



Season 14: Episode 4 | God's Book: The Series | Honest Conversations About Tough Topics

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 we have a special episode where I get to speak with three amazing young adults who are the hosts of our new eight-part group Bible study, which is called *God's Book: The Series*. So, before I introduce today's guests, let me tell you a little bit about the project that brought them all together. *God's Book: The Series*, is a new eight-part video series from the Canadian Bible Society that explores some of the biggest and most difficult questions people have about the Bible.

It's based on a book called *God's Book*, by Bible scholar Dr. Andrew Ollerton, and you may recognize his name because he also is part of *The Bible Course*. And so, this *God's Book: The Series*, covers topics like science, miracles, violence, slavery, justice, and even the end of the world. Every short video combines Andrew's teaching with honest conversation with these three Canadian young adult hosts.

And the series is designed to be watched in a group with discussion resources that help participants explore the questions together, share their perspectives, and really just reflect on what the Bible means in their lives. *God's Book*, was created with young adults in mind, but you don't necessarily need to be a young adult to engage with it. It's for anyone who has wrestled with these questions and wants to understand the Bible more deeply.

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So today I'm joined by these three young adults who host these conversations throughout the series.

First is Juanita. She's a Colombian-born creative based in Toronto.

With a background in advertising and photography, she works in social media content and strategy at Alpha Canada. Outside of work, she loves bringing ideas to life through visual storytelling, especially with her camera.

Quinten is from Ancaster, Ontario, and he has a background in Biblical studies, theology, and in non-profits.

He currently is working with Samaritan's Purse and Operation Christmas Child and serves as an editorial assistant with CBOQ. In his free time, he likes hiking with his fiancée and playing guitar.

Mikayla is a television producer, speaker, and podcaster based in the GTA, Greater Toronto area as well.

She came from York University's Glendon campus and she works across TV and media and does digital storytelling. Outside of work, she loves filmmaking, science fiction, and all things Doctor Who. So now that you've had a little intro, let's dive in and welcome these guests.

Joanna la Fleur: Welcome Mikayla, Quinten, Juanita. It is so good to be back together.

Gang's all back and I'm glad to have you here on the podcast.

Mikayla Nembhard: Thank you for having us.

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Joanna la Fleur: As a jump in, I really would love for listeners meeting you for the first time, could you introduce yourself? Like tell us a little bit about what your life looks like, maybe especially too if something has changed since we filmed this series together.

If there's maybe something you want to highlight that has changed. Who are you and where is your situation in life? We'll start, Mikayla, we'll start with you.

Mikayla Nembhard: Yeah, for sure.

Okay. So, it's always so funny when people ask me because I'm like, wait, what do I do? So, I'm a TV producer as well as a speaker and I'd say podcaster as well as like content creator. And for speaking, I speak to youth like Gen Z, like us and Gen Alpha, the ones coming up.

Yeah, that's a little bit about me. And I'm also located in Toronto.

Joanna la Fleur: Yay.

Quinten, what about you?

Quinten Shannon: I'm currently a grad student at McMaster Divinity College where I'm doing my Master of Arts in Christian Studies. I currently work for two different people. I work for the Samaritan's Purse, but in their Operation Christian Child Department.

So, I ship out all the materials for shoeboxes and the wonderful Christmas season of filling shoeboxes for kids across the globe. I'm also an editorial assistant for the Canadian Baptist Foundation in Quebec; it's a Christian denomination. And so that's kind of what's been going on in my life.

But then I also, what has changed since filming was, I recently got engaged to my lovely fiancée, Alison, so wedding planning is on.

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Joanna la Fleur: Well, I love this because in the series, you're talking, there's a point where we are, one of the episodes is called Paul and Sex. And so of course, we're talking about sex and dating and how we grapple with that today.

And like what's relevant about the New Testament Paul's view of sex today. And anyways, in that episode, as we're talking about dating, you reference your girlfriend, but now she's your fiancé.

Quinten Shannon: Yeh I did.

Joanna la Fleur: So good. Congrats.

And Juanita, what about you? Where do we find you? Introduce yourself.

Juanita Castro: Yeah, so I'm a creative with an advertising and photography background. I love taking photos, and you'll find me every time, mostly behind my camera. But I also work at Alpha Canada, and I am the social media coordinator.

So, I do content creation, digital campaigns, strategy. So yeah, I just love what I do, because it's a space for questions. And that's why even this series was so impactful to me, because at Alpha, that's what we do.

Like we encourage questions. And this series was a perfect fit for that.

Joanna la Fleur: So, I love this.

