



## Season 12: Episode 1 | Domenic Ruso | Can the Bible Still Reach Skeptical People Today?

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, author and pastor Dom Ruso will be interviewed by Lorna Dueck. Domenic Ruso has a frontline seat to helping people engage with the Bible. He's a lead pastor in Quebec's fastest growing community, Laval, just north of Montreal, in the greater Montreal area.

And Laval is where Domenic and his wife Beverly felt God's invitation to plant a church about 10 years ago. That church is named The180 and has grown into a booming English speaking gathering that has been a springboard for Dom to discover the secular people that are interested in the Bible in his community. And Pastor Ruso has also written about this in his new book.

It's called, *The Bible for a Shifting Secular Age: Hearing the Truth You Need for the Life You Are Meant to Live*. Ruso has also earned his PhD in Reformation Studies and Patristics, and he has fueled his ability to gather Catholic and Protestant curiosities together around the Bible. He's passionate about helping people reimagine their engagement with the Bible and he is a trusted resource for serious questions on the post-Christian culture.

So, in today's conversation between him and Lorna Dueck, we're going to hear about his work in church planting, his advice for sharing the Bible, and his counsels for sharing the Bible also within your own family, whether kids and youth or secular people in your context. So, here's the conversation. Enjoy.

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**Lorna Dueck:** Domenic, we are delighted to have you here at the Bible Society's Scripture Untangled. And you've got a fascinating faith journey.

Thank you for joining us.

**Dom Ruso:** Thank you for having me. This is going to be great.

**Lorna Dueck:** Okay, your introduction to belief in God began as a child, like so many of us. Tell us about your young faith journey.

**Dom Ruso:** You know, I would say like my earliest memories of faith and understanding God's love happened in a kind of a complex way.

I was raised in Montreal, Quebec, and my family kind of took me to church in a Roman Catholic setting. So, when I was young, I was an altar boy. I remember the importance of church, you know but still didn't really understand belief or doctrines like most children.

But then my mom had an experience in a Protestant setting. So, I think the Protestant Catholic dynamic really shaped a lot of my faith, both good and bad. You know, for many listeners, they're probably very much aware that Christians differ on some things, and that causes some tension and lots of good dialogue.

So, because I was young and hearing a lot of those debates, I think I struggled a little bit with like, how do you embrace God's love? And yet, why do people who love God disagree? And that really was a big part of my early experience of the faith.

**Lorna Dueck:** You know, we are cross-confessional at the Bible Society, and we navigate those two systems really quite well and have our own discussions about how the Bible unites. It unites us both as Catholics and as Protestants.

But given your exposure, how are Catholics and Protestants similar for you? And how are they different?

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**Dom Ruso:** Yeah, I mean, that's such a huge question and an important question. You know, I think you said it already. In some ways, Catholics, Protestants are orthodox brothers and sisters.

I think we all sense like the uniqueness and importance of the Scriptures. I think part of the tension we feel is how sometimes we interpret certain passages differently. And differently doesn't always have to mean bad or good, but it sometimes can mean some interpretations are better and some interpretations maybe lack kind of a robust foundation.

So that's why the dialogues continue. You know, I think of people that I know that know very little about Christianity. They wonder like, why are there so many different expressions of Christianity? Like, if you all love the Bible and you all love Jesus, why don't you all agree? The end.

You know, that's the way we might think about it. But I think, you know, the Bible, the more you read it, you realize that God is calling people to hear His voice through the Scriptures and also learn how to love one another when we disagree on certain passages in Scripture. And that itself is in the Bible.

You know, loving one another, learning to respect one another, learning to say that I need you. Like, we actually need one another to grow in some of these areas of theological reflection and, you know, leadership, especially leadership these days. So, I think that the differences and the similarities often are, can be academic for some people, like very academic in discussions.

But on the ground level, I think some of us just feel it in our relationships with our friends, our family members, those we love who have different views and who would say, I'm a Christian, you're a Christian. So, I'm so thankful for this podcast because it creates a space for us to say, hey, what are things we really, really agree on? Why do we think that Jesus is central? And what He came to do is so important for, you know,

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the life of faith and the kind of healing that only God could provide for us. You know, I think all Christians have said, hey, that is essential.

