



## Season 12: Episode 3 | Murray Watts: Bringing Scripture to Stage and Screen

Hello and welcome to Scripture Untangled, a podcast by the Canadian Bible Society. My name is Joanna la Fleur. I'm a friend of the Canadian Bible Society and I'm going to be your guide for today's episode.

Today, Murray Watts will be interviewed by Lorna Dueck. Murray Watts is an award-winning playwright, screenwriter, and author. He's written extensively on the Psalms.

He has founded several theatre companies and performed at least a hundred or more Biblical sketches, dramatizing the teachings of the Bible. He's performed all over the world with that work. He's also well known as a screenwriter for *The Miracle Maker*, a groundbreaking animated movie about the life of Jesus that has been seen by millions, and where Academy Award winner Ralph Fiennes narrated the voice of Jesus.

Murray Watts has also written and directed many plays. In over 35 years, he's worked as a writer in TV, radio, film, theatre, and won awards and received some critical acclaim as well. He has created a retreat centre for artists in an ancient Scottish castle that he has led the renovation of.

Freswick Castle is now a renowned place of beauty where the weary artist can be refreshed. So, he is an amazing conversation to talk to and he's striving for excellence and spiritual information in the worlds of arts and music and media, wherever he may go. So, enjoy his conversation here with Lorna Dueck.

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**Lorna Dueck:** Playwright Murray Watts, welcome to Canada. We're thrilled that you've found your way. You're there at Tyndale University, correct?

**Murray Watts:** Yes, I am. Yes, I've been very warmly welcomed here. It's great to be in Canada.

**Lorna Dueck:** I'm so glad we're catching up with you as you present a new play to Canadian audiences. And even in the wonder of podcasts, this is going to air after this week of the play has premiered in Canada. And we're still picking up the wreckages of what happened to the arts community in COVID.

But tell us about this new Biblical play, *The Beloved Son*.

**Murray Watts:** Well, as you can see, the title borrows from the Bible, *The Beloved Son*. This is my beloved son.

And it's such a powerful Scripture. And Henry Nouwen loved it. And among his wonderful writings, which have inspired many thousands, millions of people, he has helped us to understand that we are God's beloved children.

You are His beloved daughter; I'm His beloved son too. And I took that core message from Henry and thought maybe that really should be the title of the play, *The Beloved Son*, in this case, because there's actually a double play, a double meaning, because Henry struggled a great deal with his relationship with his own father, his earthly father. And the play explores that longing for affirmation.

And this is a universal thing. Many people know about this, needing affirmation and not just praise, but just a sense of being okay, and loved and safe with your parents. And some of us are lucky enough to have that.

I certainly had that with my own father. I'll always be grateful for that. But I have many friends who haven't had that.

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And so, this struggle of Henry's is the undercurrent of the play. So, *The Beloved Son* is about our divine identity. But in this case, it's also about Henry trying to find a safe place in his relationship with his own father.

So that runs through the play. So again, that's always the playwright's dream, really, is always finding some kind of tension of that kind, if you like, jeopardy, stress in human relationships. So, you don't wish that on anyone, but it actually makes it a very interesting and, I hope, inspiring play.

**Lorna Dueck:** And is it a biography? Like, is it a biographical look at Henry?

**Murray Watts:** Yes, in a way it is. I really go from him being a small boy, when he first dreamt of... he wanted to become a priest, you know, when he was about six or seven, his Oma, his grandmother made him a little priest outfit. He would conduct little services, and he would, you know, commandeer his brother to be an acolyte, and have little services in the attic at home.

And I absolutely loved that. So, I go all the way from that, right the way through to the very end of Henry's life. So, there's lots of biographical stuff, but it's much bigger than that.

So, it's not a straightforward biography of Henry. Above all, it focuses on his unbelievable and extraordinarily brave reverse career move, when he gives up his illustrious career at Harvard University, to go and work with L'Arche, initially in Paris, and then at L'Arche Daybreak in Toronto. And I'm absolutely fascinated by that, because when he went to L'Arche Daybreak, of course, no one could read his books, really, they didn't know he was famous.