You know, you all were invited to jump into filming this series, *God's Book*. And we want to get a bit behind the scenes, like what are some of your memories of what that was like? Some of you have had more or less experience, you know, doing on camera stuff. It's a totally different world.

And what we kind of learned and had fun together through those shoot days. But before we get there, we just want to try and get to know your own stories a little bit. So, whoever wants to go first, I'd love to know if you could share a little bit about your

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own, you know, your own faith story, or like, what did faith look like in your life? But maybe how did you become a Christian? And where did that come from for you?

Quinten Shannon: I come from quite a large family.

There's 10 of us in my house. And my parents did the wonderful job of raising us in a Christian home. And so, I grew up in the church, going to church on Sundays, but church necessarily wasn't my favorite thing.

I did not enjoy my Sunday school. And I definitely did not enjoy youth group. And so, I grew up playing a lot of sports to play a lot of rep baseball and hockey.

And so, at every chance I had, I would choose that over my youth group or Sunday church. And yeah, I grew up in the church for still the very regular life. I had no friends that were Christians growing up, it was just very secular.

And so, when I was 16 or 17, right at the beginning of COVID. I don't know, something just hit me like a rock. And I just, you know, I felt like I had to make a decision about, you know, this thing that my family did of being a Christian.

Was it real? And was it going to be my life? And so, at the ripe old age of 16,17, I decided to do my research and to start looking to apologetics and look into, you know, what is the defense for the existence of Christ? And if God is real, I said to myself, then my whole life has to be oriented around that. And so, I, after a couple of months of reading through the Bible and doing my own reading of, you know, the defense of Christ's death and resurrection, I decided, okay, you know what, "Jesus, You are real." And so, my whole life needs to be oriented around that in light of that truth.

And so, I've been planning on going to McMaster University for commerce and, and to, you know, follow in the footsteps of my older siblings of just being a regular person. As much as there is anybody that is regular. But I really felt no sense of peace around going to that program.

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And I had asked a couple months prior to, you know, receiving that acceptance letter, my youth pastor to mentor me, because I forced myself to go to youth group. And it was maybe once or twice because it was COVID. And so, it was very sporadic.

But he began to mentor me, and we began to sit and talk about the Bible, talk about Scripture, and talk about life and what it all means. And through that, we came to the topic of, you know, higher education, university, what am I going to do? I told him, I don't really, I don't know, and I don't feel great sense of peace over all the decisions that are before me. And he said, well, you know, Tyndale University, they have this one-year certificate program and Christian studies, if you want to think about doing that for a year, and then maybe you can make up your mind after that.

And I said, you know what, okay, that sounds great. So, on a very big whim, I applied to Tyndale, and I got into the certificate program. And I said, okay, well, I'm moving to Toronto for a year.

I'm from Ancaster, which is about an hour and 15 hour and 20 minutes away from Tyndale. I knew absolutely nobody, I knew nothing about the program. And I was just like, let's go and do this.

And so, I went and then I talked to the financial advisor at Tyndale about, you know, getting OSAP. And they said, well, because you're in the certificate, you can't get OSAP. And I said, okay, what do I need to do? And they said, if you enroll in the four-year program, for your BA in Biblical studies, then we can process your application for the loan.

And then you can receive that. And then if you do the certificate courses, you can get certificate when you drop out after the first year. And I said, perfect, sounds like no problem.

And then I think it maybe took like a month and a half, two months into the into the program. And I just, I felt the Lord telling me that this is where I'm supposed to be. And I really grew to love what I was studying.

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And from that point onward, it became a kind of a rewriting of my life, everything I knew, and I thought and really learning about God and where my place is in the largely redemptive story of His kingdom. And you know, what my identity is in Him as His son and His child. And so, there's so many, you know, avenues I could go down with His faithfulness and how it, you know, just became manifold in my life.

But just time and time again, He kept showing up and time and time again, when I didn't know what I was going to do and didn't know how I was going to make it through, you know, this or that problem, He just showed up in such massive ways. And so, doors opened for me to have an internship at the church that I grew up in. And I served as a youth and young adults' intern for two summers there.

And then at Tyndale, I served as the, for some reason, the leader of preaching for the student led chapels. I don't know whose decision that was, but they asked me to do it. And I said, sure, why not.

And so, I did that. And from that point, I, you know, made some great friends at Tyndale, got to serve in some crazy, crazy ways and do all these exchange programs and really experienced the fullness of God's creation. And then I really got launched into what I'm doing now with Samaritan's Purse and even the CBOQ.