And so those are important questions that I think about often as a pastor and even as an author, as I work through my book.

**Lorna Dueck:** And you are speaking to us from Quebec, which brings another perspective into the Christian family. Tell us about the Quebecois application of loving the Bible.

Tell us where that, how that's maybe a little bit nuanced or different than it might be in my part of Canada.

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah, I think Quebec, I feel like, obviously, I don't know if I could speak for all Quebecois, but I think there is a sense that I grew up here in Montreal. This is my home.

I left for a few years to do my studies abroad and, you know, but have recently, about 10 years ago, come back and planted a church here. So, I'm a pastor, a leader in the greater Montreal area. And I think people in Quebec, have this love-hate relationship with not only the Bible, but with faith in general.

Quebec has a long, complex history related to, you know, the way the church acted or did certain things in history that were not aligned with the ways of Jesus. And people very quickly have felt that. And the church has admitted that, you know, has spoken about types of injustice, types of reconciliation, forms of learning and asking for forgiveness.

And that's ongoing and it should be, you know. And so, I think there's the people who live in Quebec who are believers and who would say, hey, we're Christians. We're trying to make sense of what that means.

And then there's a whole segment of new conversations that are emerging around people in Quebec who are very spiritual but would not call themselves Christians.

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They would really be interested in all kinds of forms of spirituality, visiting beautiful cathedrals and taking pictures at some historic sites that historically have been part of the church, but are losing kind of their strength as being part of the church. We actually have laws in Quebec that allow us to protect certain religious heritage sites for people who want to visit those places as part of our history but would not necessarily connect them to a deep Christian faith.

**Lorna Dueck:** The mystery around Brother André's cathedral.

**Dom Ruso:** Oh, yeah. Oh, my goodness. Yeah.

St. Joseph's Oratory, for the listeners, if you've never been there, is one of the most historic pilgrimage sites in all of the world. And so, yeah, it's visited millions of times each year from people who are Christians and non-Christians.

**Lorna Dueck:** What are they experiencing there at St. Joseph's?

**Dom Ruso:** I would say, you know, for the people who've been there and the people that I've actually taken there to see the space, I think there's a few things. They experience a sense of reverence and peace about that space. I think they experience like just this awe that God moved in such a particular way in history.

And for the listeners who are not aware of this, the cathedral and the oratory are linked to a season of healing that happened, you know, in the Catholic Church through Father André and his leadership. So, there are people who are longing for healing in their own lives and going there keeps them kind of praying and seeking God's healing. So, there's some of that.

There's the beauty of the architecture. There's the beauty of the art connected to that.

**Lorna Dueck:** There's a holy hush there, to be sure.

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah, there's a little bit of that, right?

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**Lorna Dueck:** Well, and the crutches that are all lined up on the wall. Like you said, it was a season of healing that God introduced into the Catholic Church. It's amazing.

Okay, we are speaking to you while you are near Montreal. And I want to get into your wonderful new book.

**Dom Ruso:** Oh thanks.

**Lorna Dueck:** *The Bible for a Shifting Secular Age*. And you've got this new book out. But first, how is it that you received your calling as a pastor?

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah, you know, I share some stories about this in the book. How my earliest experiences about being a leader, being a pastor, weren't always clear. I mean, it wasn't like I saw an angel or a sign.

And I didn't have anyone in my family who actually had years and years of being a pastor. So, I kind of, in a clunky way, discerned one little step at a time. I think for a lot of people that can be encouraging because we sometimes feel like, oh, God is going to speak to me and I'm going to know all the steps of what I need to do.

And actually, if we read the Bible, we see that that's not what happens in people's lives. They just take little steps of faith and God meets them in those steps. And then God opens a new door, almost like seeing doors open.

Like as you go through one door, you see the next door. If you're like me, I mean, I like to see all the doors.

**Lorna Dueck:** Where was your beginning then? Where was your first church?

**Dom Ruso:** I think my first church experience was as a young teenager when I started to help with worship and music was kind of my gateway door.

