

Percolating on Faith | Faith and Doubt | Pt1

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Faith and doubt, spiritual growth, theological questions, Christian community, inherited faith, searching faith, easy faith, faith crisis, certainty crisis, questions, faith journey, community acceptance.

SPEAKERS

Tony Chvala-Smith, Charmaine Chvala-Smith, Blake Smith

Blake Smith 00:08

Hey everybody, welcome to Faith Unfiltered Podcast. Today we're going to be talking about percolating on faith. The Percolating on Faith series is where curiosity, theology and spiritual growth brew together. I'm your host, Blake Smith, I'm here today, and I am very excited to be with two wise and knowledgeable folks in this area and also very dear friends of mine, Tony and Charmaine Chvala-Smith. Welcome guys. It's great to be with you.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 00:38

Good to be with you.

Tony Chvala-Smith 00:39

Thanks, Blake, always good to be with you.

Blake Smith 00:41

So, Tony and Charmaine and I were at a reunion earlier this summer together, and were having some conversations with folks, and the issue of faith and doubt came up several times, not only at that reunion, but for reunions for me throughout the summer, and we decided it might be timely for us to have a conversation about that. So, we're having this conversation because of those encounters, and it really includes a couple of different groups of people, I think, and maybe Tony and Charmaine might have a different perspective on this, but part of that is that we've got a group of folks who are struggling with questions of faith and doubt and wondering if that's okay in their spiritual journey. And then we have other folks who are already self-identifying as either atheist or agnostic and wondering if they still have a place in Christian community. They're not ready to give up everything in terms of their experiences in their community, but they're really already, again, self-identifying as being non-believers in one way or the other. So those are the kinds of things we're going to talk about today. And what it ultimately boils down to is what happens when you find yourself in a place theologically, that's different from where you started? And with that, I'm going to turn it over to Tony and Charmaine to get us going.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 02:07

I think we'll begin by just talking to those who have struggled with, 'What is happening to me? I used to believe this, and now I can't, and maybe I've got some new beliefs. But does that make me unfaithful to what I started with? What does God think of me? Ooh, what does the church think of me? Is there space for me in my, with my particular set of beliefs or not beliefs right now?' So, we're just going to I'm going to start with just a few terms that I think might be helpful for people to kind of self-identify. Is this part of your experience? So, I'm going to start just with the idea of faith and doubt. So, too often, I think we tend to think of these as opposites, right? Yeah, and we can use scriptures to do that. You know, doubt is the wavering with all, you know, with any wind that comes by and all that,

Tony Chvala-Smith 03:14

That's the book of James, by the way, thank you.

Blake Smith 03:18

Just to give an example,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 03:20

Keep you around for the Bible references, but our experience has been that faith and doubt work together. They need each other, because unless there's an openness to new information or experience, which often means we have to re-evaluate what we started with, we won't grow in our own faith, and we'll just be inheritors of other people's faith, the ones that we've been, that we've received. So, doubt, well, I'll get a little bit more into defining these. So, we don't, we don't just believe, or shouldn't just believe, because somebody told us to, right? And, but that's where we all start. We all start by someone telling us what faith is, what it means to believe. But that doesn't make it...

Blake Smith 04:21

Give me that old time religion, right?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 04:24

We start there, but who stays there? Right? Maybe there is a portion of the population that stays there, and that's really important to them, because it's, it's the one sure thing in their life. But for most of us, I think if, if we're doing that, if we're just staying there, we're not, we don't have our own faith. We just have a borrowed faith in, I said inheriting earlier. We're letting somebody else determine what faith is going to be for us. And so, there's I'll start with a what is faith in, in God or relationship with God? What isn't it? Well, faith in God is different from faith in the ones who told us about God. And faith is different from the things that they told us about God. And faith is different from what our relationship with God is, different from faith in the church or the Church's teachings. And I think that's really important, because faith is a pretty individual thing, and we can claim that. It's our journey, it's our encounters with God, or God's encountering us. It's going to shape us in a particular way. Our faith is something we hold and can grow and can value in ways that we might not if we've just inherited it. So, I think it might be helpful to distinguish between a searching faith and an easy faith. So, a searching faith has to ask questions, right? Typically, it's asking questions because it wants to go deeper. It wants to know more. It wants to understand. It wants to ask the how and the why. And maybe, maybe we have to entertain the idea that the people who came before us didn't know everything. Or maybe we have to entertain the idea that some people who came before us knew way more than we thought. I mean, we should maybe

incorporate some of what they thought into our lives. So, this is all about asking questions. It lets us go to more meaningful places. It makes us curious.

