



## Season 12: Episode 11 | Leanne Friesen | The Power of Lament in Scripture

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, Leanne Friesen is in conversation with CBS Ambassador, Reverend Dr. Andrew Stirling.

Leanne Friesen is the Executive Minister of the Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec, where she serves a family of just under 300 churches. Before this, she was lead pastor of Mount Hamilton Baptist Church in Hamilton for 18 years in Hamilton, Ontario. Leanne is also the author of a book called *Grieving Room: making space for all the hard things after death and loss*. And the upcoming book that will come in 2027, *After the Terrible*.

She also curates the popular Instagram page at *grieving.room*, where she offers grief support and insights. She lives in Hamilton with her husband and two teenage children. You can hear more about Leanne or from Leanne on a number of podcasts, and many of which are on her website and linked in the show notes below.

And her book or her new book as well coming out will be available for purchase wherever books are sold.

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**Andrew Stirling:** Leanne, I'm so delighted that you could join us for Scripture Untangled.

And I've looked forward to this for a while. We've met in a number of circumstances, but never quite like this. And it's really a blessing to have you with us.

And thank you for taking the time. I know this will be deeply meaningful for many of our listeners. Leanne, can you tell us something about your background just briefly? And particularly, what were the main influences in you really developing a faith of your own?

**Leanne Friesen:** Yeah, I mean, like so many people, my story starts even long before I was born, I would say, like all of us.

And I'm fortunate that my faith story goes back that far. I was born in what we call Outport, Newfoundland, so very much rural Newfoundland. And I was raised in a Salvation Army Church.

The Salvation Army Church in Newfoundland is very much its own culture and its own world. Some people may be familiar with that. Two-thirds of the Salvation Army in Canada is in Newfoundland.

Remember, Newfoundland only has 500,000 people. And so, while, of course, the social services side of the Salvation Army was big there, really, it's very much a church and an evangelical church, a Gospel church. So, it was for me, church Sunday morning for about two hours, Sunday school in the afternoon for another hour, three to four hours of church at night.

We had long church services. Andrew just cringed a little. You know, I know. I know it was a lot. I got a lot of church. I'm not done.

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We usually had a second group on Sunday afternoons, a tambourine group that I was in, some of you may be familiar with timbrels. And then throughout the week, I'd be in the brass band. I'd be in the various Bible studies, all these different things.

So, my faith was very much shaped by a culture of faith, by a deep-rooted understanding, a foundation of faith, and my parents, my grandparents, my family around me, the community that I was in. And so, I was surrounded by stories of faith.

Those long services at night were because we would have testimony periods, which would be when anyone could stand up and just talk about what the Lord had done in their life. And so there'd be, you know, a dozen people each week get up and tell a story about what God had done in their life or how they had met God or what God had, you know, spoken to them that week or how God had sustained them or cared for them. And some funny ones, too, that I'll always remember.

But I think now what a richness that was for me. So that's where I came from and what shaped me. And then step by step, God led me in a lot of different places.

I went away to school, and I ended up at a Baptist seminary. I didn't even know it was Baptist when I went there. And after a year or two there, I realized that I was experiencing both a call to ministry.

I went to seminary kind of just to learn more about the Bible. I'd been working in youth kind of roles, youth director roles in churches. And while I was there, I was like, I think God really wants me to be a pastor.

And I think the place for me to do that is a Baptist church. So, it's a very different tradition for me. I hadn't grown up with that.

There's not a big Baptist presence in Newfoundland. And then after 18 years as a pastor, God called me to this role as executive minister of my denomination. So I can assure you, Andrew, that if you had told 14, 15, 16 year old Leanne, living in Outport, Newfoundland, that one day she would be the executive minister of the Canadian

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Baptist of Ontario and Quebec (CBOQ), living in Hamilton, Ontario, she first of all would have said, I don't even know what any of those words mean.

I don't know what they are. And she certainly would have been very surprised.

**Andrew Stirling:** Well, let's go back a little bit then before the CBOQ and so on to your time when you were in the pastorate and you had a lengthy ministry in Hamilton.