Like I love music. I love being on the worship team. My family were still wondering about, you know, what does church mean? So, as I served in music ministry, a key

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leader came to me and said, Dom, would you ever consider going to Bible school? And I thought, what is Bible school? Like, what does that even mean? You know, I read the Bible.

Do I have to leave my family? So, all those things were all brand new for me. So, because of God's grace and some discernment, I went and I studied theology at a Bible school for a few years. And I would say even in those early years of studying, I still didn't think I would be a pastor.

I just thought I love the Bible. I want to understand it better. And, you know, maybe I'll be a teacher. But it was in that time that more and more people kind of were saying a similar thing. And I think God used them to help me to see that maybe God was calling me to pastoral leadership in a church. And so, I took little steps of faith along the way.

As God opened the door, I stepped into that and said, God, show me if this is from you. And, you know, people responded.

**Lorna Dueck:** Did you begin with the Alliance?

**Dom Ruso:** No, no, no, no.

I actually early on was in the PAOC. So, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada was some of my earliest training. Some of my good friends are pastors in the PAOC.

And I learned pretty much in that space, my early years as a pastor, in a, I would say, more charismatic space. And then after that, I served a little bit in a non-denominational church, which broadened my horizon, how there's difference.

**Lorna Dueck:** Outside of Quebec, right?

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah, outside of Quebec.

**Lorna Dueck:** Outside of Quebec.

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**Dom Ruso:** Yeah, Ontario and Calgary, Calgary area for a little while. And then most recently, I would say, in coming to plant our church, we got more acquainted with the Alliance, which is the Christian Missionary Alliance for the listeners. And they had a whole new vision for starting new churches and new expressions.

And so, we began discerning through that. So, God has been good to me. I really have experienced different leadership styles.

And different leadership settings.

**Lorna Dueck:** This calling to become a pastor really affects not only your family of origin, but it affects your family. Tell us a little bit about working that in and saying, "hey gang, I guess this is where we're going to go."

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah, I wish it was that easy. You know, it sounds so nice when you say it that way, right? But I know...

**Lorna Dueck:** It was tough.

**Dom Ruso:** It was tough in some ways, but it also was very joyful.

My wife, who's a wonderful partner, she serves in so many ways with me and has always been super supportive. I think we saw the calling of leading together. Although I obviously am the pastor, we did that together.

Our kids were super young. So even when we started the church, our kids were young. And so, they kind of picked up the cues from us.

And they did what mom and dad did. Just the way of seeing us love people, seeing us love Jesus, seeing us take steps of faith to trust Jesus. I mean, these are things that you can preach about forever, but if your kids don't see you modeling it, it will not matter.

And so, you know, our kids saw us do that.

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**Lorna Dueck:** And then the invitation comes. You sense God inviting you to begin planting a church just north of Montreal.

Pretty stretching for you. Tell us about that move.

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah, I would say, I mean, I had a lot of leadership experience before we planted the church, but that would have been like the biggest step of faith for us in a sense, really for the listeners.

Church planting at times, not all the time, but at times really begins as a pioneering work. In my case, you know, I think I was stepping into some new territory where church planting in Quebec is very challenging. Whether it was fundraising, whether it was trying to make sense of what kind of church is God preparing us to see flourish here? What kind of church does a secular culture need right now? What kind of church will the next generation need? Which I was thinking of my kids.

All of those questions are kind of in our prayer space, in our hearts. And so about 10 years ago, we moved back here, and we started to slowly, you know, see a community of faith emerge. And you know, it's not something that happens overnight.

You know, it starts as a developing assembly. There's a lot of language around that.

**Lorna Dueck:** You call it The180.

And does that translate in French as well as it instantly says to me in English?

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah, it does. And that's one of the reasons we use the number for the name.

Because we knew that you could translate it into any language, and it means the same thing.

**Lorna Dueck:** Wow.

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**Dom Ruso:** Where if you use a name that's maybe, you know, Grace Chapel or something, like you're always thinking about how do you translate that? But The180 means, you know, to turn around and it's the Greek word for repentance and to turn.

And so, it captures a lot of things.

**Lorna Dueck:** Wow.

And you do often have the experience of giving people their first Bible.