Blake Smith 06:54

You make me think of something. I was having a conversation with someone not too long ago, and something they had realized about their own faith -- I just wondering if, if this plays into that as well. And what the person was telling me was that he had realized that the things that he had learned, he had learned at an early age, and if he's at an early age, his parents, who were teaching them, were also, quite honestly, at an early age, who hadn't really, maybe worked through their own process, had not found the permission to have that doubt and question. They were working on what their parents had taught them, who were probably also at an early age. So, we continue to perpetuate that and the passing on of some of those things then has maybe not been worked through.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 07:47

Wow, that's a, that was a very good insight on their part. And, you know, I say this often, but what we learn first we learn best because it, it's, it's taking up new space in us, and so it's there and, and sometimes unlearning it or letting go of some pieces. Maybe letting go is okay, is easy, but feeling disloyal about letting go of that can really be a huge barrier, and sometimes it's more a fear that's internalized than it is a realized fear. Sometimes it is a realized fear, and people will tell you that.

Tony Chvala-Smith 08:31

And what we learn first, for example, kids in pre-baptismal classes, what we learn first creates a kind of framework in us that we then use to experience the world further. But, you know, frameworks are both rigid and fragile at the same time. And so, that's, that's why, when people begin to have challenging things posed against their framework, it can be really difficult for them.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 08:59

Right, right. And, and also, when children learn things, people tend to make the ideas simpler, more streamlined. Sometimes, I think we under underestimate what kids, the nuances that kids can understand, but necessarily, because they haven't got a lot of life experience, we tend to give them the simplified version of faith and knowing, knowing well that there's some nuances here, but not being able to put it all on kids at one time. And so, so as we start thinking about this, as we get older, those earlier definitions and those earlier beliefs, they, they might not be stretchy enough to meet us in the realities of where we are now. And so, see, that means, that seems very logical, right? That the things that we learned when we were youngest are a taste of something, but not the whole meal. And so, I think that's an interesting way to think about this whole question of doubt and questioning and the faith crisis, crises that may occur because of that. It's a natural process, but we may not have, you've used the word permission a couple times already, and I think it's so important that we give ourselves and each other permission to keep growing, to keep looking broader, to what does this all mean, what does this following Jesus look like, feel like? What fits now that maybe didn't fit before. What was, what was too two dimensional? You know, now we've got these other ways. So, that's really, that whole thing about permission and grace in community especially, I think is really important.

Tony Chvala-Smith 11:06

And this may be a good moment to make a distinction, because here's a problem in lots of American Christianity, and that is that faith is confused with a type of knowledge, right? It's confused with the content. And it's understandable, because you, whether you're a kid in pre baptismal class or some an adult joining a church, whatever, you learn stuff, right? You learn "the" faith.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 11:35

Kind of like a list of beliefs.,

Tony Chvala-Smith 11:37

Right. List of beliefs and practices and hit church history and all that. And that's important, right? It's important, but you have to learn how to distinguish that from faith as "trust in," right? And so, the now, pardon me for going on medieval on us here, but the Medieval Latin feel, Latin speaking theologians had a way to distinguish this, and they made a distinction between *fides quae creditur*, the faith which is believed, and *fides qua creditur*, the faith by which it is believed, right? The second being the act of personal trust that one places towards, in this case, God, implicitly towards the church, because the church is teaching you, but really, ultimately, faith is trust. It's not knowledge, and it's not certainty, and that's part, that's one of the constant pastoral problems is that people confuse faith with certain knowledge. I think that's really difficult. And so sometimes, what, what we call faith crisis, in many cases, actually turns out to be a certainty crisis, right? So that's different. So...

Blake Smith 12:51

Yeah, I think that's really helpful, and it certainly makes it understandable why, why faith is so difficult when you're looking for certainty to live in that, I mean, we live in a world where there's a lot of unknowns, so we like knowledge, so that's helpful.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 12:52

Yeah, yeah. It's, I think that's a good distinction to be making that certainty piece, because maybe at some level, everybody wants some certainty.