And I also pulpit supply for churches. And that was all by friends, all by the relationships that God put in my life, and just the faithfulness of them to ask me to step out into my comfort zone and try new things. And so now I work for Samaritan's Purse, I work for the CBOQ, and I also preach almost every Sunday.

I go to churches without pastors and lead them in worship. And so, I now have a network of about 15 churches across the GTA and the greater Hamilton area that I go and lead on Sundays and worship and learning. And so, it's a crazy, crazy way.

And yeah, my faith just wasn't always something, but ever since it became something, it's become my everything. So, yeah.

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Joanna la Fleur: Wow, that's awesome.

Well, and you're kind of asked; I'm kind of answering some of my questions within your answer, which I love too, because I'm thinking about like, how have some of your questions been answered along the way? Or, you know, these big questions we have, and we wrestle through, I mean, you've shared some of that, and even how like, some key people and community that came along the way for you in your own faith journey. Mikayla, what about you? When you think of your own sort of, where did Jesus enter your world? And, you know, how did that, how does that shape you to today?

Mikayla Nembhard: Oh, that's good. Well, funny enough, I grew up in church.

And like, so my parents were like, heavily involved in church. They were like leaders there. My dad was the MD; my mom was an elder.

And so like, I remember being at church constantly. I was always one of the ones that would stay back late, like with the PKs. And we would always like, get to know each other that way.

But I remember I would be at like church almost every day. There was always something. And I remember though, like, it was at 17, funny enough, like you, Quinten, where I realized I was like, you know what, I don't know if I actually believe.

Like I would hear the pastor, like preach on the pulpit, and it would go in one ear and right out the other. And I would doubt constantly. It was like, I was at war in my mind.

And when I tell you, I had enough of it. I was like, okay, God, like, I just need help. Like, help me to believe in You again, kind of thing.

And I remember telling my parents, they like sat me down. And they're like, Mikayla, like, just so you know, like these thoughts, they're normal. Because growing up, I always thought questioning God was like something you can't do.

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Like you cannot question God. God is all knowing, all power. Like, I was like, okay, like, oh, gosh, I can't do that.

But then they were like, no, everyone has questions, like, you're not alone, you're allowed to question with God. And because He wants you to wrestle with your faith with Him. Because that's what it is, it's about relationship, right? And so, I remember they were like, okay, so what you're going to do is you are going to go to the youth retreat.

And I was like, okay, I'll go to the youth retreat. And we'll see if anything happens there. But when I tell you I went there, and I went there determined.

I was like, God, like, if You are really real, like, show me. And I remember having like an actual physical experience with the Holy Spirit. And I was like, okay, okay, right then and there.

I was like, all right, Holy Spirit, I feel you. I know you're here with me. But then it's like, I had that moment, but then I was still struggling with doubt.

And I was like, God, like, but I had that moment with You. Why am I still struggling? And the thing is, that's just human life, right? We still have questions; we still have whatever. But walking with Jesus, it really truly helped me get back to Him and also know who He is personally.

I always say that He loved me back to faith. And it was just it was so clear. I was like, okay, Jesus, like You are with me because You say in Your Word and Your Word is true.

So, I will stand on that. And yes, doubts come every now and then. But like, I know Who to turn to, I know what to do.

Now I have the tools, like the tools were already with me, I just need to really like open up and read. But I yeah, it's been, I think, incredible, because when I do go and

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Speak with youth, and they're like, oh, Mikayla, like, I'm going through this. And I'm like, dude, like, I went through that, too.

Like, I can relate. Like, here's what I learned here, take some of these tools, take this resource, you know, and so it's been incredible that way. But yeah, I grew up in the faith, but like, kind of fell away from the faith, but I was always under God's, microscope, He always held me in His hands.

Like, I was never far away from Him. I was never, you know, just like, too far gone. He was always right there.

And so that's how my testimony had come about. But yeah, so it's beautiful.

Joanna la Fleur: Well, and I love that you were forced.

I have a similar story. We don't have time for but yeah, that I was forced onto a retreat to buy some loving parents and it made a big impact in my life. So, thanks to all the parents who forced their kids sometimes.

Good environment. Okay, Juanita, what about you? Tell us a little bit about your faith journey.

Juanita Castro: Yeah, so funny, because I feel Quinten's and Mikayla's story kind of have similarities to mine.

So forgot to mention, I was born in Colombia, I'm Colombian, and I moved to Toronto eight years ago. So, I was raised in a Christian household. My parents were very involved in the church.

But similar to Mikayla, I was just going and listening. And I just wanted to be there for like the games and the snacks.