**Dom Ruso:** Oh yeah.

**Lorna Dueck:** Yeah, we love that at The Bible Society.

**Dom Ruso:** It's amazing.

**Lorna Dueck:** Tell us about that. Their first Bible.

**Dom Ruso:** I think every, yeah, every Christian, I think, should experience what it's like seeing people, not only opening the Bible for the first time, but starting to read it.

And a few things happen. I think one is you see how confusing it is for people. We can forget that the longer we become Christians, the more we become accustomed to like reading the Bible, knowing it's God's Word, understanding it.

Like we already have a pre-framework that helps us. But when people get the Bible for the first time, they actually don't have that. So, we'll get questions from like, why are there numbers in the Bible? Who are these people's names? Where do I start? Like, what are the little points at the bottom of the Bible mean? And I'm like, this is amazing.

You know, I never want to forget that feeling. And it actually shapes how we teach the Bible. I really try to be sensitive to the fact that anyone who's listening to us, whether it's a Bible study or a Sunday morning, we're praying that God is drawing people who've never heard of Jesus.

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And for the first time, they're going to open a Bible and get a Bible and begin to explore that.

**Lorna Dueck:** How are people who've never had a Bible before coming into 180, like you say, your church?

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah, you know, I think it happens like every other church. We create a space that is welcoming and sensitive to people's questions.

I think we remind them that their deepest questions and their deepest struggles are not things that scare God. And we actually tell them that the Bible addresses those questions. So, I think right away in our conversations with people, we lower the shame factor.

Like a lot of people have shame when they come to church. Like people are going to know I'm not spiritual enough. I'm not Biblical.

And we just say, hey, we remember when we had those questions. These are great questions. And so that changes the space of interaction.

And I think when people experience that, something beautiful happens, which I think is a very Biblical thing. They develop this ease in inviting other people to come with them, because they don't feel like it's going to be a place that maybe they're going to be confused. I mean, although people always have questions, but those confusions are normal.

You know, we tell people it's normal to not know where do I drop off my kids here? It's normal to not know where, like where do people ought to sit? Or why are people raising their hands here? That's kind of weird, you know? So, we kind of actually create a space for those kinds of dialogues. And by God's grace, I think we're seeing people more than ever in a shifting secular culture, longing for this kind of connection, longing for a better understanding of, you know, like, does God really care about us? And if He does, has He left us any signs that He cares about us? How

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do I learn to pray? You know, how do I learn to pray in a way that is Biblical? So, I would say God has really been teaching us how to create that kind of space at The180. And, you know, we have wonderful leaders who model that.

**Lorna Dueck:** And we are thankful you've put some of those lessons in your new book, *The Bible for a Shifting Secular Age*. And, you know, I can tell you've taken your PhD as I read this in this wonderful Reformation Studies. But tell us why it was important that you wrestle out this shift that you have seen take place.

**Dom Ruso:** You know, when I was working through the book, I would say even like the first draft of the book might have felt even more academic. And I kept, you know, working at this thing. I want this to be practical, as well as very practical, as well as robust.

**Lorna Dueck:** Yeah, it is a robust, practical book.

**Dom Ruso:** I've met with so many people who are not Christians. And one of their biggest struggles with Christianity is like, it seems like Christians don't think deeply about things.

I mean, it's a caricature, but it is true. Some people are like, you know, you check your brain out at the door when you go to church, and then you have this feeling of everything's gonna be positive, and then you leave. And I'm like, well, that's not what the Christian faith is.

The Christian faith is actually very robust in how it addresses complex questions. And so, as I wrestled with these kinds of issues, and as I met with people for coffee in their homes, at a coffee shop, I noticed something that I needed to talk about and clarify. And that is that the way we thought secular culture would emerge actually didn't happen.

And so, one of the themes is I talk about that there's a fading secular story, which is that the more society gets secular, the more people become secularized, the more

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they'll reject Christianity, reject God, and walk away from the faith. And I thought, why is actually that's not happening in exactly the way we thought it would happen, that we're living in a time where people are secular, but they're not really rejecting conversations about God. They're not really rejecting church.

They're not even rejecting,.. they're actually curious and open.