I remember those days. And tell us a little bit about what sort of sustained you in that ministry. I mean, you don't be in a ministry of that kind without some kind of Biblical foundation to what you're doing.

And I know that a lot of our listeners would like to know, what constituted the foundation for you in those years in ministry? And did the Bible play a major role in that?

**Leanne Friesen:** Oh, yes, of course, as it should, right? Coming back to Scriptures was what sustains you day in day out as you seek God's presence. I was in my church for 18 years. And as I think about that question, it's interesting.

And I think anyone in ministry or in faith would say that at different seasons, different parts of Scripture speak deeply to you. For me, throughout my whole life, the stories of Jesus have always been where I return. They're my favourite to preach on.

They're my favourite to talk about. And they're the ones where I just so sense God leading me.

Of course, I love all of Scripture. When I was first sensing this call to ministry, even when I was working as youth director, it was called a director, it's really youth pastor. I was so shaped by that passage that says in 1 Peter (5:2,3), "Be shepherds of God's flock under your care, not because you must, but because you're willing, not hungry for money, but eager to serve, not lording it over those sent to you, but being an example to the flock." And that passage was always so meaningful to me, be shepherds of God's flock under your care, eager to serve.

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That one continues to shape me in the role I'm in now.

Later, I began to think more about that role shepherd in recent years and what it means that Jesus is our Shepherd, and pastoring, and there's an author that talks about this, sometimes actually being more like the role of a sheepdog, that we're actually herding people to the Shepherd.

And I love that.

**Andrew Stirling:** I like that, yes.

**Leanne Friesen:** I actually have a sheepdog right in front of me, right?

**Andrew Stirling:** That's very applicable.

**Leanne Friesen:** It's so beautiful. I love that.

And so, I actually went and bought, I don't know how, if you know how hard it is to find a sheepdog, but I found him one day in a store. I just happened to pull it.

And he's misshapen, which I think is very fitting. You know, I don't know who designed it, but it reminds me of that role to bring people to the Shepherd. And that's what we see in the Gospels too all the time.

What it means to keep turning people towards Jesus, speaks to me so deeply. And there are a few different passages in different seasons that were so sustaining to me. My favorite Bible story will always be, the woman with the bleeding, which I know is a strange one to think of as saying this sustains me in ministry, but always that image of Jesus pausing and making time and really seeing someone.

And I've always loved in that passage, this juxtaposition between this person of great privilege, for anyone who hasn't read the story, Mark 5. And, you know, it says, Jairus, the synagogue leader comes, and says, my daughter is dying, you know, and he's bold. He shows up and he's like, Jesus, come to my house. And then this

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juxtaposition of this woman who hides and crawls to Jesus and reaches out and touches Him, hoping no one even notices.

And Jesus making time for both, I think is such a beautiful example of what it means to lead and serve in all the ways people need us.

When I think of other seasons in my life, I was so struck in the book of Mark, this moment, again, also Mark, another Mark one, where Jesus is, you know, He's at Peter's mother's lost house, and He's just been healing all these people. And then He says, come, let's go to the next region.

And everyone, and the disciples, well, He's praying. And the disciples go, Jesus, everyone's waiting for you. And He says, oh, come, let's go to the next region.

And there was such a season where I also need to realize that, where Jesus had to be thinking about His mission and what it meant to be listening to God. And of course, He could have went back to that house and spent the next three years just healing person after person, after person, after person. And He had to remember to stay on task with what God was calling Him to do.

I think that that's such a shaping image of what it means to be in leadership and serving. And I've always been moved by that, by Jesus' ability to walk away and sometimes let people walk away. And I struggle with that.

And I think about that other passage in John, where He is talking about, He's just fed the 5,000. They're like, give me this bread. And then He's like, ah, they're like, give us more bread.

And He's like, you only came for the bread because you want more bread. And then He's like, I'm the bread, you should eat Me. And they're like, what? And then says a bunch leave. And He doesn't chase them, which I think is really interesting too.