As a kid, like I didn't really understand the verses or like who God was. So, I wasn't really engaging with the idea of a God, to be honest. And then we decided to move

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out of the country, and my family was going through a hard situation, like hardships and struggles.

And then we changed church and we ended up going to a smaller church that was just starting. And my parents were called to kind of help out to set like the foundations of that church as well. And so, the youth pastors came to me and asked if I wanted to volunteer at youth group.

And I was like, sure. But that time I was 13 or 14. I was like, I'm not sure what you want me to do.

Like I even I'm doubting a lot of things, but sure, I'll help out. And I was just volunteering every Friday night a youth group. And I was just welcoming the youth.

I was praying for them as well. That was wrestling with a lot of things about God, but just through volunteering that strengthened my faith so much. And I was able to see how God was working in the youth and how the youth was so keen to learn about God and about relationship and asking questions.

They were not afraid to ask questions. So, I think that really empowered me and strengthened my faith. And I was able to have that personal relationship with God finally.

And I remember the last months before moving here to Canada, it was like a really tough month. Obviously, we're just like selling our stuff. We didn't know where we're going.

We've never been to Canada before. And I remember I wake up super early in the morning and I'm in my bedroom and I just start praying because I was feeling very anxious about like the travel and all the logistics. And I just prayed, God, if You're with us and if You're coming with us to like Canada and that new season in our life, please show Yourself.

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I just want to feel You know you're here. And then I go back to bed, and I feel someone sits at the edge of my bed. Like physically, I feel that.

And I knew it was Jesus. I wasn't afraid. I was tempted to take a peek just to see Who was there.

But I didn't. I was like, I'm sure it's You. I didn't. I should have. But I was like at so much peace.

And I was convicted. I had such a conviction. It was like Jesus there.

Like, trust Me. And I'm sitting there like you don't have to see to believe kind of thing. So, I just felt so much peace.

And I remember I just like went back to bed and fell asleep with like a smile on my face. I was like, I know, Jesus, that was You on my bed and You're with us. And then long story short, we moved to Canada.

Then we join a church right away. I continue volunteering because I found community and I found my relationship with Jesus through volunteering as well. And so it was through the church, especially here in Canada, that I learned that I had creative skills and a creative talent.

And then I started doing photography without knowing anything at all. But the church was so welcoming. They taught me a lot of things on like the creative side of the church and ministry.

So, I fell in love with photography and the creative side of ministry. And yeah, and then the rest is history. But pretty much that's my story.

Joanna la Fleur: All right. So, where we all met was on the filming, you know, where these stories converge on the filming of this series, *God's Book*, the series is based on a book.

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There's these eight episodes, but they're big questions that people have with the Bible and have a hard time reconciling with the Bible. And I love that you guys all talked about questions, wrestling and coming to make some decisions. But some people coming around you as well, which is the point of a thing like *God's Book: The Series*, we're trying to offer those environments for people to come and ask questions and talk about it.

So, we got to go behind the scenes, though, because that's really what people love to hear about. Mikayla, can you set the tone of like what was like a film? You know, we had some film days in Hamilton where we were all outside and then we had some indoor film later. But take us behind the scenes.

What was like that typical filming day like? What did it look like behind the scenes?

Mikayla Nembhard: Yeah, for sure. So, I will set the scene.

So, when you guys watch the video, because the videos will be out by the time this podcast comes out. It was very cold. OK, I was freezing.

I remember freezing. We had to get the blanket and like warm up because it was just like in between takes. We're just like, OK, we got to warm up here.

Honestly, it was so fun. It was so fun getting to know Quinten and Juanita behind the scenes and catching up with you, Joanna, and like getting to know all the people.

Like it was incredible. And honestly, it was actually it felt so inviting, one. And it didn't feel hard.

Like I was, we're doing this for our people, our own generation. We're doing it for people who are just questioning no matter the age. And I was like, yeah, this is how I feel, too.

Like I thought I was just the only one that had these questions. But no, like this is literally for everyone. So great time.

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It was a great time backstage. What do you guys think? Like behind the scenes?

Juanita Castro: Yeah, I remember when we had to film with Andrew, that portion of the series, I personally was very nervous to be next to Andrew. He's like British.

He's like brilliant. He's like, you know, it was nerve wracking. He knows so much about the Bible.

And then I'm like, here, I don't know much like I can barely say a Bible verse in English because I really struggle with like, in English that aspect. So, I was like, I know you want me to give my perspective. So, I was feeling overwhelmed.

But I remember as soon as we walked in and said Andrew was so welcoming. He was just like talking to us asking about our lives. And then we were live with him, like he just broke the ice immediately.