Blake Smith 13:27

I know I do. I have many times I'd like some certainty this morning.

Tony Chvala-Smith 13:33

But even, even the greatest of certainties has an element of trustfulness in it, right? Has an element of trust in it, and that's really quite important to, to keep in mind. So, faith, certainly, faith in the New Testament is most of the time it's trust. So, *trust in*.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 13:51

Apologies for the Bings coming up.

Tony Chvala-Smith 13:55

My computer is dinging us with stuff that I believe I just shut off, but it's still dinging us so I don't ...

Blake Smith 14:01

Well, maybe it's trying to answer the questions for you, Tony.

Tony Chvala-Smith 14:06

AI is stepping in to solve all of our problems here, right?

Blake Smith 14:09

A little AI certainty.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 14:14

So, you know, there's another distinction that might be helpful, and that is the distinction between questioning and doubt. So, questioning, here at least, I'm, I'm kind of framing this as a desire to go deeper. Curiosity. Asking the hows, the whys and maybe even the what's relevant for now. But then there's doubt, and I would say with doubt as well, it's really, really important. And it's kind of around things we've just been saying doubt comes because what has been passed on -- the faith that we learned, maybe at that young age, or maybe our first encounters with it in a real way -- that it doesn't measure up, or that it's too simplistic, or that it's just wrong. So, doubt is a really important player here, because it allows us to imagine that faith can be different. It can be bigger. It can include the complexities of life. So, so one of the things that we hear a lot from our students, but we hear from other people too, is the idea that if you do everything right, if you are good, you do everything right, and, but I do start to notice that it's like, it's parents and teachers and like Sunday school teachers, and the society that kind of says if you do things right, then your life will be comfortable and successful, you'll be successful, right? I mean, you hear that if you do everything, right, God will protect you and you will be safe, right? I mean, that's implied, if you follow all the rules, who's making the rules, but if you follow all the rules, and if you're good, and probably if you're a woman, if you're nice, which is like one of those rules, then God will take care of you and you won't have any challenges, and it'd be good.

Tony Chvala-Smith 16:26

And now I'm feeling judged as a professor who says, if you follow the rubric and write the paper this way, you will get good grades. If you do not, you will get bad grades.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 16:35

And part of the problem is that these different parts of our lives will have a tendency to not just say, well, this is a rule that if you do the right things, you'll probably, you know, do okay. We imply that this is what God requires as well, that we keep this rule and this rule and this rule. Well, it doesn't take very much life experience. You know, you see a good person at church who is dying of, in an agonizing way, and, and there's nothing anybody can do, and they've been prayed for, and, and they die. I mean, you need to ask questions about that beginning belief if you're going to have any room for belief, because otherwise it's like, well, they lied, and God doesn't take care of people, right? So why should I invest in this? So, but the other way is to say, Hmm, I wonder if there's another way of looking at this. And so doubt lets us do that, and then we start saying, oh, wait a minute. Hmm, Jesus did all the right things. His life didn't turn out easy. His disciples' [life] didn't turn out easy. Maybe this isn't a good characterization of what God wants. And then maybe we might go to a place where we say, oh, you know, maybe what God wants is a relationship with us and wants to be with us in those difficult times in life, rather than making sure we never have them. So, you know, doubt lets us go to a different place and lets us grow with God and let, instead of letting the failures of our earlier theology get in the way.

Tony Chvala-Smith 18:30

You know, sometimes over the years, Charmaine and I will hear from church people we don't want our kids taking any religion classes or seminary classes, because it'll just make them doubt. And it's like my response to that is, dude, you don't need a single seminary class or religion class to make you doubt. You need one, one bad call from the emergency room, right? You may, you may take zero classes in theology and, and one, one devastating call from the emergency room is, is the experience that that may provoke deep sense of doubt and loss of faith, so...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 19:04

Right. Right. And so, there are understandings of deity that ought to be doubted, right, that that are worthy of being doubted. And so, that's, that's, that's, that's a place where doubt becomes an expression of the search for truth and depth and understanding, and actually becomes a pathway to a deeper, richer kind of faith, I think.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 19:04