He turns to disciples and says, do you wanna leave too? And they say, "Lord, to whom else shall we go?" And everything about that story speaks to me, Jesus' ability to say,

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sometimes we have to let the Spirit do what the Spirit will do. I know that if it had been me, I would have been chasing like, oh, let me try that again.

Let me explain it. Let me just kind of show you what I mean. And in this role of leadership, that's such an important thing to balance.

And then I so resonate with the disciples saying, well, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. I could probably talk about passages that have shaped me all day. So, I should pause.

**Andrew Stirling:** But it's so encouraging to hear. I mean, one of the things that I found, as you know, having had lengthy ministries at times, and then one really quite long, is that you go through a series of generations, don't you? You go through people who you baptize to you then sort of confirmed or people who you confirm to then take leadership positions and people who were in leadership positions, you then deal with them dying and so on. So, you deal with this myriad, this change in generations over a period of time.

And as you said, you know, in terms of your engagement with Scripture, you're engaging with people at different levels. But one of the ones that you deal with, and one that has really sort of struck me the most, and I'd like to spend a bit of time on Leanne, is the subject of grief. And you have focused in this, in your writing and in the grieving room, which you can tell us a little bit about. How did you come to write specifically in all that you've done in ministry on grief? And was there a singular moment, even a personal moment that might have led you to deal with that really important topic? A lot of people grieve everybody at some point grieves.

Tell us Leanne's perspective on that.

**Leanne Friesen:** This has been such a significant part of my calling and the passage that speaks so deeply about that to me. And I admit, I'm taking it entirely out of context, because it's not a passage about dying.

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It's about, you know, making space for others in the church and so on and being aware of who you are. But it's in Romans (14:8) and Paul writes, "If we live, we live to the Lord. And if we die, we die to the Lord. And whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord."

I love it. I even say it and I just go, right, we belong to the Lord.

Of course, again, the passage is about being aware of our impact on others and so on. But the truth of it is very rich. When I was 35, my older sister, whose name was Roxanne, died of cancer.

I'd been pastoring for about, just about a decade at that point. And I had actually, Andrew, always been very passionate about grief. It's one of those things when you say, was there a moment? The short answer is probably, well, when my sister died.

But truthfully, I can look back and in promoting the book I eventually wrote and doing lots of podcasts about it and so on, I began to see, God laid that on my heart a lot sooner. You know, when I was 22, I did an elective in my undergrad course, which was in child studies, on death and dying. And then when I was in seminary, you know, I did a whole paper on supporting people who had miscarried.

And I always had this passion, even long before my sister died, about making space for lament and grief and loss in the church. Which did lead me to falsely believe, my sister had fought cancer for eight years, that I'd kind of have a leg up when she died, that I would, and I think a lot of ministers maybe feel this and caregivers.

I was like, well, I like know stuff about this. I've done a lot of grief courses and workshops. I've led funerals. I've sat at deathbeds. I've done grief counseling. I know how this goes.

So, I thought I'd, you know, be well equipped. I was not. I mean, maybe I was, but certainly didn't feel as equipped as I wanted to be.

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And what really struck me in the year or two after she died was what I discovered I really needed. And this is what led to my grief work. The book I call *Grieving Room*.

I run an Instagram page called *Grieving Room*. This idea, oh, the idea that grief doesn't need to be fixed, which, you know, I kind of always thought, right? You find the perfect thing to say or do, and then you'll make people feel better. But grievors don't feel better.

I often say our goal should be to make grievors feel loved. Better is a long shot for a while. Aim for love and support.

And so, this idea was that grief needs room. And so, I was very shaped by learning that after my sister died, and it felt like all these things kind of culminated a couple of years after that. This was when blogging was the thing.

I started blogging about it. I blogged about lots of things, but it was always sort of the grief blogs that got resonated most and that I felt most passionate about. And I began to do more writing about grief.