And he prompted us to give our own thoughts and not always agree with him, which was great, or like question him as well on his arguments or his thoughts. So, it was like he set up like a very welcoming place and like a safe space to talk and yeah, it felt like just a time with friends just talking and pouring our thoughts about the Bible and God and all these things. So, it was a great time.

God's Book: The Series - Okay, before we return to today's conversation, that here's a clearer look at this exciting new series from the Canadian Bible Society, *God's Book: The Series*. What does the Bible really say about science, miracles, violence and suffering? *God's Book: The Series*, is tackling the Bible's toughest questions in a new eight-part video series created for young adults and others who are asking honest questions about the Bible. Featuring Bible scholar Dr. Andrew Ollerton and these three Canadian young adult hosts, *God's Book* explores some of the most challenging questions surrounding the Bible through thoughtful and accessible conversations.

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The series is launching soon, and you can be among the first to know when it arrives. Preview the trailer and download the free launch kit at godsbooktheseries.com. That's - Gods book the series . com

Joanna la Fleur: Yeah, Quinten, I'm curious about your impression's when he's joking about this intimidating, you know, this British guy, Doctor of Theology, all these academic degrees. I mean, I don't know if you want to continue pursuing education, but that's the kind of stream that you're in.

So, what was it like for you being on set? Did you guys have chats behind the scenes? Were you bantering about other theological issues at lunchtime during the break? So, what was that like for you?

Quinten Shannon: It was cool. Okay. Reading over the script before like filming, I was like, oh, this is awesome.

Like someone's answering these questions that I've like, had to write papers about all throughout my degrees. It was like, this is like being made accessible. And I think that is like, something I really love about Christian education is when you have people rise up in generations to make understanding the Bible accessible.

And so, it was really cool to just get there, get to sit there with Andrew and listen to it and hear him do it. But yeah, it was great. And like, there were some things that you know, I had different views with him.

And we talked and like, not major things, but you know, he'd ask my opinions. What do you think? Like behind the scenes? And I was like, well, it's funny you're asking me what I think. I don't know if what I think really matters.

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But here you go. And so, it was awesome. And like we spent after I think it was after the first day of filming in Toronto, when we all had dinner together, him and I talked about everything and anything foreign in between from Scripture to, you know, ecclesial and church structure and how people are, you know, hearing the Word, who's hearing the Word, how young men are coming back to faith.

And it was this massive, long conversation. And you know, I can probably remember only, you know, 10% of what we actually talked about. But it was just so great to get to be with someone who's so down to earth and who is so focused on making Scripture accessible, making knowing God accessible.

And so, it was great to just be a part of that and to get to know him through that. And to, you know, if this video had come out, however many years ago, call it seven years, seven, eight years now, when I was trying to answer all these questions by myself and in my bedroom, you know, it would have been a lot easier than scouring the internet and going from YouTube video to YouTube video and reading the backs of all these books and trying to figure out is this one going to answer my question? Is this one going to answer my question? So, I think it's just such a wonderful and great blessing that it is to have been a part of something like this. And so, I've spoken in front of hundreds of people and more times than I can count, I've had to public speak, but being on camera is not something that I'm used to.

And so that was a very interesting endeavor.

Joanna la Fleur: And well, and the outfits, Quinten, come on. I remember like, I was joking, we got this guy on set, and we're asking him to bring, this is, you know, maybe gender stereotyping, but you, you know, you looked great.

Everybody looked great. But you had, you know, we had to have all these outfit changes. And everyone's trying to figure out what to wear, or what did we wear when we shot this the last time? And was that stressful? That part of thinking like, hair? Oh,

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you know, your hair's flapping in the wind outside, or it's about to rain, you know, that side of things. Does anybody remember that part?

Quinten Shannon: I think for me, it was fairly easy. I went very methodical toward approaching this. And I got my parents to lay out all my clothes on the kitchen table.

And I said, all right, we need what was like seven outfits, or eight outfits. And I was like, we're going to set all these and take a picture of them. And then everything in the bag.

And my hair in the film was much shorter. So, I didn't really have to worry about that. Because it was nice and nice and tight to my head.

I don't have the same issue of long hair that Mikayla and Juanita have. It's a stressful night before the first shoot. I don't know what this outfit is.

I don't know if it matches. But yeah.

Joanna la Fleur: Now, Juanita, I'm thinking of you. I think the bravery it takes to be on camera in in general, but now you're doing it in what isn't your first language. And it's not your own words.