**Lorna Dueck:** They feel uneducated about it. They wish it were more accessible.

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah, and I think I grew up thinking that secular is going to be very confrontational culture, right? And that exists in some pockets, right? But in general, I use this phrase that I don't think people care enough about Christianity to even attack it.

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**Lorna Dueck:** Yeah, there's a big age difference between the two of us.

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And when I was in my younger career, these atheist versus Christian debates were really hot. Yeah. They were big crowds.

Not happening anymore at all. They're just, that's not the conversation.

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah, so there's the shift.

That's just one of the shifts. The other shift that I think is happening is that people are more than ever realizing that even all of the good things that science does, all the good things that medicine does, all the good things that we experience don't have to be always in a state of this or that as it relates to faith. There are people who are wonderful thinkers and great scientists and are saying, maybe spirituality and faith in God is going to be important for us as well.

I mean, what is that going to mean for us? And we're not even touching the technological advancements of AI, and you know, that are going to bring about a whole new.

**Lorna Dueck:** Transhumanism.

**Dom Ruso:** Sure.

**Lorna Dueck:** That's another religion trying to emerge there with technology.

And so, you feel, it comes out in the book that it's absolutely an open season to introduce the truths of Christianity, don't you?

**Dom Ruso:** I think this is a particular time of learning and a wonderful opportunity for Christians to not be afraid, to step into opportunities and conversations where God maybe is preparing people to hear that Jesus is the only One who can really restore, bring healing and wholeness in our lives. And that doesn't mean we have to attack or confront everything in a culture that we might actually disagree with.

Actually, I'm not saying we agree with things in culture, but that's maybe not the first way we would approach a conversation. Yeah.

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**Lorna Dueck:** Okay, so let's talk then.

What are the spiritual conversations that you think people are trying to have that are outside of Christianity? Where do we start with those spiritual conversations?

**Dom Ruso:** Well, in the book, I kind of document a little bit of this, you know, I call it the secular surprise in the introduction of the book, like this surprising sense that young people in their teenage years are more interested in astrology than ever before. So, astrology apps, just the sheer amount of downloads that astrology apps get, reveals that many, many people are looking for signs in the planets, in the universe, in the cosmic order of things for how to make sense of their lives. Like I spoke to a young adult in our church who's thinking about relationships and dating.

And they said to me, young adults today, when they date, they use astrology apps to figure out who they should and should not date. And I was like, wait a second, like, where is this coming from? That old secular paradigm didn't prepare me for this. That, you know, people are so hungry to see their lives connected to something bigger, that if faith and God are not the center of your lives, you will find something else to really explore these kinds of questions.

**Lorna Dueck:** Okay, I want to take a little pause because you tackle this so well in your chapter on seeing the Bible as a compass, a compass, which kind of leans into that whole astrology hunger that's out there. How does that work? Seeing the Bible as a compass?

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah, I think one of the things I try to do in that chapter is I wanted to correct this view that the Bible is a book that tells you exactly what to do at every step of the way in your life. So, pick like dating.

There's a lot of people feel like I'm looking for the right person at the right time, and I'm looking for a sign. If I don't find that person, then God's going to punish me or I'm being tricked. So I wanted to help people see that when you start to read the Bible, the people who love God and who are faithful to His ways are not always looking for

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the one sign for everything, but they actually see their lives as a compass so that God can give us direction for our lives without dictating everything we should do at every step of the way.

And for people, that could be overwhelming because it's actually easier if we believe that God will dictate everything, right? It's actually easier because if I make a mistake, I can actually blame God because He told me to do that. And what I often want people to see is the more you read your Bible, the more we learn that God meets us in our mistakes, in our struggles, in our messiness. He meets us in those places.

And so, the Bible is actually a book that unlocks this sense of North, South, East and West. Like I use a compass to help people realize that sometimes God opens many doors, and you need to step into one of those and trust Him in that. And as you do that, you might change along the way.

And so I think for so many people, if they've never read the Bible or if they're new to faith, they still think of their faith in the Bible as if there's one door and I need to find that door, versus there's a God who loves you. And sometimes He opens many doors, walk through one of them and see how He meets you there.

**Lorna Dueck:** Yeah. And so less of, you must do X, Y.

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah.