I started the Instagram page and eventually wrote this book, *Grieving Room*. And so, for me, Scripture is such an important part of that because we do miss sometimes in the church what a significant part of Scripture makes space for grief. And certainly, in the evangelical tradition from which I have been birthed and continue in terms of our understanding of that, it's often the goal to focus on heaven, on Jesus' return, that we'll rise again.

And we've almost been made to feel bad for making space for our loss. Yet we see all throughout Scripture, this reality of those two things coexisting. And another really shaping Scripture for me that I adore is Lamentations 3, which has like these 19 verses where he's like, you've pierced me with arrows and I'm living in darkness.

You know, you pierce my kidney, like all these images, my bones have been crushed. He's writing after the exile, after the fall of Jerusalem and heaven knows what he's

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seen around him. And then we get to the middle of Lamentations, which we pull out all the time, that beautiful verse that reminds us, the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness.

But it comes after these 19 verses of trauma and suffering, right? And he says, yet this I call to mind, and I have hope, this steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.

And it's this power. And then the Lord is my portion, therefore, I will rest in Him, right? And then there's this part we never quote. And it says, so let them.

So, there's this refrain, right? It says, let the young people. And it basically says, you know, let them sit in pain. So, there's like this mix of, this is so awful and God is good.

And let's just let it be awful for a while. But we often just pull out that middle one. And Scripture points to the totality of this.

Jesus said, blessed are those who mourn. We read so many songs of lament. And so being able to speak to the fullness of this image of Scripture that does point us to hope, but does very much make space for our suffering and our grief and our pain, even as we hope, that if we live, we live to the Lord. If we die, we die to the Lord and we belong to the Lord.

That there's still space for grief. So that's where grieving room came from.

That's a big part of my ministry. So, I sometimes joke, Andrew, that that's my weird hobby because I do have this big job. I'm the executive minister.

And then in my spare time, I talk about grief and run workshops and read books.

**Andrew Stirling:** Leanne, I challenge you. I challenge you severely, strongly. Absolutely.

**Leanne Friesen:** What's your weird hobby?

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**Andrew Stirling:** No, I'm not telling you about my hobby. I'm saying if lament and hope and faith and going through the dark times to get to the mountaintop is a hobby or a weird thing, then the faith itself is weird.

You know, that's the cornerstone. And I sometimes feel, Leanne, and I don't know, and when I read your work too, and I read others who really take seriously grief, that at times I feel even in worship, there isn't really at times a lot of room for lament. And we want to jump to the joy, and we want to jump to the faith, and our music affirms the faith, but it doesn't always take us through lament.

And you look, as you said, at Jeremiah. I mean, it's a powerful thing to allow people to go through that grief and to give them permission to grieve.

**Leanne Friesen:** I agree.

And I wish we did make more space for that. And I think we forget the power of it. Again, I think sometimes in the less liturgical traditions, I think it's why sometimes we're seeing traditions like mine now be more drawn to things from traditions like yours, like Lent, you know, like this intentional space to say, let's allow the darkness.

Let's name it for a while. We don't need to rush to Easter because sometimes we actually do need to be here. And this is where some of us are.

And this is the season we live in so much of our lives. And so, I think there's such beauty in that. And I'm seeing in our traditions more longing for that, which I think is a beautiful and meaningful thing.

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**Andrew Stirling:** Yeah, I'm particularly seeing it, Leanne, with younger people. It's true. Okay, raise your hands in praise and worship and absolutely.

But in their daily lives, you know, they're dealing with many struggles and they're grieving many things. I mean, we're living in stressful times at the moment as Canadians. I mean, I think there's some grieving going on here.

There's geopolitical uncertainty. Young people are concerned about future employment. And with some, I mean, some reason for it and affordability.

Do you think as a pastor who's been in the ministry for so long, does the Biblical message have an assurance or a guidance to the stressful age in which we live?

**Leanne Friesen:** It does. You know, I'm going to go broader, Andrew. It was, you know, last year when there was so much initial tumultuous reality, right? If we put our minds back to the winter of 2025, there's a new president in the U.S. And most people in my life were just sort of watching stunned.

There's this fear, and it's only increased. We're recording this January 2026. And things are feeling very disorienting in the world.