A lot of the people, the wonderful different characters, some of whom are portrayed in the play. But they weren't literary or academic, they were intellectually challenged, they were physically challenged. And Henry spoke very movingly about Adam, in particular, who had multiple physical problems, couldn't speak, and yet, became Henry's greatest teacher.

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So, I mean, it really is an extraordinary story.

**Lorna Dueck:** Downward mobility.

**Murray Watts:** Downward mobility. I mean, I've grown up with that world of Oxford and Cambridge. I went to Cambridge; I went to all those academic things. My family was that way inclined.

But I'd never come across anyone getting so high, and then giving it all up, and reinventing, being reborn, really, in a way. And Henry loved clowns. And he loved the kind of acrobats at the circus and things.

He loved the kind of strange comedy and reinventions and the fool, if you like. And one birthday party, they had him reborn as a clown at L'Arche, to celebrate his birthday.

**Lorna Dueck:** At L'Arche.

**Murray Watts:** I think that's a fantastic kind of image, to be reborn as a clown. And there was something about that.

There's certainly a real humour in Henry. And there's quite a lot of humour in the play, actually. But tremendous empathy in Henry, as a character.

I did meet him once, and I'm glad to say I did have just a short time with him, because we had a very, very close mutual friend, actually, that he references sometimes in his writings. But of course, I feel I know Henry through all the books.

**Lorna Dueck:** And when this podcast is released to our audience, the play will have moved on.

But Henry is larger than life in Christian thought. What is your hope for the play *The Beloved Son*, will do for audiences?

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**Murray Watts:** You know, a good play, I think, is a place of encounter, spiritually and emotionally. A place of enlargement.

You know, one of the things I've always wanted for my own life as a writer, particularly the last couple of decades or so, I want to enrich people's lives. You know how you can go to the cinema and you can see a really good film, or a play, and you come out afterwards and think to yourself, that was really good, but I feel a little bit poorer. You know, I feel I've been robbed of some hope.

And I want the opposite. For me as a Christian, as a follower of The Way, a follower of Jesus Christ, as a playwright, a writer, I want to give gifts. I want to enlarge the horizons for people.

So, with *The Beloved Son*, a lot of people, and this has included atheists and agnostics who've already seen the play, as well as Christians, people have loved it across the board. Because the image I would use is this, Lorna, is playing the whole piano. You know, I learned this when I worked in Soweto in South Africa.

I did a trilingual theatre production there in the early 1980s. And I realised from my very British background that I'd grown up playing the piano emotionally on one octave. You know, I never saw my mother cry.

My father never raised his voice. I mean, we were very British in that way of a particular kind of British people.

And I went to Soweto and there was rage. There were tears. There was hilarious laughter. There was every note was being played, you know.

I'll never forget it. And it informed a lot of my thinking about theatre. So, when I came back, I wrote a play called *The Fatherland*, which was set in, with 11 black actors set in Soweto.

And it was a play that demonstrated as far as I could, that huge horizon that the whole piano. And I think with this play, which is many years on from that, it was a successful

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play of mine in London, but this play, okay, it's a one man show, a solo performance, but it does play the whole piano. So, people are in tears, people are laughing, people are touched and challenged.

But they go away with this incredible sense of the infinite, unimaginably greater love of God, for you as an individual. And even those who don't believe in God are wishing they did.

**Lorna Dueck:** Oh, you know, and I just love how the artist in you is needed for helping people engage with God in a new way.

You have had a lifetime and we're going to get into some of the significant stuff you've done. I mean, Ralph Fiennes, William Hurd, these are guys that you've pulled into your plays, your productions. But why does a Christian need to engage the arts?

**Murray Watts:** I always remember the great Dutch art historian, Hans Rookmaaker.

I should probably say Rookmaaker, if I'm saying it correctly. He was a very brilliant art historian, a true Christian believer. I nearly landed up doing a PhD under him, actually, because I studied art history.

