that keep in the root cellar.

you know, through the winter. But, you know, that's the way they kept their fresh seasonal succession going, you know, currants and June berries and all sorts of things.

And we look at that, what in the world is that? We've never heard of this stuff before. And so they actually ate with much, much more variety than we do.

Well and they had such a different variety of nutrients in each one of those things. I mean you know what's in a fig is totally different than in a date.

I mean things that are pretty similar and so you know they're feeding that microbiome like you like you mentioned it's really funny last night Joel our daughter called they have a big garden and their beets are coming in so she's like mama I need a recipe for borscht.

Well years ago she and I went on a mission trip to Russia and started making borscht. And so I started looking up recipes. And it's just exactly as you described, Joel.

There's a variety of recipes. They all are based on seasonality, the particular area of probably where they lived in Russia, what they could get, so many of the ingredients in that cookbook.

I had no idea what they were. Right, right. It's completely foreign, and yet that is the secret to our own microbiome

is this huge diversity. That includes being grown in a very diverse soil environment, which is not done when you have, for example, aquaponics or hydroponics.

Microbiome Diversity and Nutrient Density

And now we're the only country in the world that certifies organic, soilless produce, you know, strawberries and stuff. Most all that is all hydroponic, which means it's not even grown in soil, which means it doesn't benefit from the worms and the azotobacter and the mycorrhizae and the actinomycetes and the gibberellins and all this soil microbiota, it's not there.

And so it can't be in the plant, can't get in your microbiome. So you and I then, we end up with a very simplistic microbiome and something comes in, tries to invade us from outside and we don't have enough different kinds of troops, soldiers if you will, to handle, you know, the creative, you know, the creative onslaughts from outside.

Well, and then add to that, Joel, the antibiotics that are in conventionally raised meat. Tell our listeners what the labeling means on conventionally raised meats or beef that they buy, for example.

Well. You know, natural doesn't mean anything. You know, natural just means it's beef and not beef and kangaroo. So, so natural doesn't mean anything.

Most organic is raised in a feedlot. The, and most people don't realize that way over 50% of all the antibiotics, all the pharmaceuticals used in America.

way over 50% of them, or over 50% are used in livestock. So here we have people using drugs all the time, prescription and over the counter, whatever, but then we're sitting down to eat and we're eating drugs for dinner as well.

And so your dosage goes way, way up. And we all know that antibiotics actually kill a lot of the microbiome, which is why there's probiotics. So if you do need antibiotics for an infection or something, then you wanna, as soon as your regimen is done, you wanna take some probiotic to build up your microbiome.

Yeah, right now the labeling on beef is really crazy because right now you can import Australian and New Zealand and Colombian and Paraguayan meat and All you have to do is repackage it in the US and it's stamped with country of us a product of USA.

And so there are a lot of people trying to get that changed. But, but yeah, there's nothing like knowing your farmer know your food, you know, building a relationship with your, with your producer.

and doesn't have to be local. We ship nationwide. It can be somebody that doesn't live near you, but I'm always a champion of trying to buy from somebody near you that you can go visit and look in the eye and have a relationship with.

And people are always asking, well, why can't we get your stuff at Walmart or Kroger's or HEB or Piggly Wiggly? And my answer is, well, why do you go to Piggly Wiggly and Walmart?

Don't buy your groceries there, buy them elsewhere. Yes, you've totally changed what kind of beef Mike and I eat. We buy from a regenerative farmer who uses your exact method.

I want to also clarify something for our listeners that you mentioned at the conference. If it says grass-fed, then that can mean that, or grass-finished, you know, correct me, Joel.

If it says grass-finished, that can mean the cow had one blade of grass. Right? It's pretty meaningless. Normally, you were right the first time. Grass-fed means it can have had just one blade of grass in its life and they consider that grass-fed.

Grass-finished generally means that it is finished on grass, that it's not grain-fed. So, grass-finished is the kind of thing you're looking for, not grass-fed.

Generally, grass-fed simply means most beef is grass-fed up until they go to the feedlot and start eating grain. Some cows are certainly corn-fed before then.

But generally, generally, you know, a calf is out on pasture on grass with his mama until weaning. And then when they go to go to a feedlot. So grass finished is actually what you're looking for.