Yeah, I, absolutely. And, and this is, this is hard, but actually this is, the church is a place where this ought to be able to happen, right? You know, so, examples, let me talk to examples of New Testament, quickly, the resurrection sequence in the Gospel of John, where Thomas is not there at the first, and Thomas hears what they say, and he says, Unless I put my hand in his side and see the print of his nose, I will never believe. And then he's there within the next, next week when Jesus shows up again. Oh, how good of the disciples not to say, Get out of here, you doubter, because then Thomas wouldn't have been there. In other words, they this was so weird and so different. They're like, whatever. Stay with us, right? And so. And then at the end of Matthew's Gospel, when the risen Jesus appears to the 11 disciples on the mountain in Galilee, it says, it says, the text says, Then, and they believed in him, and some doubted. It's like...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 19:04

Yeah, and so if you let, if you stick with doubt, but also take the other pieces, you know that people are believing in something that's real there, it's really matters to a lot of people. So, let's see what I can do with, and this is one of those places where giving permission more than permission, giving people a way, a path where they can deal with some of the difficult theological questions. There's another thing that's really, we hear it a lot, and often not from our students, but all generations, the idea that everything happens for a reason. So again, this is a way of trying to bring comfort and idea that somehow God is involved in everything, and so we don't have to be distressed. But the problem with that is that it implies that everything happens is God's will. And when you start seeing and, or you start naming the things in your own life that are happening, when you know, when you see child abuse, when you see people's lives ruined by war, when you see people marginalized by social systems, and you start asking, Is God the author of all of these things? If so, do I want to have anything to do with this kind of a God? So, you know, doubting takes us that next step of saying that idea that everything happens for a reason, I don't think, I don't think I can live by that one. I don't think that's big enough and but that's a hard one because it has its own kind of comfort, its own kind of security, that confidence that comes with it, that that the world seems too big and too many things are happening and I have no

control over it. So, maybe I can say God has control over or has made it all the way it is, and I'm just supposed to find a lesson in it. But then it's, then it's, what is it saying about the character of God?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 19:12

So rather than questioning being a bad thing, it can be the positive response to the shaking loose of some of these ideas that don't fit, and moving to a better place or a deeper understanding.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 19:36

It's to a loving God, you know, to a God who understands the struggles in our lives and the injustices.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 19:36

But, but they all took, they all responded to the call.

Tony Chvala-Smith 19:36

Right, right, right. And so, Jesus did not, Jesus did not separate the doubters out and send them to doubt camp or something like that, right? So, in other words, even in the New Testament, there you can see places where the in, in in the fellowship of disciples, of community disciples, there's room, there's room for various stages of faith and understanding.

Blake Smith 19:36

So we don't need to send people to conversion therapy camp. They'll, they're,

Tony Chvala-Smith 19:36

No, we don't. That would be wrong. I would be highly against that.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 19:36

But we should definitely embrace them and ... [absolutely] help them know that they're on a really important journey and that this is the part. Why do we keep this so quiet that most of the people around them have been on this journey in one form or another? If, if the people around them don't believe the things they look, all the things they learned as a child in Sunday school, or if they've added new beliefs to that, then they need to be telling people, and especially those who are who are new in their journey, especially those who are really wanting to go deeper. Yeah, because it's a scary place when you have no when you have no road signs, and you don't know if you can stay on this path, or if others have stayed on this path, and if we're not talking about it, then, then the self-judgment, because we're displeasing or disappointing those early teachers. And it's again, this is mostly in our own heads, because probably those early teachers, if they're still alive, think a whole lot different than what they taught us when we were, whatever age we were when we started. But we don't say that enough. We don't let each other know. Yeah, this isn't an easy journey, and, and you have to let go of some things in order to pick up the more precious things.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 20:40

Yeah, listeners, I hope you're hearing this. This is not just for those who are obviously in faith crisis or doubt, but for all of us who are holding on to those things and trying to keep a front up that we are okay even when we have questions. [Yeah], this is okay for everyone.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 25:28

Yeah. And maybe we're, maybe that's the thing. Maybe we need to say we're more okay because we have questions. We're more okay because we have doubts. You know, I as a young adult, you know, I was led to believe, you know, early, early, early learnings, right, that the story in Genesis, about creation, you know, the, that that was, that was and, and then in school, you know, and in culture, I learned about evolution, and was kind of told by people, these are two different, maybe even opposite, ideas. But you know what? I could hold on to both ideas. And as a, you know, high schooler, it's like, what if? you know, what if this idea is right? What if this idea is right, and you don't have to rule out one or the other in order to what if and we all do this all the time, when we're making decisions on other kinds of things, when we're changing our ideas, when we're, when we're, when we take classes to learn new ideas. We're saying, what if and what if. And we can hold more than, even more than two different ideas about the same thing all the time. And so, I think this is something we can let ourselves practice in the realm faith, of belief, church life, spiritual journey.