But I went into the theatre instead. I remember him saying to me and a number of artists in the 70s that Jesus Christ did not come to make us Christians. He came to make us fully human, fully man, fully woman, fully child, to experience in all its fullness, the wonderful gift of our humanity.

And I think that is central to the idea of the relationship between faith and art, that the arts are part of God's incredible armoury of communication, but it's part of who we are. André Gide, the French writer, said, "Without worship, we shrink. And without the arts, we grow smaller."

We all experience this, of course, during COVID, because people were turning to the arts all the time, to little comedy videos and box sets and the rest of it. So suddenly,

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when a lot of things had to shut down, art was thriving. Often for free, artists were giving their art for free online.

And the arts are part of the very nature and fabric of the universe. I'm a playwright, and the word play is really good. In the book of Proverbs, it talks about wisdom being ever at play in the world.

Wonderful phrase, ever at play. We lose that sense of play. There's too much intensity in a lot of our Christian behaviour.

And to play is to explore, is to have fun, is to have new experiences, to be open to every possibility. So, the arts are part of our humanity. That's the answer, really.

That's who we are. We can't live without the arts.

**Lorna Dueck:** Okay, because you challenge us that we will encounter God in the power of theatre, in the power of film.

Tell me a bit more about that.

**Murray Watts:** You know, I once wrote an article many years ago. It was a bit controversial, I suppose.

But my article was that you might find the footsteps of Jesus Christ in many 20th century plays in a way that you weren't in many churches. And the reason that I said that is because, even though many of the greatest playwrights were not Christians, very far from it, often hostile to the church, there is a visceral honesty. There's an openness.

You know, and I could name numerous 20th century plays which have this quality, this feeling that the writer is sometimes drawing on his own life, and is being sometimes ruthlessly honest with himself or with circumstance. And you see the questions hanging in the air. You see the painful realities.

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And very often you see shafts of sunlight, like hope. You see beauty, love in relationships, but you also see what can go wrong. The problem for the Christian very often is that one grows up in a culture where there's such pressure on you to hide what you're feeling.

How are you? Oh, I'm fine. I'm absolutely fine. But to really be able to say, this is how it is, you know, I've lost my best friend.

It's something that happened to me a couple of years ago. Childhood friend, you know, we grew up together and founded Riding Lights Theatre Company together, wrote many books together. And when he died very rapidly of cancer, I mean, I'm still processing this.

I'm still trying to come to terms with this bereavement. And there's always that thing sometimes, you know, people say, well, it's okay. He's in heaven now.

But you know, I'm not. I'm not in heaven. And I'm still grieving.

And I'm so grateful to God, you know, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is meeting me in the midst of the tears that are still there for me and the loneliness and anguish. And I think the great playwrights very often are so good at this. The reality, like the Psalms, there's so many Psalms of lament.

You know, I mean, we need to be able to grieve, and we need to be honest. Above all, the truth will set you free.

So, if you don't tell the truth about yourself to anyone, if you live in a society which is pressurising you to keep up appearances the whole time, I'm not saying this is true of every church. It's not. But it's very hard to be completely honest.

And the arts can be helpful here. You know, sometimes vicariously by watching a play or a film, you know, there's a flowing empathy. There's a kind of, you identify with the tragedy or the hope.



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I mean, I love rom coms. I was talking to a friend about this the other day. You know, I mean, you're longing for a love relationship to work out against all the odds.

And those films play on those longings. We have these huge longings as human beings. And plays and films can help us.

I mean, somebody once said, a painter called, von Jawlensky, a Russian painter in about 1900 said, "all art is nostalgia for God."

**Lorna Dueck:** Wow. I want to just take a little side tour here, because nostalgia for God, you actually studied 2000 years of history of crucifixion in art, right?

**Murray Watts:** I did. Yeah.

**Lorna Dueck:** What did you learn from that? Because that's not, that's a big jump from the rom com.

**Murray Watts:** Yes, absolutely.

**Lorna Dueck:** But art, like we've been trying to give a vision of the Biblical story since the very beginning.

**Murray Watts:** Yeah, yeah. What's so interesting is in the very early days of Christian iconography, you know, you don't see an emphasis on the brutality of the physicality of the crucifixion.