In some cases, it is, but in some cases, it was scripted. Was there anything that you're like, oh, no, how do I say this word? Or I couldn't I had to do that take 17 times because I couldn't get it. I mean, not that it was just on you.

We all had we all had those moments. But do you have any memory of that of that part of it?

Juanita Castro: Oh, yes. I remember when we're back to Mikayla, I remember the night before we filmed.

We were like going through our lines. And many times, I was like, what's this word? Or how do you pronounce it? And Mikayla was so graceful with me. She was like, Yeah, like this.

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And like we're practicing together. I remember you Jo as well. We're like, can you like, pronounce it like this? Or I remember I had to say like, can't like can't not.

But the way I kept saying it sounds like can't and you kept saying like, let's change it to cannot. So, it sounds like it's negative. So, it's like, so fair.

So, I had to be very mindful, but like my pronunciation, like kind of accentuate and like move my mouth like bigger, which was a great practice for me as well. Because sometimes I just speak super-fast. And yeah, maybe like my accent comes out and but nothing to be ashamed of.

But I learned so much even about like, about like how to pronounce things. And like, all the team was so graceful with me, even Sherbert, like everyone was so helpful as well how to like to say the right stuff.

Mikayla Nembhard: I remember Juanita you said, was it literal? Literal? It was the one where she was like, how do you say literally?

Juanita Castro: Yes, yes.

I was like, literal, literal, literal. I was trying so much, and I just kept laughing because it sounds like I was saying litter. So yeah, but now I know literally now I can say it.

Joanna la Fleur: And what I love about that too, is like, I think each of you represent some of our people who are going to be watching, you know, not everyone who's watching, you know, I'm joking, we're teasing you about this, not everyone who's going to watch the series, it's English isn't their first language, some people who English is their first language, they're going to have subtitles on everything no matter what. So, like, that's just how it is.

But I love that each of you come from a different place. I think, Mikayla, when I bounce over to you, you've had tons of experience in your own world of like production and behind the scenes. But there were a few moments, I remember you kind of having like an aha about the learning itself.

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Like, I don't know if you remember it. I don't want to prompt you with things if you don't remember them, because I'm thinking of them. Where you're like, I've never heard it explained that way before.

Like there were some big heavy topics. And you're like, I've wondered about that. And Andrew, Dr. Andrew Ollerton is like, maybe giving you like a new nugget to take away.

Do you remember any of that? Because I remember you on set being like, oh, about a couple things.

Mikayla Nembhard: Yes, shout out Dr. Andrew, by the way. He's incredible.

But I remember there's like a couple things. There was one about the science and creation, how like it's literally together, like God created science too. Like it's not something that we kind of came up with.

But it was that it was also about race and like, and especially even about specifically slavery. And like, God did not want that. That was not intended like that.

I was like, just I don't know why. But for like, just me hearing that I was like, yeah, no, He didn't want that, you know. And I know it can be kind of elementary when you think about it.

But like, it just it resonated with me. And it like has stuck with me. And like, even when I talked to my friends about it, like, I'm just like, yeah, no, God did not intend for that. That's people. That's us. That's humans, you know.

So yeah, I would say those types of nuggets, for sure.

Joanna la Fleur: Well, and you know, I think when we think about the series as a whole, like the Bible, why we want to make the series is because the Bible can feel it's this whole podcast is called Scripture Untangled. We're trying to untangle Scripture because it can be confusing.

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It can feel controversial. It can be intimidating. Some people would say it even feels dangerous, some of this stuff.

And so why do you think a series like this, these big topics? What do you think is needed about that right now? Or like, what's the need that it's going to meet?

Quinten Shannon: I feel like I could probably talk like an hour about this. But yeah, I think like for so long, like Biblical education has primarily just been from pulpits. And there's now and with the technological age, there's just like a massive wealth of content that has been put out trying to answer these questions.

And, you know, some people do well, some people don't do it well. And there's a lot of, you know, discernment and deciphering that has to go on between, okay, you know, God is this Biblically true? Is this sound? Is this good teaching? Is this, you know, fruitful for my life and for following You? And I think, you know, with Andrew and his background, his education, and you know, his reputation, he is a reputable, trustworthy, you know, above approach man that has taught so many people about the Word of God. And so it's, you know, speaking right into the generation of questions of kids who aren't afraid to ask questions themselves, and don't want to bypass, you know, the hard stuff, don't want the nice, you know, Sunday morning answer of, you know, this or that, but want the uncomfortable discussion, they want to, you know, argue with you and talk back.