**Lorna Dueck:** And more, you must hold God's hand.

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah. And He's with you as you learn to go through this door now. And if you make a mistake, mistakes don't equal that you're a sinner.

Mistakes equal that you're a human. And so that for people, I find that when they learn to read the Bible that way, the level of anxiety in their lives for decision-making just goes down a million percent. To be like, it's okay to make a mistake.

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And it's okay to say, God, I thought God was calling me to this. I'm exploring that. Obviously, there's things that are clearly disobedient in Scripture.

But if God opens many doors and many opportunities, then just trust Him with that. Like I think a church planting. I stepped into this opportunity.

I could have stayed at the church that I was at that I loved. But I sensed God was saying, be obedient in this way now and see what I do.

**Lorna Dueck:** How did people start coming to that church plant? Like how does, I think a lot of us who've never dared to do something like that wonder, what do you do? Just put out a cross on the front lawn and hope it attracts?

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah, you know, I don't think I have an easy answer, but I think the secret is just relationships. You know, people who we were meeting and who were sensing that a new church in their area would be something they would attend. We started to meet and pray. And so, we met in homes for a few months.

And when we met in those homes, we just prayed about a few things. We said, God, what kind of church would really help people far from, you know, that You still love them? You know, what kind of space do we want our kids to grow up in? So, they realize that having a faith in Jesus, is not about protecting them from the world, but it's about preparing them for the world. So, we started to pray through these kinds of ideas.

And as we did this, God provided a space early on that was a very temporary space. So, I would say from the leadership side of our church plant, and again, I mentioned some of these stories in the book is that I think we didn't always know exactly what the next chapter would look like or the next year. But as we were faithful in the small things, God started to bless us.

**Lorna Dueck:** Well, you even had people ask you, do you have to ask the Pope?

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah, that's a great question.

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**Lorna Dueck:** And what did you tell them?

**Dom Ruso:** You know, I said to them, give me a chance to talk about the difference in Christianity a little bit.

And I said, it makes so much sense that you would think I would call the Pope to start a church, right? And so, I said, we don't do that, but we do have spiritual leaders that we confide in or ask for the sermon for. I think the reason people ask me that is that they wanted to know, is this like a rogue thing that anybody can do? Or is there some accountability to a church? And that's an important issue. There's a lot of accountability to a church.

**Lorna Dueck:** Okay, I want to get back to your book, because you challenge us, see the Bible as living words.

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah.

**Lorna Dueck:** Not as a textbook. Tell me about that. See the Bible, not as a textbook.

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah.

Well, I think, again, part of what I was hoping to do is to help people who live in a secular culture, who think they understand the Bible and who, because they think they understand it, they won't read it, to correct that by saying, if you're not a Christian, it's easy to think that the Bible is a religious textbook for people who call themselves Christians. And so, if I'm not a Christian, why would I read this book? Like, just like you would say, if I'm not Muslim, why would I read the Quran? And so soon, that becomes the default for how people process the Bible. So, in secular spaces, then the Bible is put on a shelf as a textbook for a particular religion.

And if you take a class in university, that's usually how you learn about the Bible. Like you put it up against other religious textbooks and you study them and compare them and figure out why they're the same or different. So, I thought, many people

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feel that until I'm not serious about God or Jesus, the Bible is just a book that's there that I might read if I'm writing an essay or a paper.

And so, I thought, what if we could help them realize that the Bible is not actually the kind of book that works like a textbook? It's not something you read and put back on a shelf. It's not a book you go looking for answers for when you have a problem with your car or your kids. It's not that way.

It's actually something that is living that we keep coming back to, not because the Bible changes, but because we change every time, we come to it. So, because we are changing, every time we come back to the Bible, God reveals to us some newer things that we maybe didn't notice the last time we read it. And so, I try to make this shift that the Bible keeps revealing new things to us because it's not a textbook or a religious textbook that way.

And I'm shocked at how many people just think that that's what it is.

**Lorna Dueck:** Yeah. And you also say, move from rule book to a guide for restored relationships.

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah.