And really, that's something that happens later. And some of the earliest images and certainly, for example, during the Anglo-Saxon period, you see the victory of the cross that Christ descends it like a warrior. Fantastic.

I actually expressed this; I did a stage production in the 1980s of St. John's Gospel. I adapted the whole Gospel and put it almost word for word on stage. And it was a number one tour around major theatres in Britain.

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We did three tours of it. And in it, I had a huge net hanging over the stage and I had Jesus climb the net for the crucifixion, step by step, and an ensemble cast, then delivering the seven "I Am" statements from John's Gospel as he climbs. And this sort of taking upon himself.

So, I learned that from the early history of art, this thing of the warrior Christ. But of course, in the Gothic period, you have much more, "look at what I've done for you," the suffering Christ, the agonized Christ on the cross. This is something that happens, particularly sort of from about 1200 onwards.

And that would be mostly how we associate the history of crucifixions. And so it's almost like in the cross, you can see every aspect of human experience, which is why, I mean, obviously, theologically, from a Christian point of view, but also from an artistic point of view, at some level, the cross is at the very centre of the universe.

**Lorna Dueck:** You will also challenge us that all 66 books of the Bible are in dialogue with each other.

That is an artist's gift to bring to us. Tell me about that. The Bible is in dialogue with its different voices.

**Murray Watts:** Yes, I think some of the problems that have developed in Christian history is when somebody takes a text and uses it to justify terrible, violent repression, for example, or something like that. Things have happened where people take stuff out of context. But I think, probably at a more fundamental level, early on in a lot of thinking was the idea that if you just followed God and obeyed the commands, things would go well for you.

You know, you'll get money, you'll get security, God will bless you. If you go after other gods, then you'll be punished and things will go wrong. But of course, you have this dialogue going on, a fascinating dialogue in the book of Job about this idea of a very, very good man suffering unjustly.

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And what you see in the life of Jesus is an amazing, the ultimate universal lens through which the Scriptures need to be understood. I mean, the conversation I would love to have been in on is on the road to Emmaus. And I did write a short play about this, trying to imagine when Jesus was unfolding the Scriptures to these two men who couldn't even recognise the risen Christ.

And He is explaining to them how it was inevitable that the Messiah would suffer. And through that, you see the suffering servant, the Messiah. So away from the great, victorious Messiah, the conqueror who's going to liberate Israel from Roman occupation, and the rest of it, comes something else.

Jesus is basically helping them understand the pathway of suffering and prophetic power. I mean, I can't imagine. I tried to imagine what that conversation might look like.

But you see how Jesus himself reinterprets issues around the Sabbath and says the Sabbath is made for man. Man's not made for the Sabbath. And when He deals with legalism, He's correcting a certain kind of interpretation of Scripture.

So, with the Pharisees and the Levites, there's like 613 commandments they're dealing with, trying to get it all right. And then Jesus summarises everything in the two great commands, you know, about loving the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul and strength, but also to love your neighbour as yourself. And He frees us from that legalistic thing.

So, He's in a very loving and profound dialogue Himself with the Hebrew Scriptures.

**Lorna Dueck:** Wow.

**Murray Watts:** And then you'll get the sort of directives.

Paul does it as well. It doesn't invalidate anything, but you shouldn't use one book of the Bible to beat another book over the head.

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**The Bible Course:** Pausing the conversation here just for a minute to tell you about The Bible Course, because whether you're a seasoned Bible reader or you're just starting on the journey, The Bible Course offers a superb overview of the world's best-selling book.

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That's Bible course . ca. And as always, the link will be down in the show notes.

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**Lorna Dueck:** You just showed us the role of an artist once again, to just pull that out and let our imagination understand that. You are passionate about church, and I mean the global church.

You need the arts. Tell us a little bit about that.

**Murray Watts:** We all need healing. Jesus expressed His divine compassion, the love of God for the human race through signs and wonders, through a bubble, through healing people, touching the untouchable, the lepers, the marginalized, touching, healing. I think that one of the problems with a lot of sermons in churches is they're very cerebral, and they don't necessarily touch hearts in the way they should.