Tony Chvala-Smith 26:56

And that, and that holding of two ideas at the same time is actually what is meant by a paradox. Paradox is a positive word. Paul Tillich, the theologian Paul Tillich, says paradox comes from the Greek, Greek words which means contrary to the opinion of limited rationality, right? So, limited rationality says, only one thing can be true, right? But a more nuanced rationality says no multiple things can be true at the same time, and that's what a paradox is. So, God created the world. Evolution is a real scientific, it's not a hypothesis, a theory. It makes sense of data, right? And so, both things are simultaneously true, even if you can't fully make them jibe, so I'm okay with that.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 27:42

And it was, you know, it was a relief when somebody in my religious world said, Oh, those two ideas can merge. They can, they can support each other. The idea that, that God is creator and that evolution is reality. It's like, oh, okay, then. But as a high schooler, I had to hold on to the idea about of and I I don't think this is just me. I'm pretty sure that's why I'm talking about this. So, other people who are in that same spot might feel but I had to entertain the idea, what if God? Is God real? What if God isn't real? For me, that was really important to acknowledge that question, because then it allowed me to be open to looking at things in more than one way, and it allowed me to see God eventually in more than one way and in more than one place. I grew up in time when the church was the only true church. And so, this allowed me to say, Well, if God is God, if any of those descriptors are accurate, then God's not just here, where I am and we're in my church. And so that question about Is God real allowed me to be looking for the answer in a lot of different places, and it was actually ended up being a freeing thing. So...

Blake Smith 29:12

I had a similar experience, and I don't know if I should say this live, I may get silenced right after this, I remember being and it was through the seminary experience, but also just some encounters that I was having with folks outside of the church walls, and that was being a 70, a special witness of Jesus Christ, and hearing all my life, I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, I am the only way, you know, only come to God by me. And yet, I was in relationship with persons from other world religions, not Christian. And that was a huge issue for me, because I like, how do I rationalize this sense that these people are very Godly, or, you know, very connected to the Divine, and they have no connection to Jesus? How is that possible? And so, kind of, that was one of those moments for me to wake up and say, Okay, I need to, I need to do some questioning to figure out, how do I make this work? And I've gotten to a point where, and this is the part that I'm taking a chance saying, saying live in a recording, but I can say to people with pretty good confidence that I don't, I cannot say that Jesus is the only way to God. What I can say is that Jesus is my way to God. It's how I best understand who God is. [Yeah] And some people, for some people, that's really heresy. But it was freeing for me to come to that point.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 30:57

Because in some respects, I would say, I, tell me if I'm wrong, but it allowed you to be faithful to the things that are most important to you about what you know about God?

Blake Smith 31:12

Absolutely, you're right on, yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 31:15

It's, it's about God being for all people, for all creation. That God is a God of love, that God can work with people in many, many different ways and all kinds of paths.

Blake Smith 31:28

And so, Mom, I'm sorry if I've offended you, if you're listening to this.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 31:31

Yeah, but you've raised those aspects of your belief and experience with God as the most important things. [right] And some of those other things that used to be important to you have fallen down the list a little bit and so, but you're not the only one who struggled with this. If you know, we sometimes use the old preaching charts from 1920 to let people know what our theology was, and you know, in that time period, but even they were asking the question, What about these people who are better, you know, who are from other faiths, but who are better Christians than we are? You know, what? Surely God is a fair God. Surely God is a God who knows them too. So even on our old preaching charts, when we thought we were the one a true only church, that question was being asked. It's part of our journey as a church as well. So no, I'm so glad you shared that.