If you're, you know, if you're looking for a label, but, you know, For hours, we don't even put anything on our label because it is so subject to craziness.

So we just use our reputation to explain what we do. And we have an open door. Anybody can come and visit at any time to see what we do. And we have a 24-7, 365 open door policy.

Anyone can come from anywhere in the world to see anything, anytime, anywhere unannounced. That's our commitment. It's incredible. And we're we're planning a trip with our daughter and son-in-law and granddaughter next summer.

It's going to be so much fun to visit Polyface. Tell our listeners exactly what rotational grazing means, how that looks on your farm. OK, so. So yeah, rotational grazing is essentially a mimicry of what we see in nature.

So let me back up a little bit. When grass grows, forage, you know, your lawn, when grass grows, it grows in a sigmoid curve. It starts slow and then it grows real fast and then it slows down as it goes into senescence and makes a seed head and all that.

And so the whole idea of grazing management is that rather than allowing the animal to eat, to prune, we call it pruning, rather than allowing them to prune that biomass, that vegetable material, the grass, at that first little swoop, you know, when it starts to speed up.

No, wait till after that, speed up that fast growth period and then graze it. What you do then is the grass can go into third and fourth gear. You know, it can actually grow fast with the time.

And so most people, as you know, don't move their cows around. They just put them in a pasture and leave them. And so what happens is every time that grass gets up to that little first little starts to accelerate, it becomes long enough to graze.

And so the animal comes and eats it again. And so that over time, that weakens the grass because it never really gets to positive energy. It's always behind trying to catch up.

It never gets out of first gear. And so the whole idea of rotational grazing is by using electric fence, So there's some little bit of, you know, technology here.

Using electric fence and monitoring the grass, instead of just turning the cows out on a field, letting them be there all the time in what we call continuous grazing, where they weaken the good stuff and let all the weeds grow because they don't like them.

Instead, we mob stock. We confine the herd into one day's worth of paddock. Imagine it, you know, one day's plate full of food, okay? And then using electric fence, We move them every day to a fresh plate of food, a fresh paddock every day.

That's the rotation. And by doing that, the cows eat a much greater variety of stuff. They eat more aggressively so that they actually spend more time ruminating, which is what they need to do to actually be productive.

and they're on fresh ground every day. They're moved away from the flies, away from yesterday's manure pile,

away from the toilet, and they're moved onto fresh ground.

And so it's great for the animal and it enables the grass, the pasture, the photosynthesis to really kick into high gear and for way more biomass and carbon sequestration development.

Food Labels, Antibiotics, and Regenerative Beef

We call this mob stocking, herbivorous solar conversion, lignified carbon sequestration, fertilization. Oh, you didn't suck that one out of your thumb, did you?

I mean, good grief. I spent a while putting that. Whoa. Yeah, I'm glad I didn't see that earlier. I would have tried to memorize it. Yeah, yeah. But but but the bottom line is by doing that in our county where we are, Augusta County, Virginia, the average cow days.

So a cow day is what one cow will eat in a day. So that's a constant. It's like inches to a carpenter, bushels to an apple orchard. A cow day is what one cow will eat in one day.

In our county, the average cow days per acre is 80. In other words, an acre will support 80 cows for one day a year or one cow for 80 days a year. Are you with me?

And we average almost 400 cow days per acre. And we have never planted a seed or bought a bag of chemical fertilizer. So this and what this does, there are, there are numerous other things that this does.

It enables you to have a mosaic in your pastor. So something is always in bloom. We, we participated several years ago in a Smithsonian called a working landscape study.

We were one of, I think 29 sites in Virginia that they chose. And we were the only one, the only site in Virginia that had all eight known types of bumblebees in the state.

And I think it's because of this mosaic that by moving them around all the time, you have stuff that's mature, immature, and partly mature. And so there's always something in blossom, and that really stimulates pollinators.

We also have 20 hives of honeybees here, and they do very well as well. Yeah, you got to give those pollinators something to eat and you're giving the worms something to eat this whole underground universe that you that you talk about.

Tell our listeners the worm story, Joel. I just love this. Oh, at the school? Yes. Yeah. OK. So I was. I do too. So I was out speaking in California and I went to visit a farm school.

