

Encountering Jesus & the Church in Scripture - S08E07

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:00:00] Hello, welcome to season eight of the Abiding Together Podcast. Abiding Together is a place where you can find connection, rest and encouragement on your journey with Jesus Christ. My name is Sister Miriam James Heidland, and each and every week I am joined by two of my very dearest friends, Heather Khym and Michelle Benzinger. This podcast is born out of our friendship and sharing all kinds of things together: our walk with Jesus, our insights, the lessons we are *still* learning, our joys, sorrows, tears, and laughter. And you are most welcome on the journey with us. You can find out more information about all of our episodes at abidingtogetherpodcast.com. But for now, grab a cup of coffee, settle in, and welcome home.

Hello, and welcome to this week's episode of the Abiding Together podcast. We have a wonderful guest with us today, you are going to absolutely love. We cannot wait. We've been looking forward for a long time to having him on our show and you're going to love him, but we're going to make you wait to find out who it is. So before we do that. Michelle, we should probably talk to you first because there's a hurricane coming your way and we might lose you at some point during the show. And we might lose you out to sea. So are you okay? Are you hanging in there?

Michelle Benzinger: [00:01:22] I am fine. We are actually recording this podcast on Our Lady of Sorrows feast day and tomorrow Hurricane Sally is supposed to hit and we're right in the middle of it right now. So she's just dumping a lot of rain on us, but she keeps on moving East so she could really hit us. But I lived in the Gulf coast majority of my life. So I'm used to hurricane, so they don't phase me, but I'm just praying for all of those that are in its path and just praying for safety. And I felt kind of funny cause I was driving over to my neighbors to record because my kids are home and the post office was the only car out. I'm like me and the post office: come wind, come rain, I'm going to record. Here we go. So it was kind of fitting .

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:01:59] Our listeneres are so grateful.

Heather Khym: [00:02:01] Yes. Thanks for risking your life.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:02:03] Thank you .Just for all of you all. And I was excited for our guest.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:02:06] Yeah, we couldn't make our guests come back another time, so we record through a hurricane. If we have to

Michelle Benzinger: [00:02:10] seriously. Heather, how are you?

Heather Khym: [00:02:13] I'm good. And Michelle, thanks for giving me a lesson this morning on hurricanes and tornadoes, because being up where I live just in the North, in Canada, I wasn't aware of all the things involved. So yes, we're praying for you, praying for safety. And up here, we're still covered in smoke from wildfires. So if people weren't wearing mask because of Covid, they're wearing masks now because we can barely breathe out there. It is just amazing how 2020 continues to unravel here for us, but I'm excited about this episode and praise God that he knows all of these things and he is holding us all in the palm of His hand. So yeah. Good to be with you all.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:02:48] Yes, indeed. And Oh, listeners, you're going to love this. So I'm just going to let you, I'm not going to make you wait any longer. I want to introduce our beloved guest today is Dr. Andrew Swafford. He is the associate professor of theology at Benedictine College. He is general editor and contributor to the Great Adventure Catholic Bible published by Ascension Press. And hosted the video series and author of the companion book on, Hebrews and also on Romans. Maybe you saw him with Jeff Cavins, if you haven't checked out, that was one of my one things last season. So you might wanna check that out. Andrew is the author of Nature and Grace: John Paul II to Aristotle and back again, and Spiritual Survival in the Modern World. He holds a doctorate in Sacred Theology from the University of St. Mary of the Lake and a master's degree in Old Testament and Semitic languages from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He is a member of the Society of Biblical Literature, Academy of Catholic Theology and a senior fellow at the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology. He is married to his beautiful wife, Sarah, and they have five kids and they live in Atchison, Kansas. Dr. Andrew Swafford. Welcome.

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:03:49] It's so good to be with you all. Thanks so much for having me on.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:03:53] We're absolutely delighted to have you on and we have to ask you, I mean, just the first question and then I'll let Heather and Michelle take over. The first question we ask every single one of our guests, whether it's Bishop Barron or whoever it is. Most importantly, how do you take your coffee, Dr. Swafford? How do you take your coffee?