Tony Chvala-Smith 32:30

And, and it seems to me that part of the maturing of a faith journey is coming to understand that my ultimates remain ultimate for me and true, regardless of other people's ultimates and, and your ultimates don't have to be false in order for mine to be true. You know what I mean? Right?

Blake Smith 32:54

Yeah, that's a, really, that is a relief.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 32:58

So, I think another thing that might be helpful to know you're not alone, it's huge, and that this is really an important part of your faith journey, or maybe you're not using the word faith anymore. Maybe, maybe it's a part of your spiritual journey and that, you know, or your personal journey. But another piece is that there's, this will not be a surprise to anybody, but there's different parts to ourselves, right? So, there's the intellectual part, and sometimes the questions or the doubts become the intellectual questions. Or we, we have new intellectual information, and it puts, it puts some our beliefs or our experience from the past in question. So, there's the intellectual approach to things, but there's also the experiential you know, are those times of being encountered by God, those times of knowing that we are loved or that we belong, or that we are forgiven, and that's another aspect of who we are and then there's the social part too. You know, being part of a community, for many people, that's what church is, more than anything else, is belonging being part of a community that shows that love, that mutuality, that respect, that care for the world and other people can, can be a way of living. And you, we can support each other in that, and we can have quiet time together. We can pray together for those who are praying, but for those who aren't sure about prayer anymore, being together, eating together, laughing together, having time together, that's, that's important too. So, that's part of their faith journey, or part of their spiritual journey. So. So, all, all three of these parts, and there are other parts I could go on to describe. They're all part of who we are and part of this journey, part of the questioning, part of the doubt, part of the letting go of some things and figuring out how to value the others, is, is to recognize that all of these parts are important. Sometimes people feel like they're outside of the community because of the ideas they now have that are so different from what they started with and, and they're afraid that that will disqualify them from the community. Because especially, I think of people our age. Tony's and mine. Not yours, Blake.

Blake Smith 35:45

Thank you, Charmaine.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 35:47

Our age or older, who did grow up with the idea of this is the right list of beliefs, and if you believe these things and you're part of our church, then you're good with God, right? I mean, that was kind of the, the, and maybe, maybe for some people, probably more before us, that that will determine your play, your place in eternal, eternity tune, as far as what glory you might be into, that was kind of toned down quite a bit by the time we came along. But you know, if you started with that, and then you suddenly look at yourself and you go, Oh my gosh, I don't believe any of the things on that list that I had to start with. And so, there can be this self-negating from the community, because, oh my gosh, I instead, now I believe this and this and this. And would I, you know, maybe I shouldn't even say those things out loud, because they're so different from those things I started with. So, you know, there's for certain

generations that's really important, but sometimes we give preferential treatment to the mind, to these ideas, when in reality, we also have these amazing experiences. You know, I've even heard people say, you know, I don't believe what I, what I believe before, and I'm not sure if I'm Christian. I'm not sure if I should be a member of the church, but let me tell you about the miracles that have happened in my life? Yeah, absolutely, yeah. Here's someone who's trying to find that balance and or who somebody who says, you know, I don't think I believe the same thing as most of the people here, but I don't this is my community. This is my family. I need this group. They need me. And so, you know, we need to bring all those different parts of ourselves into the conversation and not just let our ideas, our new ideas, or a lack of the old ideas, be the determiner of whether or not we're faithful.

Tony Chvala-Smith 37:54

And this, again, is a challenge to the community, to be an all-embracing community. Now that doesn't mean there aren't certain kinds of disciplines and care we ought to take in how we talk about things. It just means that, gosh, if Jesus could assemble around himself a bunch of people with really different experience and ideas and make them a community, then that's us too. And so, people are at various stages and on these journeys, and journey, faith journeys are seldom always going up, onward and upward, right? It's often spirally squiggly back and forth, up and down. And so, one has to take great care. I mean, expressing, expressing love in a Christian community, often has to take the form of accepting where people are in their journeys, and that sometimes they're just in a different place from me. And so that's complicated, but that's one of the joys of trying to be community.

Blake Smith 38:59

Well, Tony and Charmaine, I think this would be a good place for us to pause, so we're going to pause and pick up where we left off next time. To you our listeners, thanks for joining us here today. We hope you'll join us for the next part of this episode and this conversation we're having about faith and doubt. Until then, have a blessed day.