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And it was interesting to me. I'm going to confess something that I found myself a bit baffled and saddened by, because what I found was I was talking to so many beautiful Christian people who were saying, I can't believe this is happening. This is shocking.

This shouldn't be happening in Canada. This shouldn't be happening in North America. And I'm going, we see a lot of seasons where God's people go through pretty long seasons where things aren't easy for them.

In fact, if we want to just sit in Habakkuk for a hot moment, we've got this man and he's sitting on the ramparts, and he looks to this ruling power to the south. And he goes, God, what is going to happen? This is terrifying. Yes.

And you remember what God says? God says, yeah, they're going to attack and you're going to fall and it's going to stink. But I'm still going to be God.

**Andrew Stirling:** I'm still God.

**Leanne Friesen:** And you know why this is happening? Because you have cried out for Me to act. And because we have been longing for justice. And this is part of the road to get there.

So, I was fascinated by this. It was like, I found so many Christians saying, have we read Scripture? You know, we watch these things happening and it's like, it shocks us to see that the stories of how God works can sometimes be very long. And sometimes we will be in seasons where we are not the people of power and we're not the people in privilege.

And it's very scary. And actually, Scripture has so much to offer this because what it offers to us is the fullness of the story. I see, you know, so I was often saying, I don't get people.

I'm like, you know, there's been Nebuchadnezzars before.

**Andrew Stirling:** Yeah, oh sure. Yes.

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And his idol, his idols on the plane of Jura were not nice idols, right? Yes, exactly.

**Leanne Friesen:** And there's been Nero's and there's been Pharaoh's.

**Andrew Stirling:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Leanne Friesen:** And you know what? They don't win. They don't win, is what Scripture tells us, right? And the fact that we don't remember them, and we don't know them and we know them, but you know, there's these distant memories and God's people are still here. Is a source of hope.

And so, to go back, I know you talked about job loss and all these uncertain outcomes. I think all of that speaks to that. And as you can see, I can get excited talking about it.

And so that's what I see. I see hope in the big story in God's constant picture of faithfulness throughout Scripture. And again, even in Lamentations, right? We don't know if the writer of Lamentations who's looking around and saying, this has been awful, did he live to see the exile end? It's a pretty good chance he didn't.

**Andrew Stirling:** Yeah. And not necessarily in his lifetime. And there are moments when you live in this in-between world, don't you? I mean, the word liminal is overused right now, I think.

But we live in this sort of in-between worlds, and you get even the promise, the offer of the promised land. I mean, some saw it, some didn't. You know, some generations made it, some didn't make it.

But they were still saved through the exodus. They were still saved to be able to go to the promised land. And so theologically, I think it's important to reflect on these things, Leanne.

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And I'm encouraged to hear you doing that. Because I think sometimes, we look at a political situation, we just look in a very narrow and broad terms. But there is a sense in which the Kingdom is still very much at work in our midst.

You serve, I'm talking about Kingdom, you serve the CPOQ and the mandate covers Quebec. And I'd like to talk a bit about that. Just simply because, and not just to single out Quebec, but to single out a trend.

How has the Baptist Church dealt with laicity, with Bill 9, and the restrictions regarding faith in the public square? It's certainly on the minds of many of my Christian friends. And I hear about it a lot. As I said, not only there, but also, in fact, as a trend.

**Leanne Friesen:** It's so interesting you bring that up. So, I should clarify that Canadian Baptists, there's four groups of Canadian Baptists across the country. They're partners.

There's not one over group above us. We work together. So, I'm Canadian Baptist of Ontario and Quebec.

We only have 19 churches in Quebec of our 300 churches. Most of the Quebec churches are part of the French Union. But of our churches in Quebec, usually there are non-French speaking churches, although not often English.

We have Ukrainian, Russian, Mandarin, Cantonese, Creole, Spanish, because, of course, Montreal, where most of the churches are, is a quite high population of new Canadians. And so, it's quite an honour to serve there. I think it's important for our listeners to remember there's a couple bills happening at the same time, both with the number nine in them.