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:04:07] Straight black. Just need the caffeine shock and I'm good.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:04:11] Really?

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:04:11] Never, never any cream, never any almond milk, nothing?

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:04:14] You know, I've got a sweet tooth in some things, but not in this. I just need the efficient cause right there. And I'm ready to start

Michelle Benzinger: [00:04:19] There you go, efficient cause

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:04:21] Spoken like a true theologian right there.

Heather Khym: [00:04:24] We can definitely respect that. Dr. Swafford, I would ust love to know a little bit about your personal story of conversion and just how, yeah. What inspired you to get your doctorate to teach? Most importantly, just when did you encounter Jesus in a personal way in your life?

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:04:41] Well, what a question. Well, I grew up Catholic, but kind of by name only. And so I teach at Benedictine College now, but I came here as a student a long time ago for one reason. And that was to play football. That was where I was at that time. And lo and behold through a number of things, I met Jesus Christ and I met him in the Catholic faith. Here, one of my mentors here that I'm sure your listeners and y'all will know is Dr. Edward Sri. There was a broken leg and a couple of different things happened and I was in a Christian moral life class with him. And you think it's about a bunch of rules and, you know, don't do this, Bible and church says this and that and the other, and then you learn about

freedom, friendship, virtue, happiness. And kind of see, this is why you're not happy because you're made for more. And just fell in love with the faith with scripture. And he just changed my life. And he and his wife, Beth became mentors to me and my wife, Sarah, and I just kind of became disciples of them and was never the same and really just kind of. Wanting to give back, pay it forward and the way he gave to me. So that's, that's kinda how I got here. And I never many in my life, many people go back to high school and they would never, ever have anticipated this, but here I am by the grace of God.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:05:45] So what inspired you to go and get your doctorate? Was that it? Was it just, okay, I want to go deeper into my faith or what was that like?

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:05:53] You know, I mean like a lot of people, you meet Jesus Christ, you meet him in a profound way and you want to give back and you want to go into ministry. You consider religious life really hard. And, uh, you know, in my discernment, I kinda discerned away from that and kind of had some worldly motives, I think we're kind of covering some of my motivation there. And my wife, Sarah transferred into Benedict the year after I had my conversion. So it's really kind of, I look back and I kind of see the Lord kind of preparing me to meet her because she never had to wonder is this conversion about her? Cause it, yeah, she really met me afterward, you know, and I said, I just want to give back. And one of the things for me, scripture, it was to connect Jesus to the church, to connect Jesus to the story of Israel and to really encounter the living God in a living way through scripture and allow that to fuel our great Catholic faith was just so profound for me. So to kind of just reintroduce more people into the the living God and to know him personally, that's kind of what led me there.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:06:50] Cause you think of all the things you could have studied. And I just, I think it's fascinating. You talk about biblical theology and scripture and you know, for so many people they're like, Oh, that's what Protestants do. Like, that's not what Catholics do. And so to see somebody who is very young and I mean, to already have a doctorate in biblical theology and scripture. You know, is it, did you find like it was a personal thing where you're like, the church needs this? Or, I mean, how did that open its door to you. Like what was something that really led that door to be open for your heart?

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:07:15] Gosh, that's a good question. So it started, I had two classes with that, just read an intro to theology and then a New Testament class and just the kind of salvation history narrative and connecting Jesus to the church that I mentioned that was kind of what planted the seeds. Uh, so that's Spring of my freshman year and then our football team played an exhibition game in Paris, France, that May, so after my freshman year and I, at the time, I didn't even want to go. I wanted to get home to Ohio where I'm from, to train and try to gun for a starting spot my sophomore year. And. I'm over there. And my legs go out from beneath me on more ways than one. I broke my fibula in Paris, France. And so I'm just crushed. Yeah. My whole world is just, you know, like depression and just, just crushed. But what I learned that spring semester before the injury kind of started to seep from the head to the heart. So, there I am beginning of my sophomore year and Dr. Sri And I went out to lunch and I'm firing a bunch of questions left and right. You know, all summer kind of what I learned from them in the spring was kind of seeping from the head to the heart. And, uh, all of a sudden I'm kind of entertaining the possibility of changing my life and giving my life to this. And that's when he said, you know, I'm teaching this class called Christian moral life. It's full. But if you'd like, I'll let you in. And at the time I was already