And so, like, I think this resource would just be such a great, you know, sounding board for those discussions to then flourish within whatever community they're within. And it's coming from a trustworthy place and doctrine of theology, and it's all packaged together with all the episodes on, you know, what truly are seven of the Bible's toughest topics. So yeah.

Joanna la Fleur: Mikayla, I know you're working with youth and traveling across the country, connecting with youth and youth pastors and leaders. Do you think that churches are making enough space right now? Is there space in churches for people

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to ask these questions? What do you think people could do? What do you think the church could do better? I'm not here to just tear down the church, but I mean, you see people all over, like, what do you wish? Like, if we could have more places for questions?

Mikayla Nembhard: I think that's so good. One, I know I can't speak for all the churches, but I'd say, specifically, like, I remember talking about this, but just letting Gen Z's and Gen Alpha to have a seat at the table, you know, one, but also to not be for the church to not be afraid of those questions coming in.

They're not trying to come at you or try to go against authority, whatever. Like they literally genuinely want the answers. They want the truth.

Like what is God saying? Because as Quinten was saying, we're in such an information age and there's a lot of content, especially online, that people are saying different things out of the side of the mouth and people just want the clarity. So just having space for Gen Z to just ask the questions that they want, even though it may be uncomfortable for you, or you may not even know the correct answer. But just allowing space for that to happen, you know, and if you don't know the answer, maybe grab another trusted leader, stuff like that, like another like a church leader and bringing it to them or even like resources. Like I know, Wesley Huff is really, really great.

Love him. Um, but yeah, just, I would say creating space, allowing the youth to speak and not being afraid of their questions. Cause I think they're really brilliant.

And also, they just want to learn, let them learn about the truth of Jesus. Like, yeah, this is amazing.

Joanna la Fleur: Well, and I think all of you talked in sharing your, a bit of your own story.

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We got a glimpse into it. I couldn't tell all of it today, but like that people gave space to you to wrestle, ask questions. Juanita, you know, when you think of that in your own community, what does it look like? Is there anyone you want to give a shout out to like people who gave you the space for questions? I mean, you work with Alpha, that's all about asking questions as well and giving space for that.

But what is the meaning in your life of like the people who let you ask the questions?

Quinten Shannon: Wow. That's such a great question. Um, I will say it has started with my parents, my family.

Cause again, asking questions can feel intimidating and you don't know where to bring them. So that's like the natural response. From a family perspective, going to a trusted adult in your life or in your household and just asking the same way, like you ask, how can I ride a bike or how do I cook or like teach me these things? I feel my parents have been that source mainly because they come with a baggage.

They come with knowledge, of course. They're not perfect, but they have that as well foundation and that knowledge. Um, and I'm not afraid to bring these questions to them and, uh, just ask about like, why is there like suffering in the world?

Or sometimes I ask myself like, this person is such a good person. So, kind, God fearing, but it's going through so much suffering. Like why is God allowing all these things?

And so, we just have like these conversations around the table with my parents. Um, and if they cannot respond to my questions, like they will send sermons to me or they prompt me to like, go to my church leader and ask this questions.

But it has been a great exercise because I have a younger sister, she's 14. And she's also going through that same season that I went through of like questioning a lot of things, especially in this digital age. Like we have been talking about especially gen

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alpha are so invested in knowing the truth and questioning and finding answers online.

So just having these conversations with my family and allowing my sister to have that same space to ask and don't be afraid. And I'll always tell her like, don't be ashamed if you're doubting God, or if you're struggling with like prayer, or questioning things like that's normal, just like bring them up. And just know that there's so many things and resources and people who can help you out.

Joanna la Fleur: Yeah, it's so good. I mean, this series is covering things like science, sex, violence, slavery, suffering miracles, how to even read the Bible as a cohesive book. I mean, I love that like, Dr. Andrew, he jumps in with the book.

And then we made this video, this series to complement it. And he didn't like step away from some of these big topics. But do you have one that you think is going to have like, out of that whole list? Is there one that when you think of your peer group, one that maybe comes up the most or there's like, if you have an episode that like that one's going to be the biggest discussion around the room kind of a thing.

I don't know if any of you have "it's going to be this episode on this topic."

Mikayla Nembhard: I don't think so, they're all good. Yeah.

Quinten Shannon: Everyone's going to have something to say for everyone, I think.

Mikayla Nembhard: Absolutely. Goodness, I'm not even sure.

Like, I think I would have questions for each of them. And I feel like there's so many takeaways that you can get from all the conversations that we'll be having. And so, like, personally, it was definitely the race one.

It was the science one. And I can't remember the other one. Oh, my goodness. I can't remember what it was.