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So, you learn a lot, and you go away if you like having three points about something, and it's all clear to you what was being said in Romans 5, or Romans 8, or whatever. You get the points, and you get the kind of intellectual understanding. But it's very important to feel.

Somebody once said to me many years ago, why do you write? You write to make people think. My answer to that is still the same. You cannot make people think. I write to make people feel so deeply that they can't help thinking.

And this is where the arts are so important for the church, because our feeling life is very important. So, we may know, for example, here's back to the Henry Nouwen story, we may know the truth. I went through a crisis of this kind myself when I was a student at Cambridge.

We may know the truth that our parents loved us. But I had to say to my parents, because I'd been sent away to boarding school, and I'd been through a lot of anguish about being away from my home. Eventually, I had to sit with my parents and say, look, don't tell me you love me because I know you love me.

The problem I'm dealing with is I feel that you don't. And I mean, I said lots of positive things in that talk as well. But it was a very important moment, because I said, look, it's not your fault.

It's just that my feelings have gone awry here. And we need to re-experience, if you like, we need to feel that God loves us. And the arts are full of feeling and touch, and particularly for the marginalised.

That was why I wrote a book about Psalm 23, called *Anthem for Life*. And in the book, I talk about addiction, I talk about problems, I talk about people on the margins and I just talk about how God leads us through green pastures, still waters, but also, He's there through the valley of the shadow of death. And the book is really about the feeling life.

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And it's very interesting how many people have been, I haven't written lots of books like that at all, but I'm surprised at how many people have been walked by this idea that God is for you, He's not against you.

**Lorna Dueck:** Even just there with referring to Psalm 23, the way you did, you remind me that the artist, the artist sees things differently. Like I saw steps all throughout Psalm 23, but you see the feelings, how we feel in Psalm 23.

**Murray Watts:** Yeah, absolutely. And you know, I talk about the valley of the shadow of death, and how you can get to a place where you can feel that God is not there, you know, you're feeling life becomes empty, if you like. And there's an incredible Jewish inscription on a wall that was, I think it was in Cologne, actually.

But sort of more or less saying, like, "I believe in the sun, even when it's not shining, you know, and I believe in God, even when He is silent." And this is to do with the awakening of our feeling life against all the odds, you know, that was very deep for me as a young teenager away at boarding school, I had a very real sense that Christ was with me, in extremes of loneliness. And I carried that; I've carried that through my whole life.

And I want to reaffirm that to people, especially those who are what I call refugees of faith. You know, there are people who've been very hurt sometimes by overzealous religious backgrounds, who need to rediscover the beauty and they need to be anointed. I have a chapter about that anointing, because it comes into Psalm 23.

You know, "My cup runneth over and He anoints my head with oil." And that is a healing thing, where shepherds would use oil to anoint the wounds of the sheep, to heal them. You know, and so, anointing is consecration, like kings and queens.

And we're being anointed for God's service to serve Him, to represent Him, to be His ambassador, to be like Him. But we need anointing to heal us. And I think this goes back to why the church needs the artists, because the artists can be those who anoint,

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you know, and that would lead me on to my favourite passage of Scripture, of course, which I can tell you about, if you like.

**Lorna Dueck:** Okay, you better just tell us what your favourite passage is.

**Murray Watts:** Well, it's the paradigm, I think, for all artists. It's the story of the woman and the alabaster jar.

**Lorna Dueck:** Mm. That's interesting.

**Murray Watts:** So, here's a situation where, and I'm somebody who's tried to raise money over decades, you know, for the arts, and it can be incredibly difficult.

It's getting more difficult. Because of metrics, you know, where, in the 1970s, or say up to about 1980 or beyond, I could go to someone, and they would trust me, you know, they would say, we believe in what you're doing, we're going to give 10,000 or 20,000 to this. But many charities, many of the great philanthropists, you know, you're having to fill in endless forms.