taking 17 hours, but I was red shirting that season because I hadn't trained all summer. I didn't want to waste a year of eligibility. And so I took the class, took 20 hours and that class was what put me over. Now that changed my life, you know? And this is the time of 9 11. Right? So it was, I'll never forget that happening. I'll never forget that class the next week when doctor Sri is like, you know, some people want to say that morality is relative: your truth, my truth. And he's just like tell that to the people in New York. And I mean, it was just silence. Just complete silence. You know, so the combination of the moral and then scripture, in the tutelage of Dr. Sri, it was just kind of key to evangelization, key to discipleship, key to kind of really encountering the living God and really kind of studying Jesus in the gospels and recognizing that the same Jesus that I worship in the Blessed Sacrament, that same Jesus present in adoration. That's the same Jesus that I'm studying, and connecting liturgy and the church. And so I also majored in philosophy at the same time because I saw how it could help. So sister, your question to why biblical theology, partly that's just how I was exposed to theology to begin with. I love all parts of theology and I'm at home with St. Thomas Aquinas and doctrine. What I do sense though, at least now, is that a lot of students love doctrine. They love the clarity of doctrine. They're afraid of scripture, and I worry about kind of a Catholic deism. Kind of creeping in here where the faith becomes an idea. And I see scripture as key to avoiding that and to see scripture as giving life to our sacramental life, to our doctrinal life, the way we teach, the way we preach. With scripture ignored and neglected I fear that the Catholic deism kind of creeps in. The faith becomes an idea, not about a person.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:09:50] I love that. I love that it was Dr. Sri who poured into you and therefore you felt just called to give back. And I mean for someone that loves young adults, I mean, that is how my husband and I actually came together. It's just forming young adults. That, that is your passion too. Like you were mentored and disciplined, therefore you will mentor and disciple. So like for your college students have, how would you mentor and disciple them in scripture and the faith? Like how would you even start that? Like, okay, how do your college students encounter Christ in scripture in your class? And we're all probably going to sign up for your classes after this.

Heather Khym: [00:10:28] It's true.

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:10:30] Well, I love what you're saying because I began this semester saying theology is really about intellectual discipleship. That's what we're here for: more is caught than is taught. And I love doing it with my wife, Sarah, and she's a master evangelist. She's got this knack for saying what needs to be said, and he's still like her afterward. Right. Uh, and, and it's, you know, Do you love people enough to say the hard truth and to say them in a loving way? So that was my experience with all my mentors. I guess one prime example for me was the spring of 2018. My wife and I taught in our study abroad program in Florence, Italy, and I taught my class there on John Paul the Second. And. Yeah. And we were living with 48 students and my family was with 48 students in my kids. And that was kind of a powerful way of what we're trying to accomplish in the regular semester. That's harder too, but it's just, you know, it's we like to have students over to the house. That's why we got into this. It's not, I love academics. I love scholarship. But to what end, I'd love to leverage that to the real goal, which is wisdom and sanctity and discipleship. And if it's not passed on, it's going to die.

Heather Khym: [00:11:30] I love what you're saying about connecting the head in the heart. Like I think it's so important. It's so important that we pursue understanding and that we pursue knowledge to help us grow in our relationship with God. Like you said, that like there has to be another goal, right. Then just having knowledge for the sake of knowledge. And I think with scripture, often people don't know how to make that connection. You know, I read it, it seems dry, or they hear it read in a dry. Dry weight, or sometimes we put a tone of voice to God or to scripture that makes it seem like it's something different than it is. And I just want to, like, where would you suggest that people start? If they're like, I want to know how to pray with scripture. I just don't know how to do that. I don't know how to make it personal, but what would you suggest to them?