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But it was like, just things like that. I think there's just so many nuggets. And I just want to say, for the people that are going to be watching, have that pen and pad.

I'm so serious. Because I know there'll be questions that you all even have and like, oh, wait, what does this mean? Like, what does you know, so I think just having those notes would be perfect for you. Okay, that's what I'll say there.

Joanna la Fleur: And Quinten, what do you think about this idea of well, to even a prerequisite for this series, to even watch this series, I have to believe the Bible already. Like, do you think people can jump into this, join this conversation before they believe in the Bible? Or, you know, what if people believe differently around the room and have different perspectives, like you said, even behind the scenes, you and Andrew are, you know, bantering about different theological perspectives? What would you say to that? Like, do you have to believe everything or agree to everything to be in the conversation?

Quinten Shannon: I definitely don't think you do. I think, like the wonderful thing is that there's a theologian that says, we should as Biblical educators, they should be able to dive into the depths and the deep sea of theology and be able to bring it back up to the surface to feed the people.

And so, I think Andrew does a great job with that. And I think for people that have been Christians for a long time, people that have been in the church for, you know, decades upon decades, this would be a great resource to, you know, solidify and to remind themselves of what the Bible teaches and to learn new things. Because, you know, like my parents, my dad always says, he says, "I've been a Christian for one year, 30 times."

But every year, it feels like he's restarting learning new things and going over and over and over again. And I think that's, you know, true of us all is that, you know, there's always a season of growth and a season of renewal when we're following God. But I think the great thing about this resource, too, is that, you know, Andrew does

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such a great job putting forward, you know, the different views of how people interpret Scripture, that if you have no belief or faith in Christ, that you can come to this and, you know, just hear for the first time and hear and see for yourself what it is that you want to learn about and that what the Bible has to say about these topics.

So, I think it's great for seekers. It's great for people who are new to Christianity. And it's great for people who have been, you know, long steadfast Christians for most of their life.

Joanna la Fleur: I want you each to answer this question. And we can like finish the sentence. And it's about your hopes are like what you would think of when you think of the people who are going to check out this resource.

I hope people leave this series, knowing this or believing this. What do you hope for people leaving this series?

Quinten Shannon: I think my hope is for people to see the heart of God. Yeah, I preached yesterday morning on Matthew 11:25-30, where, you know, Jesus gives an invitation, come on to Me, you who are weary and burdened, and I'll give you rest, take My yoke upon you for this. My yoke is easy; My burden is light.

And it's Dane Ortlund has a book, *Gentle and Lonely*, where he makes a comment that this is the only time within all Scripture, that Christ Himself and God Himself tells us what His heart looks like, and how you know, His disposition towards people. And so, to the people with questions to the people with doubts. Christ's heart is, He's humble, and low, and He's gentle, and He's accessible, He's approachable.

And I think that this resource is great for, you know, exhibiting the heart of Christ and the heart of God towards people that are wondering and worried and all the wonderful things in between.

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Juanita Castro: Yeah, I hope they live just feeling encouraged to bring anything that they're feeling and that they feel welcomed in a space where they can just bring whatever they have in their minds.

I hope that they can also leave feeling open that they can just be open about their thoughts, and that God is not afraid of their questions. And on the contrary, God loves questions. And that's how He wants to build relationship by being open and just coming to Him as we are.

Mikayla Nembhard: Man, I'm going to try my best because Juanita and Quinten are amazing. I love their answers. But I pray that my hope is that when people leave and come away with the things that they have taken, that they feel a little less alone, a little less alone in that the questionings that they have, or even the doubts that they have is, is normal.

We're human. This is what happens. This is what we do.

Like we always question. And God is not afraid of our questions. We are to wrestle it with Him.

And that, yeah, you feel encouraged that you feel poured into or even just like, okay, I can continue on with this journey. Like at this, I have God by my side, like Jesus is with me, and I can keep diving deep.

Joanna la Fleur: That's good.

God's Book: The Series, we're excited to get it in front of people. I love too that people can check it out. You know, the trailer, we've got episode four for people to check out even before the whole thing releases.

And so, depending on when people are listening to this, it might have released or might be about to release so they can check it out. And yeah, we're just trying to help people untangle Scripture. And I love that you guys have set the table for people to ask questions.

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And to make that normal, make questions normal, and wrestle that through together and not have to agree on everything. But bring your real normal self to the table. So, Mikayla, Quinten, Juanita, it's so fun to do this with you.

It was so fun to film with you. And I'm sure there's more to come. We all just got to get together and eat some pizza or something soon.

But thank you so much. And we'll see you on the other side of the release.

Thank you.