It was a little three acre farm that was hooked up with the middle schools of that county and every student in the middle schools went. and spent half a day a week at this farm.

And they had, you know, vegetables and chickens and all sorts of different things. Well, one of the things they had was a worm box. It was about eight feet long, three feet wide, three feet deep.

You know, it looked like a giant coffin, okay? Like a coffin for, you know, for an NBA player. All right, so you have this, and listen, and kids, Debbie, if you want to see kids get excited, you, get them in a worm box.

I mean, all these worms, I mean, it's just like a seething mass of stuff. All right. So, so yeah. So the teacher said, all right, kids, we got a homework assignment next Monday, bring food.

And so the next Monday kids brought, they brought, you know, gummy bears and Twizzlers and, you know, Velveeta squeezable cheese and, and, and hot pockets and whatever.

And they, they put that, they put that in there. And then the two teachers, the two farm ladies, they put in like a pork

chop, an apple, a banana, all right, in their end.

So the next week, kids come, you know, they go charge up, they open up the lid, they look in, and here comes the Twizzler, the Kit Kat, the, you know, gummy bear, the Velveeta squeezable cheese, they, you know, nothing.

And over here on this end, well, there's no apple, there's no banana, there's no pork chop. And the object lesson was, it was so great. The teachers looked at the students and said, so why would you wanna eat something even worms won't eat?

And man, ever since I saw that, that is a fantastic thing. So let me tell you what my permutation is on that. Even since the Worcester conference where you saw me speak.

So as you know, Maha is really taking off and there's all this discussion about ultra processed food and, and, and additives and red dye 29, you know, all this stuff.

And is it okay? Is it not okay? Glyphosate, whatever, you know, 10,000 food additives in the U S all this stuff. And of course, you know, there's all this wrangling.

And of course the food companies are having a fit about daring to be questioned about, you know, is this stuff okay or not? And so RFK junior Bobby Kennedy is, is struggling to you know, to, to get whatever credible research, you know, to, to, to make the case, I mean, in my view, the case has already been made, but, but he's struggling to make the case that, you know, we need to look at some of this stuff, not necessarily to ban it, but not to promote it, you know, not to, not to let people spend snap money, you know, for a Coca-Cola.

And so I've had this thought as I've watched his, and, and I'm, you know, I'm a, I'm a, a friend or a promoter of the Maha movement. And so I'm sitting here thinking, well, my goodness, we don't need to go into a bunch of committee meetings and jet people all over the country and do billion dollar research studies on this stuff.

All we need is a worm farm, and we get 100 worm beds, and we take everything that we put on the soil, on plants, and in our food, okay? And we submit each one to one week with the worms.

And we can do 100 a week. So in a year, we could do 5,000. In two years, we could do 10,000. And we just submit it to the worms.

Rotational Grazing and Soil Health

And what the worms like gets a green light. All right, America, this is great. and what the worms don't gets a red light. No, we can't have it. And let the worms vote.

The worms don't watch TV. They're not swayed by advertising. They're not swayed by K Street, you know, the lobbyists on K Street. And we just let worms choose our food, our soil amendments, our plant amendments.

We just let worms decide. And we'll have a truly, I think that that would be the ultimate test to determine if this is what God wants us to use or not.

Amen. I think that's the best. We're going to balance the budget. Think of all the money we're going to save on everything. We're going to save money on health care.

People are going to have more fun. You know, you talk about if you're going to watch the news, you need to watch something hilarious twice as much time.

So people are going to get a lot of entertainment out of this, Joel. It's going to be good. Oh, I mean, you could actually have real time, you know, real time cameras set up, you know.

Yeah. Remember on the old National Geographic or whatever, they do those speed it up of the flower. So we can

do that. What's it called? Time-lapse photography of the worms eating up or moving away from the squeezable Velveeta, like running from it.

Yeah, that's right. That's right. That's so good. Oh, that's so rich. Well, you know, you do bring God into the equation, the creator of everything. You talk about that science has to be observable and reproducible, I believe is how you say it.

You are a total wordsmith, but creation is not observable as observable and reproducible. So tell our listeners about how you view your farm as part of your Christian stewardship.

Sure. So thank you for that question. So essentially, our bottom line is it's not ours. I mean, the psalmist says in the Psalms, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness of it.