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:12:14] What a great that's the perennial question. First: start small, start small, start with the gospels, you know, and then the next thing I'd say is there's some really good resources out there, so to kind of get ahold of some good resources. So I kind of skipped over this, but one of the key books for me was Dr. Sri's *Mystery of the Kingdom*, which he's kind of redone as a *God with Us* now. But when I was in Paris in that hotel and I broke my leg, I actually brought that book with me and I was supposed to have read it during the semester. But I didn't of course. And so I sat in the hotel room all by myself because I broke my leg the second day we were there. And, you know, everybody else is looking at the Palace of Versailles and things like that. And here I am reading this book and it was just a profound moment of connecting Jesus. Cause everybody loves Jesus. I want Jesus on my side, but get that stinking institution away from me. But he connected the dots for me. So that's a good one. A Father Who Keeps His Promises by Scott Hahn. I mean, there's so. Petre has got a lot of great stuff. You know, the Great Adventure Catholic Bible, something to kind of give you the lay of the land and to help you read with faith and reason, big picture, and just kind of get some of the principles. Going onto the catechism is a big help here. So I'd say start small, read with faith. Don't be intimidated, but yeah, you know, the liturgy, let that help you. So there's so many good resources. I think number one, Get ahold of some easy, accessible, good resources that gets you started and then kind of be not afraid.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:13:31] Cause what would you say, Dr. Swafford, are some of the misconceptions of the Bible. I know sometimes people say, well, it's all literal or it's all figurative or it's all metaphor. It's all. And it's really not because you just kind of help our listeners understand just the beauty of scripture and just the different ways that the God has revealed to us through the old Testament and the new Testament.

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:13:48] Amen. One of the key guiding principles of Catholic Biblical Theology is typology. And you've got some great lines in the catechism, 128, 129, a great quote from St. Augustine that many of your listeners I'm sure have heard, that the old is revealed in the new, the new is concealed in the old. And so in a way like Aquinas puts it in the Summa for example, is that God can signify things with words as we can. I can say dog and something comes to mind, but God can use things to signify further things. So we read about the lamb, the Passover lamb, and that refers to a thing happening, but that whole event, because God is provident over history. is staging what's coming later. So two things, one the old points to the new. So you've got a typology historically with Eve. Mary is the new Eve, Adam Jesus is the new Adam, but also I think this is really important. Typology, vertically and metaphysically. What I mean by this is: to read the earthly in light of the heavenly. So the promised time becomes a type of heaven because everybody gets caught up on the battles and the violence and this and that. And what you really have in the old is a

movement from the earthly to the heavenly, from nature to grace, from the old to the new. So I think if you think of those two axes of a typology from the old to the new historically or horizontally, but then also vertically. So when we kind of come across tough things, it's not just spiritual or literal. I mean, there's different genres for one, I think that's probably my sister's getting that. Then you read a Psalm differently than you read the narrative of first Kings. You read Genesis 1 through 11 differently than you read other things that come later. So you want to be attentive to the literary genre and the nuances there. But I think overall, just as a guiding principle, to read it both historically and theologically: to read it typologically as the old paving, the way for the new and the earthly paving the way for the heavenly.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:15:24] I love that. So with doing that, when you're talking about typology and I absolutely love that and the girls make a lot of fun on me because I just love, well, I love old Testament because I love Jewish, just anything historical Jewish. Like, I love that we're about to go into the feast days, the high Holy days, you know, starting this next week and stuff like that. And, um, And one of my dear friends here is Jewish, but she has enhanced my faith so much, my Catholic faith with her beauty of her Jewish, faith and tradition. And she's made me see like to connect the dots in between. But I think also connecting the dots between, I think a lot of Catholics we have in our mass: liturgy of the word and liturgy of the Eucharist. I remember being at Franciscan and Dr. Minto, our biblical studies teacher that I had for that semester was saying liturgy of the Eucharist does not trump liturgy of the Word they go together. They're a harmony, you know, they're both. And like together it is. So what would you even say to Catholics? Because like you were saying earlier, we want doctrine, but it is doctrine and scripture that go together to have this. We want also a living, tangible faith that you know, that we can see played out in our everyday reality. So what would you say just to Catholic's trying to be in harmony with liturgy of the word and liturgy of the Eucharist together and mass?