**Lorna Dueck:** Restored relationships, you know, with each other. And families are just, you're finding a real receptivity, aren't you? Tell us about that.

**Dom Ruso:** Well, I think we all feel that we live in a world where our relationships are so fragmented. I mean, more fragmented than they've ever been before. And whether you're a Christian or non-Christian, at some point, you just want to know that your life and those that you love, that you're living in a way that is honest and authentic with them, that when you make mistakes, forgiveness can happen.

When you have regrets, healing can happen. Those are all very much relational dynamics of being a human. And I think that many people don't know that the Bible addresses these things at a very deep level, you know? And so if you have, again, a

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skewed view of the Bible, as in it's a rule book for people who need to follow the rules or God punishes you, you need to follow all these rules or you're going to get in trouble with some being in the sky, you never really hear that even when the Bible provides commandments and guidelines, they're to be heard from a relational place.

You know, if my kids love me and my kids know that I love them, when I tell them something, they hear the rule in my home through the lens of the fact that my dad loves me and he has a relationship with me. If you don't have that kind of relationship, you just hear the rule and you think, you don't care about me, why should I listen to this? And so, I wanted to, in one of the chapters, to unpack this for people to say, you know what? The thing you long for the most is the thing that God provides for us in the living words of the Bible. And so that's one of those chapters.

**Lorna Dueck:** Yeah. You've got to tell us about your kids, about teaching this at home, because you refer to that a lot. Tell us how you as a parent bring the Bible to your home.

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah, you know, I've wrestled with this a lot, and I don't think it's going to go away, and I hope the listeners wrestle with this. I think our kids are going to need more than ever, moms and dads, grandparents, aunts and uncles, people who are not only reading the Bible, but who are modeling what the Bible says. And that's hard work. That is hard work and that is not easy.

And I think that our kids are living in a digital age. I talk about this in the book, like they're digital natives. So, they experience the Bible through apps, through stories, through videos.

But that won't be enough if they're going to build their lives on the teachings of the Bible. You know, so in our home and as a pastor, as a dad, you know, I just try to look for places where I can be present with my kids, where my kids have questions about the Bible. And I can say to them, you know what, bud, that's a great question.

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Like one of the ones I often think about is I think about my kids wrestling with whether the Bible is really the Word of God. Like, that's a great question. Like, how is that different than the Quran or another religious text? Why do we believe that our book is right, and all the other ones are wrong? I mean, if you're not living in the tension of those kinds of questions, I don't think we're actually ready to sit and to listen to the next generation who are going to have much more complicated questions as AI continues to, you know, develop and emerge.

And so, I think in my home, I model for my kids that I'm somebody who's reading the Bible. I'm someone who's learning to listen to God speak to me when I don't have the answer to hard things that are happening in our home and in our church. I don't read the Bible because it has a secret answer for everything.

And so, I think we model that, that we oftentimes, even as we pray in our home, I have three boys and they're all different ages. You know, our oldest one has more difficult questions than our younger one. But I often will pray, you know, we need God's wisdom for this because mom and dad don't know what to do.

And so, we're going to be praying about this. Or you have friends at school who don't know what they, they don't believe in God the way we do. So, let's pray for them.

Let's make time to pray for them and their families. You know, for families, I think of families this year who our kids interact with, who are not going to celebrate Christmas the way we do. So, we just say, hey, this year, let's pray for all the families who don't celebrate Christmas the way we do.

And let's pray that through our lives, they might understand that there's something special about Christmas that's more than just buying gifts. So, I think just simple prayers like that create an awareness in our kids to be like, wait a second, this is different. So that when they leave our home, when they're in school, they remember, like, we prayed for this friend.

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We prayed for this person. And that's really, I mean, the way we're called to live out our faith and model this for the next generation.

**Lorna Dueck:** Beautiful.

You know, I find it curious that on your journey to discover the Scriptures for today, you did a PhD in Reformation Studies, which I'm sure is helpful to you who live in that province that has Catholicism and Protestant struggle so side by side as it does. Tell us what helped you on that topic for your PhD.