In other words, this is his. Now, the courthouse says we own this piece of property. I get that. But in actuality, we view all the physical universe as owned by God, it's God's stuff, it's ultimately God's stuff.

And so that begs the question, well, if my property is really God's, if the trees are God's, if the chickens are God's, if the cows are God's, if the tomatoes are God's, if the soil is God's, if the water is God's, if it is stuff, well, does he care?

Does he care what I do with it? Does he care how I How do I take care of it? I mean, what that means is I'm actually not an owner. I'm a steward for the owner.

All right. And what is the first thing that an owner wants from a steward? Well, number one, They don't want it to go backwards. They don't want it to become whatever, less productive or less healthy, that's number one.

And number two, most of them want some sort of a return on their investment. We call that an ROI in business, return on investment. Well, you know, if I were God and this earth were mine, and I'm looking down and thinking, oh my goodness, I didn't make these deserts.

I didn't make a dead zone the size of Rhode Island in the Gulf of Mexico. I didn't make super fun sites. I mean, I can go down the list, but if that was what I saw, I'd say, hey, somebody got in my stuff and messed it up.

That would be my reaction. And so that's the way we view our responsibility. and and it's not it's not a it's a wonderful responsibility i mean i view it like well god could he could take care of this with angels he could take care of it with you know the voice of his mouth he could i mean he could do whatever but he chose me he chose me debbie to go out here and be his hands and feet and interact and massage and caress this object lesson of his divine attributes and so So for us, the bottom line is when somebody leaves the farm, we want them to say, oh, that's what mercy looks like.

Oh, that's what peace looks like. Oh, that's what abundance and provision look like. Because we view the physical world as an object lesson of spiritual truth.

You can't just sit in a focus group and talk about mercy and forgiveness and abundance without visceral visceral stuff to hang it on. Just like, you know, love is not love is not something that can be done without an object.

Well, you know, well, what do you who do you love? What do you love? You know, how do you love? Right. I mean, there's all these things and it's the same way with mercy and forgiveness and redemption and abundance and provision and all those things are are are are nebulous.

They're nothing without some sort of a framework to hang them on. So this is why we talk about we want to provide a habitat in which the pigs can express their pigness.

We want to honor the pigness of the pig. Why? Well, because when we honor the pigness of the pig, we honor the godness of God. If we don't care about the pigness of the pig, then the next thing is we're not going to care about

the holiness of God or the mercy of God or the forgiveness of God.

And so I think even in our homes and with our kids and whatever, we can talk about these pretty heady issues if we have a physical reference point. And so we see everything through that prism.

And I'll just mention one more because I think it's so profound. The whole notion that we can that we can produce life without death and this is a big one right now with the animal welfare movement and all this stuff and it Debbie it it it it's It's foundational to the entire chemical fertilizer industry that, oh, nothing has to decompose.

We don't have to feed soil by something that was living, died, decomposed, and is now regenerated in a new form, like compost. No, we can just pump chemicals and put them on the soil and nothing has to die in order for something to live.

And that's the biggest lie ever. Everything is eating and being eaten. And if you want to live, you actually die. And of course we know in Christ, his death provided life for us.

And I tell kids when I speak at elementary schools, if you really want to live, You die to yourself. You serve others and that's how you actually live.

And so this whole idea that, oh, we're not going to kill animals anymore. We're not going to, you know, we're not going to use, we're going to be able to use chemicals to grow all of our own food and all that.

It is a complete mockery of one of the most profound ecological, I would say spiritual object lessons through ecology that we can imagine.

Worms as a Test for Food and Inputs

I totally agree. We are trying to negate the design in every way, whether it's the food we eat, how we treat the soil, how we treat the animals, how we view our possessions.

We have to live in harmony with God's design to be happy. Yeah, to, to, to feel fulfilled. And I don't know if the happy is exactly the right word, Joel, but you know what I'm saying?

To be, to be, I would just say to flourish, to flourish or be functional. I mean, I mean, boy, we saw, we saw this really happen when, when, you know, four or 50 years ago.

when all the agriculture experts around the world were telling us farmers to feed dead cows to our cows. You can grow cows cheaper this way. We'll grind up dead cows and feed them back to cows.