And so, there's the bill in Quebec, which is actually out, more or less, outline is an extreme word, but more or less extremely limiting what Christians can do. So, you

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know, we see that, how we're seeing that in our churches is, you know, if they want to rebuild, so you can't build new church sites. If a church wants to rent a secular site.

So, for example, if you want to rent a school, a church is usually not allowed to rent that anymore. Even as we're planning events, we were talking about a Baptist gathering this summer and meeting in Montreal and realized it would be near impossible because if we wanted to have a gathering where we worship, there was just a lot of challenges to doing that. So, I'm very thankful for how both our French Union partners and the churches there are working to do that.

They have been doing some really intentional pushback on the government. They've actually filed like a countersuit. Basically, the equivalent of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada for Quebec has been in the midst of, I don't know if I'd say filed a countersuit, but they put a petition forward.

I'm not sure the exact wording there. And so, we're seeing this need to be continuing to come alongside them. And, you know, we're saying to people, we need to be learning from what Quebec's doing because this can be our reality.

We see Quebec as often sort of that little bit, a few years ahead of us in the depth of secularization. And then what's happened from that is there's not from that, but then there's been this other law at the same time, which is a national law, which is the new Hate Crimes Act. And then kind of connected to this, there's been a Black Quebec Qua member put in a recommendation to amend the new Hate Crimes Law to remove a piece of the Hate Crimes Law, which allowed you to appeal.

So, there's four ways you can appeal a Hate Crimes Law if you're convicted of the willful promotion of hate. One of those was you could argue something called the Good Faith Law, which was basically, I did this with good intentions for my religion. He wanted that removed, which it has been, and we'll go back to Parliament to debate.

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Now, where this has been a bit tricky in my role, and again, maybe I'm getting too detailed with this, is I do think people are conflating those. So those are two different bills. So, for the first with Quebec, we're trying to very much support our church out there and listen to them.

We're saying, tell us what's going on. We need to pray for you; support them in the ways they're trying to speak out and support our French union who are so actively engaged in this. And then for this other bill, which is different, being convicted of the willful promotion of hate is actually quite a high bar.

Canadians haven't done that since like the 90s. So, you'd have to be convicted of the willful promotion of hate. And I'm going to say something radical here, that I do think that if as Christians, we do something that currently under this definition would be described as the willful promotion of hate, I'd invite us to think about how we did that.

If you were actually saying something about your faith that was allowed you to be convicted of the willful promotion of hate, which is very extreme. Maybe we need to reconsider some of our language. But of course the fear is that this is a slippery slope.

That's what we want. The fear is the slippery slope that by removing this, we're seeing more and more the freedoms we might enjoy. We're not currently worried that Christians are running around going to get convicted of the willful promotion of hate and they'll need to say, I just was quoting the Bible.

We're not worried about that.

**Andrew Stirling:** This isn't Diocletian, right?

**Leanne Friesen:** Let's be careful. And I want to be clear that the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, which does a lot of work with government, has also said, don't panic.

But they are also saying, write your MP, name your concerns, that we do want to protect freedom of religion in Canada across the country. So, we need to be paying

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attention to what's happening. And we are encouraging our people to do as we've been encouraged to do, which is write your MP and say, we are concerned about this.

And friends, pay attention. Listen, notice, and hold on to hope. Because we also know that the church has thrived in seasons when it hasn't been in positions of power.

And God will continue to lead us whatever happens.

**Andrew Stirling:** Yeah. Time is coming along now.

And so, we've just got a few minutes left. But I do want to talk about the next generation and how best to share our faith with the young in our world. I'm never sure who the next generation is.

We use that phrase a lot. Sometimes I think it's much more heterogeneous than we realize. But in terms of the sharing of our faith, Leanne, have you got any sort of words of encouragement for Christians and churches out there in terms of engaging with the next generation? And what should we really be emphasizing when we do that?