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:16:39] Yeah. Amen. One to take it seriously. Just what you said. I mean, I love st. Thomas Aquinas. I love John Paul the second, but you're never going to hear them read at mass. And to take on the mind of the doctors, I mean, look at st. Thomas Aquinas, I mean, he revered scripture, he thinks that you should study the Summa so you're ready for his Bible classes. Right? So to kind of put the mind of the church to kind of take that on, you know, the Ratzinger once, Benedict but then Ratzinger once said that the synagogue where you had the word proclaimed and the temple, where you have the sacrifice and the priest had come together in the mass, there's the word- liturgy of the Eucharist. I think part of what happens is I think I love my Protestant brothers and sisters, and I studied at Trinity evangelical divinity school. They called me Catholic Andy there. Right. I think one aspect of the legacy of the reformation sometimes is to see a radical discontinuity and rupture between the old and new Testament. So you think about like the temple veil tearing when Jesus dies on the cross. And a lot of Protestants will take that as the end of temple, the end of priesthood, the end of liturgy, the end of all the sacrifices, all those things. And now we're done with that. And so now we just have faith alone and that's how we encounter the Lord. Well, but there's really more going on than that because it's not just the end of temple and liturgy and priesthood. It's really the end of earthly priesthood, earthly sacrifice, earthly temple, and the ushering in of the heavenly. And this is part of what Hebrews is all about. And so to see, not just radical rupture, but the continuity of revelation, I think is a great help. But, but as I said again, I think the key is to see the earthly as moving

to the heavenly that the, the old Testament, I love it, but it is a story in search of an ending. And to kind of keep that in mind as we go and to read the Bible from the heart of the church, with both faith and reason.

Heather Khym: [00:18:24] I remember being at a conference when I was a young person and, you know, it was that experience of having this wonderful lively experience of faith. And then going back to a very dry experience at home, you know, kind of that mountain top, and then going back to reality. And the one thing that the gift that God gave me was that the scriptures came alive at mass. Like all of a sudden it was like the Holy spirit, just breathed life into the scriptures. And I was sitting in mass and I remember thinking, Oh my gosh, this applies right to what I'm going through. You know, right now it became very, very personal. And, and I would love to just hear like what scripture has just become very personal for you, because I would love that transition to happen for our listeners, especially those who are just longing for scripture to leap off the page and become something that is alive in their life. So I would just love to hear a personal story of a scripture that means something for you.

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:19:15] Gosh, that is fantastic. You know, one that I love to return to is the rich young man, the rich young man: if you would be perfect. And then obviously he goes away sad and I don't read him as kind of this upstart hypocrite. I mean, in Mark's account, it says Jesus looked at him and loved him and says it almost like a lot of us, a, basically a good guy. But afraid to go all in. And there's many kinds of riches, there's many kinds of poverty. And so what I love about that parable there is that what I'm clinging to that keeps me from deeper intimacy with Christ changes throughout my life. So you can go back to it again and again and again. So that's always been a powerful one for me. I remember when I in college Mark 8:38. Where Jesus says he was ashamed of me and my words in this generation, the son of man will be ashamed of when he, when he comes again. And the athlete in me was like, do I have Jesus' back or not? Am I afraid to kind of go public with this or not? You know? And so that hit me like a ton of bricks. You wouldn't count this as friends. What kind of friend are you gonna be to Jesus here? I mean, just different stages, I guess, in my journey there.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:20:22] And what would you say Dr. Swafford? I mean, you really had as a college professor, you're really at ground zero. I know Dr. Sri talked about that with the new evangelization you are at ground zero, and as we know, universities today are just like hotbeds of atheism, all kinds of just interesting, to say the least, ideas of what society is promoting to young people today. And then when you look at kind of what the unraveling of culture and the unraveling of society, and then you see people like say Dr. Jordan Peterson, who some of his most famous lectures are on the Bible. They're the sociological explanations of the Bible. Like, what do you see as a professor of young adults? How is scripture encountering the generation today? Like what does it have to say to us right now in our lives?