And now and so if I give you \$10,000, how many mouths will be fed for \$10,000? You know, do the metrics. But how do you do that for dance? How do you do that for love? For poetry? How can you quantify what the spiritual impact is? And it's very difficult to raise money metrically. But here's this story, where Jesus is being anointed with oil, in the most beautiful context where staggeringly expensive ointment, you know, this is broken open.

And He's anointed with this oil, and the fragrance goes everywhere. So, the first message is, art is uncontrollable. All right, once the perfumes out of the bottle, goes to the window, goes down the street, the beggar gets it, the Pharisee gets it, the random person, the child gets it, everybody gets it, the house, it says, was filled with the fragrance, right? And so, art doesn't behave itself.

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It does things you're not expecting. But then you've got the people doing the metrics, that's Judas, and some of the other disciples got their calculators out from their pockets. And they're punching the keys and saying, this is a whole year's wages.

You could just think what you could have done for the poor with this. They're doing the metrics. And Jesus rebukes them and says, "this woman will be remembered for all time, this act."

And He's accepting the anointing, of course, a very courageous act as well, because we learn that this is on the doorstep of Jerusalem, this incident. And it was a very dangerous act, actually, to anoint the Messiah.

**Lorna Dueck:** You know, that is a beautiful illustration to bring to us at the Bible Society podcast.

Because the arts are so, so meaningful, yet so difficult to quantify. And we've got a guest coming up who just finished a big project at your crazy, wild project you did for artists. You created Freswick Castle.

**Murray Watts:** Oh, yes, yes, yes.

**Lorna Dueck:** Okay, that's your version, probably of an alabaster.

**Murray Watts:** It is actually. No one's ever said that like that, Lorna, but that's a very good description.

**Lorna Dueck:** Yeah. And our Canadian Jason Hildebrandt has just filmed or recently filmed *David*, and he has poured acting into the Psalms.

And you see the Psalms there in those. So, I want to just circle back to you so believe that the artists need to be protected. You bought a crazy big castle in the middle of nowhere in northern Scotland.

Yeah, it's absolutely stunningly wild and beautiful. Tell us about Freswick Castle, which is available on Airbnb.



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**Murray Watts:** Yes, well, I mean, people come and in fact, anyone can come and book it.

But there's I have a charity called the *Wayfarer Trust*. You know, we all need havens. And you know, we're all artists and scientists up to the age of nine.

You know, like, you know, my granddaughter might say, why is the sky blue? You know, she's a scientist with a question like that. But she might paint a picture as well. You know, we unfortunately, as we get to be 12, 13, 14, we sort of often pushed into categories.

Oh, he's good at maths or physics, or, you know, she's obviously going to play music or be in the arts. But we have the image of God as artists and scientists and explorers. And I've done a lot of plays about science, interestingly, because of this, I'm interested in crossovers.

But as human beings, with all the artistry that's in us, and all the longings and the needs that are in us, we need havens, we need places of rest and recovery. And I, in the early 90s, I was working on a series, I was a producer and the associate producer in the documentary department in the BBC in Wales. And I was responsible for the series on stress management.

So, it was the BBC series on coping with stress. And I worked with a brilliant psychologist. So, I wrote and presented this documentary series, and I wrote the book about it.

And working on that book about surviving stress, plus a visit to Iona and working on a film about St. Columba, the great Irish Christian who brought Christianity to Scotland in the sixth century. And a number of other factors all came together, like a number of tributaries into some great, huge river in my life. And I thought, you know, I was working on the film, *The Miracle Maker* at the time as well, you know, a film that was to go all over the world.

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And I just thought, I wonder if there's something I can do to help people take courage keep going out there on the front line. A lot of artists are really living on the front line, culturally and financially desperate, emotionally vulnerable, spiritually challenged. And yet these precious people need to keep going and they need to be given new fire in their hearts, you know.

And so, I'd always loved the far north of Scotland. I'd known it since a teenager, would often go up there after shows on at the Edinburgh Festival. I'd keep driving up to the top of Scotland.

Anyway, I just started looking around for places. I just had this idea that maybe I could just find a place. And I was completely mad.