And farmers like me that were thinking about these things looked at that and said, wait a minute, where on the planet does an herbivore eat meat, eat carrion?

Well, it doesn't exist. It absolutely doesn't exist. And so we didn't buy into it. And we were, of course, accused of being, what, Luddites, barbarians, anti-science, don't you want to be, you know, make progress, blah, blah, blah, you know, cavemen, you know, Neanderthals.

And we didn't do it not for any of those reasons. We didn't do it because we couldn't see a God-ordered pattern in which this made sense. Now it took 30 years until bovine spongiform encephalopathy, also known as mad cow, actually reared its ugly head.

That's how forgiving nature is. You can abuse it a lot and it'll still come on. But 30 years later, of course, we had mad cow and what we had done is we had pierced that order with chaos.

Yeah, that's what god brought to the universe. You know genesis 1 1 he moved upon the the the face of the earth the water and brought order out of chaos And and so anything that stimulates chaos You can be assured is not Is

not divinely, you know divinely requested which genetically modified organisms is another example You know, you you can't you can't have a being that's part tomato part fish and part persimmon.

In Genesis 1.1, he says, I'm going to make everything produce seed after its own kind. GMO, they're a patented sterile, so they don't even produce seed.

And B, if they did, they don't produce it after any kind. It's complete chaos. And God actually set up lots of boundaries so that that couldn't be done and we are just you know like swashbuckling pirates walking into this this sacred space and and irrigating to ourselves manipulative capacity that God never ordained us to have.

And then wondering why we're sick. Yeah. And then wondering why it doesn't work or why this plant is more susceptible to frost or more susceptible to bugs or more, or doesn't have nutrient, you know, nutrient density in it, you know, any, any number of things.

Well, and I'm sure a lot of our listeners are thinking, oh my gosh, the seletons are doing it, but could we do it? So I want to assure the listeners that there's a huge opportunity here for anybody who wants to just start small and have their own little regenerative farm.

So, Joel, talk about that because you mentioned at the conference that many of the current farmers are aging out. And right at the same time as you work with RFK, there are initiatives that are changing people's minds, so this is a huge opportunity.

Well, it is. And yeah, the average American farmer right now is 60 years old. And if you look at business, you know, rules of business, anytime an economic sector and a culture, the average practitioner is more than 35, that is considered a sector in jeopardy.

It's in decline. Well, farming is now at 60. And so in the next 15, that's one five, 15 years, half of all America's agriculture equity is going to change hands.

That's all the land, all the equipment, all the buildings, half of it. No culture, no civilization has ever weathered that degree of agrarian transfer without conquest.

the Huns come in and take over Rome or whatever. I'm not saying we're getting ready to be conquested, maybe we are or not, but the point is it's never happened in peacetime.

Christian Stewardship and Godu2019s Design

So we have a big order on our plate right now to take the aging farmer and create a new generation of land stewards to take this and protect it from all going to Bill Gates, Black Rock and Vanguard or the Chinese or whatever.

And so that's why I'm on a bit of a tear to try to encourage, inspire and coach, push a new generation of young people to jump on this as an opportunity, as an unprecedented opportunity to not only heal the land that's been abused for a long time, but then to access the marketplace that is leaving Monsanto in droves.

And everything that RFK Jr. uncovers in the food system is making people distrust it more. And so I've never seen such a, whatever, a stampede, if you will, a market stampede for non-industrial food.

And goodness, it's a stampede whose time has come and I'm just thrilled to see it happen and hope that it builds up speed. But yeah, there's an unprecedented opportunity to make this happen.

Well, and people don't need a lot of land. You mentioned they could start with five acres. Also, though, Joe, I know your time's coming to an end, but just briefly tell our listeners how you and Teresa got started.

Because when you started on the land, it was rocks when you were a little kid. but moving forward. So folks, you

know, you don't need this lush piece of land.

If you look at the Polyface website now, it's the Garden of Eden. But it didn't start that way, right? No, it sure didn't. I mean, I remember as a kid, so mom and dad bought this property in 1961. We've now added two more properties to it.

But when it started in 1961, it was a rock pile, gullied rock pile that You couldn't, couldn't grow hardly, you know, 15 cows. And today, you know, it does over a hundred.