**Leanne Friesen:** Well, I don't have any perfect answers.

You know, I'd love to be able to say to all the churches, because every church that I visit goes, how do we get more young people? So, I'm actually going to quote some of the young people I know who I think are the people we should listen to. We gather once a year as a family of churches for annual assembly. And this year, we asked four young adults to get up and share with us.

We had a panel with them. And a very similar question was asked of them. And you know, they all said, listen to us, take us seriously.

One person said, feed us. I still remember this one 19-year-old gentleman said, you know what, if you open your doors and you provide food, young people will show up. But you also had to be willing to listen.

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And you had to be willing to make space for people who may do things differently and who want to engage things differently. And so, I don't want to say this is some magic formula, because I'm sure there'd be some churches listening going, we brought food and we said they could come and they didn't. But you know what he was trying to say was, be a safe place to land.

And my advice to all my churches that I talk to, and again, I get this all the time, I do lots of consulting. So, you have to ask why you want young people in your church. And regrettably, Andrew, 90% of the time their answer is because we don't want our church to die.

So, when they're saying we want young people, they actually want the young people to come and save them. So, they want them to come and take over running the ministries because they're tired. They want them to come and give money.

They want them to come so they have a young church because they miss seeing little kids. And I say, you have to shift your language. Your desire has to be to share the hope of Christ with people.

**Andrew Stirling:** With them. Yes.

**Leanne Friesen:** The end.

That's your mission. Your mission isn't to save your congregation. And if you hold on to that mission, maybe they'll come and maybe they'll stay and maybe they'll take over the tea service.

I don't know. Maybe they won't. Maybe they'll end up at another church.

Maybe they'll do something in your church differently. So that's always my advice to ask yourself why you're asking the question. And if you start by saying, I need to be thinking about the question in terms of what it means that I hope another generation can experience the hope of Christ and love of Christ, as opposed to getting them in my building. I think that's a good starting place.

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**Andrew Stirling:** Yeah, totally agree. And I think that, you know, it's the difference between sort of having a survival mode and having a missional mode, isn't it? And I mean, that really is the difference.

And I know that, you know, I mean, colleagues and friends in ministry and other people I've interviewed, like Ross Lockhart in Vancouver, you know, has made the point that sometimes, you know, our catechesis, a development of young people, in fact, starves them because we don't really give them the substance that they need to be able to sort of live their lives themselves and develop their faith.

And, you know, that we still have very much a churchy model about where they're going to fit in, either in the present or the future, as opposed to really fostering the development of their own faith and their own experience.

Is there anything, Leanne, finally, that you want us to pray for you? As you know, every time I interview someone, ever since the very first, I've always asked that question, because I know that a lot of our listeners have been engaged now with what you've said, and they're inspired by what you said.

But they also, you know, know you have a hectic life, you have teenage children, you write, you're a scholar, you preach, you're a leader of an organization. What do you want us, as listeners, to pray for you?

**Leanne Friesen:** I get asked this question all the time, and I'm so grateful for it. You know, one time someone said, what question do you get asked the most as you're out visiting your church? I said, honestly, it's how can I pray for you, which is such a joy.

And I hope people, you keep asking your leaders that. And my answer is always, pray for wisdom, you know, and it sounds cliché. I always wish I had a more dramatic answer, but such wisdom is needed.

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And I've added, and pray for fortitude. You know, we want, I want to be able to continue my ministry for the long haul. And I guess that word to be able to, those sometimes go together, right? Sometimes fortitude requires wisdom, wisdom about when to let, when to walk away, when to, like Jesus did, right? When to say, this isn't my mission right now.

So that I can have the fortitude, because there's so many places that will pull you in different directions. So, wisdom and fortitude, I'd be grateful for whoever who may be listening and want to may add me to your prayer list. I would be so grateful.

**Andrew Stirling:** Wisdom and fortitude. What a wonderful way to end. And Leanne, on behalf of the Canadian Bible Society, I want to thank you for the time, for your candor, for your joy in the faith.

It's really been a great delight talking to you. And God bless you and give you wisdom and fortitude in abundance.

**Leanne Friesen:** Thank you for all you do.