I mean, when the BBC interviewed me about it, after I'd bought the cast, I said, why on earth had I done this, the interviewer? And my answer was faith bordering on madness. I said, I'm not quite sure about the distinction between the two. Because I didn't have the money.

I mean, I didn't really have the money to buy it when I bought it. I had to take a risk and then try and find the money once I'd made the initial offer. I certainly didn't have the money to restore it.

But gradually people teamed up, people helped, people gave. And I've just seen an extraordinary blessing, a real anointing on many lives. People come often at a crossroads, if you like, you know, children or people of all ages.

It's a retreat, but I tend to call it a place of advance, where people move forward.

**Lorna Dueck:** Yeah, after this podcast, in a few weeks, we have Jason Hildebrandt on the show, an artist who worked at your Freswick Castle.

**Murray Watts:** Yes, absolutely.

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**Lorna Dueck:** Filmed that beautiful piece of David there. Wow. You know, you've had, the first time we interviewed, my memory is, it was when *The Miracle Maker* came out, and this was a new thing that we could put in people's homes with a VHS release.

And I was like, look at this new thing that can go into your home. You've seen the entire evolution of the arts.

**Murray Watts:** Yeah, yeah.

**Lorna Dueck:** It's a challenging time. Give us a closing word for the church on the arts.

**Murray Watts:** You know, my prayer is that the church, the body of Christ, you know, we all need one another.

The hand shouldn't say to the foot, I don't need you. The ear shouldn't say to the eye, I can do without you. We need our artists.

We need our feeling, loving, empathetic, creative people. That is very important for the health of the church. What's happened over my lifetime is the dramatization of society itself.

You know, even the news is dramatized. Everything is intensified, whether it's advertising, whether it's film. And also, there's a democratization going on, which is quite encouraging.

In other words, when I was first out, you know, you couldn't just go and make a film, right? You'd need so much money and support. But now people are able to make films on their mobile phones. The technology is incredible. And I have two sons who are both have a strong faith in God, and I'm very grateful for that. And they're filmmakers, you know, and so they are living that life on the edge. They live in England in Sheffield.

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But they're risk takers. So, I would also say this, that the church needs to encourage risk taking. That the artists are, by definition, risk takers.

And it's okay to play safe. And a lot of people, we need people who will play safe in their lives, financially, live ordered and settled and great lives as Christians. But love and care for, support financially, emotionally in your prayers, those who are called to take risks, financially and artistically and spiritually.

Missionaries have always been great risk takers. But the artists are uniquely vulnerable because they don't have missionary societies behind them. You know, they don't.

Very often they are really on the edge. And God brings a fragrance and a beauty out of that life on the edge, you know. And we need our people on the margins.

But reach out and love. If there's an artist in your church, think, how can I support this person? How could I make this young person flourish? Because that person may well water a garden that will flourish and bless millions. I was lucky with *A Miracle Maker*.

I mean, I started off doing sketches on beaches to children, tiny Biblical sketches. I landed up having the privilege of being able to tell the world, 50 million people plus, what I really felt about Jesus. Nobody could have imagined that when I was first starting out.

But there were many who encouraged me along the way. And it's like, I want to say, well, do that for young people. You don't know what they may do.

**Lorna Dueck:** Murray Watts, we're so glad you came to Canada. And I know everyone who's listening is sorry they couldn't catch the play this week because you were doing this on the week that you happen to be traveling here. But thank you.

We will put in the show notes, we'll put where people can link to both Freswick Castle and to your good work, your many books. Thank you for encouraging us today, that

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the alabaster jar is a very valuable perfume. And it can be our job to take care of the arts as it pours over our life.

Thank you.

**Murray Watts:** Well, thank you, Lorna. It's been an absolute privilege.

And I'm a huge fan of the work of Bible Society all over the world and have been quite strongly engaged with the Bible Society in Britain and so on. But it's just wonderful to be just briefly, you know, in the fragrant room with you.

**Lorna Dueck:** Well, thank you very much.

And the Bible Society thanks you for joining us today.

**Murray Watts:** Thank you for having me.