And, uh, and, you know, I, when I was a kid, I can remember as a kid walking the whole farm and never setting foot on a piece of vegetation. The ground was that bare.

You could walk between the clumps, you know, stuff. And today, of course, it's just, it's just solid, solid, lush green mat. And so, you know, it didn't, it didn't change overnight.

And if we, if we had known then what we know now, we could have changed it faster for sure. But, you know, we, we, we started doing multi-species, the controlled grazing, started doing large scale composting.

We got a wood chipper so we could put a carbonaceous, a carbonaceous diaper under the, under the animals in the wintertime and compost that. Then we use pigs to do the air rating.

And, and now, you know, it's gone from the armpit of the community to arguably the, you know, the most lush place in the community. I'm not bragging. I'm, I'm giving humble homage to the patterns work.

I'm not, I'm not out here inventing something, you know, these, all we did was we said, well, how did God order this? You know, and, and we're just trying to mimic that on a domestic scale using our, you know, our, our intellect and our mechanical.

Hosing thumbs and and bring that to the landscape and and yeah you're you're right you don't need a lot of land. To get a to get a toe hold and i'm a big fan of actually starting on land that you don't own just go ahead and start you know we're big fans of the portable farm.

And I've written 16 books, number 17 coming out in October. And, and, and some of these are broad cultural books, like the folks, this ain't normal one, but, but most of them are hardcore how to, how to grow chickens, how to grow beef, how to, how to set up a farm, how to set up a farm business, how to have a family friendly business where you're.

You know, it's successionally friendly. Fields of Farmers, how to develop risk sharing partnerships. So there's 22 of us now who earn a living from the farm, but nobody is paid hourly.

It's either salary or subcontract or some sort of performance oriented compensation. So everybody shares a little bit of risk. and that creates stakeholder ownership in the whole program.

Opportunities for New Farmers and Polyface Farms

We're going down a rabbit hole there, but trust me, the business elements are as important and necessary as the actual, you know, how do we build organic matter in the soil?

How do we grow, you know, abundant abundant crops, how to grow abundant food and have healthy animals and really functional immune systems. You know, that's all part of it, but it's also, you know, you got to watch your money and your marketing and your finances and somebody's, somebody's got to, you know, balance the checkbook.

Well, you have to use the brain God gave you and you're doing that. I mean, you're loving God, loving people and you're keeping it relational. That's the thing I would want our listeners to know about Polyface Farms and the

Saliton family.

It's relational. It's not transactional. So much in our world has gotten transactional and we just applaud what you're doing. We want to mimic what you're doing.

Lots and lots of education for people who want to know, who even just want to start low, go slow in a little bitty farm. So how can people find you, Joel?

How can they order your meat products? It's not just meat, but tell us everything. Yeah, so I do a blog. It's great, you guys. When you need that entertainment, just go to the blog.

It's wonderful. It's Musings from the Lunatic Farmer. And I try to keep them all readable under five minutes with a question at the end to stimulate ideas and conversation.

I do a weekly podcast with Dr. Sina McCullough called Beyond Labels. We have video curriculum, like I've written a lot of books. We ship nationwide. You can get beef, pork, chicken, eggs, turkey for Thanksgiving from us, and we'll be glad to get it to your doorstep.

but we do we do seminars we do all sorts of wellness and and farming and parallel universe type type thing you know opt out of the system type things and so but it's all available on our website polyface farms p o l y f a c e polyface farms.com i don't have a a personal social media presence everything is through through the farm because i don't have a smartphone i don't i don't want to spend time you know fooling around with all that social media But if you want a clever t-shirt like Compost the Bureaucrats, or Everything I Want to Do is Illegal, or the Food Emancipation Proclamation, those kinds of things, we have a gift shop too, and we have all sorts of swag there as well.

So polyfacefarms.com. Oh, thank you, Joel. This has just been such an honor to have time with you. And thank you, listeners. Thank you for sharing. Send this podcast to somebody who likes to eat good food.

It's going to do so many things for their immune system just to have the the wit of Joel Salatin. We're now in I think about 150 countries and maybe 5,500 cities for vitality made simple and that's because you listeners are sharing and subscribing and just thanks for joining me blessings until next time Thank you for tuning in to Doctor Talks.

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