**Dom Ruso:** I would say one of the journeys that I had to go through was to make sense of my own story of how I was raised in a Roman Catholic setting, how my mom, you know, had this early experience in a Protestant setting and how early on there was so much tension between those two Christian traditions that I wanted to say, listen, I need to figure out, you know, I would use this phrase, I'm going to figure out why Catholics and Protestants fight.

And it was very naive of me because it's not that simple. But I was really blessed along the way to really meet wonderful professors who modeled a real respect and wisdom about how we interact with one another in different traditions. You know, the Reformation period is such an important period in the history of Christianity because actually it's a period where the Bible is brought back to the center of a conversation.

Now, it's important I say this, Roman Catholics were reading the Bible in the pre-Reformation period. There's this naive idea that somehow Protestants are the first ones to kind of read the Bible or rediscover it. Now, what I think Protestants were trying to do, and they weren't called Protestants at the time, but...

**Lorna Dueck:** Protestors.

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah, you know, there was a sense that even people within the Catholic church at the time were saying we need to revisit some of the practices that we have and whether they actually align with some of the things we see in the Scriptures. So,

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there's a Reformation happening both in the Catholic church and then something that's brewing outside of the Catholic church. Maybe that's a better way of seeing it than a very clean cut between yes and no.

So, there's a brewing Reformation and I think every time God does something special in His church, He draws his people back to the Bible. And I think that's one of the reasons I hope that my book encourages people to say if God is preparing us for the new shifting secular culture, we should go back to the Scriptures with intensity, with focus, with humility and listen again to those in the Bible who are living through incredible change. Like think about that.

You know, again, I mentioned this in the book how the Bible's written in a language that Jesus likely didn't speak. That in itself tells us about the changing dynamics of the world of the Bible.

**Lorna Dueck:** Yeah, you write that.

You write that the early writers made a very bold decision.

**Dom Ruso:** Oh, yeah. Strategic.

**Lorna Dueck:** This won't be done in Aramaic. Yeah.

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah. And it would have been really a tense thing to say, like, why not? We should, you know, so I think even just the dynamic and the gift of the Bible is God's way of showing us that He's walked with his people in complex seasons of change.

And the Bible is actually one of the great gifts of that. Even the fact that we have Bible in different languages is itself like such a great gift to us. You know, so I think those who read the Bible most faithfully are those most ready for the seasons of change that are coming.

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**Lorna Dueck:** OK, we have to wind this up but give us a word at the Bible Society. Give us a challenge that you would say, you know, hey, Canadian Bible Society, you are on the cusp of. Yeah, here's what I would love to see happen.

**Dom Ruso:** Yeah. I mean, I would say that Canadian Bible Society and the particular influence and, you know, reach that you have I think that we want to call people to not only a more consistent and faithful reading of the Bible, but reading the Bible more is not enough if you're not learning to read the Bible better. And I think if we're not careful, we can say, hey, we just want people to read the Bible more without some wisdom to learn how to read it in a better way, which is a much more rooted way, which is a much more, you know, historical way that is in dialogue with other Christians who have come before us.

So, in some ways, the Bible Society, I think, is doing some of those things. It's really creating a space for that kind of dialogue. The next generation is going to need new tools to make sense of the Bible because they have the Bible and all the resources and even all the videos that are available to them.

But some of them might miss some of the deeper things that the Bible calls us to, which is sacrifice, which is a deep sense of submission to God's ways in a world that says, you know, God is there and He's going to help me figure out what I want to do. Well, let's keep reading the Bible together and see if that's what God does in the Bible. You know, so I tell people at our church that the more we read the Bible, the more we should respond to challenges in the world differently.

And so, my prayer is that as people, I mean, obviously read my book. I encourage people. My book is really meant to encourage them to read the Bible more, not to read my book more.

And so my prayer is that that's what happens and that leaders, you know, create the kind of spaces in their church where if God hears our prayers and answers our prayers

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and draws the next generation back to His church, will we be ready to disciple them in the ways of Jesus?

**Lorna Dueck:** Well, I want to encourage the readers in our audience to get *The Bible for a Shifting Secular Age*. It's a wonderful book. It's not very big.

It's dense, but it really helps you understand that this is the conversation to have with our friends and neighbours. Thank you very much.

**Dom Ruso:** Thank you, Lorna.