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:21:03] That's a, that's a great, great, great question. Great question. In some ways I prepared to teach myself as a student. And I wasn't ready when I first came back to the way the context had changed and it wasn't that long ago, but the questions were different. So I suppose, you know, when I was in college, there still was the, the Catholic/Protestant questions were still burning and things like that. Whereas I'd say one issue that we have now is just getting people to care. Did they, the questions are almost 17 steps prior to those Catholic/Protestant debates. It's sort of, why should I even trust the

Bible? Why should I even trust scripture? So, uh, on the one hand, the students are starving for authenticity. They're hungry, it's cliché, but it's absolutely true. They don't care what you know, until they know that you care. I've also found that they want, they want. Yeah, we all want meaning in our lives and, and they really want the challenge. They want it give it in love. But John Paul second one said that when you lower the bar for the youth, you actually rob them of their chance to be more heroic. That deep down they're yearning for it and that was my experience. And I've seen that to be true again and again. So on the one hand, I think the apologetic task is important, but we have to be careful with how we couch that. So on the one hand, what can apologetics do? It can remove obstacles. It can provide motives of credibility, but it can't bring you all the way so it's needed, but we have to also invite people into the mystery, to encounter the living God. That theology includes an apologetic proclamation, but it goes far beyond that. And so I think that kind of careful balance is key because they, they want reasons. Or there for the hope that's within. And they want honest reasons, right? So bad arguments that they don't work in the end so that they want robust arguments. They want robust reasons. They also really appreciate your honesty. And I think the invitation to go all in and see what's there. Now we're blessed. We have incredible students at Benedictine. And so I, I got all kinds of students, but the hunger is still there. The questions I think are a little bit different than they were 20 years ago.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:23:00] I would like to know, like, what is one project that you're working on or have done that you're passionate about. And like what inspired you to even begin it, to do it? You know, like what did the Holy spirit stir up within you to do something that you've been working on besides teaching? Because we know that you do, um, teaching and being a husband and father is a lot.

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:23:22] Well, you know, just, part of me is like, I can't believe that they pay me for this.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:23:29] Let's do that too. I want to give you a raise. That's fine too.

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:23:33] But my wife might slap me. You know, you mentioned at the beginning, so the great adventure Bible. Yeah, we did a couple years ago. Um, that, that that's been a lot of fun. It's been really well received. Cause it's like Jeff Cavins and the Bible timeline that he pioneered 25 years ago, it just kind of put in the Bible. That kind of really helps the reader understand the big picture of what's going on. We just did the Hebrew series. I wrote the book was written before COVID hit. But the presentations were given, we recorded them at the end of May. So that was after COVID and Hebrews is so liturgical. And one of the fascinating about Hebrews is it really seems to be an ancient homily. And so one of my great hopes is that this could help galvanize people to return to the Eucharist. You know, if you're healthy and things like that, but we've been away for so long. We've been doing Bible studies, watching the mass online and to come back and realize the new covenant is not just a text. It's a living liturgical reality. And to see the movement from, as you said, Michelle the importance of sacred scripture, but the movement just like the road to Emmaus: from the sacred, from the scriptures to the breaking of the bread. So my hope, my hope is that it'll kind of help people kind of come back to that. That the Eucharist isn't plan B. This is God's gift to the world. This is Jesus present among us. So we've got a couple of things in line for Ascension, uh, in the next couple of years. But that's kind of still in the works right now.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:24:47] Dr. Swafford, if it's not too personal, how do you, I just would love to learn from you. Like, how do you grow as a human being? Like, how do you, as you study the scripture and as you, like, what is your prayer? can we ask you, like, how do you incorporate this in your life as a, like a beloved son as a husband and his father, like, how do you? Could you share with our listeners, like how you incorporate this into your own personal prayer? Would that be okay to ask you?

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:25:08] No, that's fantastic. And I get this from students a lot because especially theology majors, right? The great danger is great as academics is that the faith becomes just an academic pursuit and they read the Bible and they can't shut off the pure academic vantage point. And the thing is we don't want to have this schizophrenia, right? So the intellect is part of a life of wisdom. It's part of a life of sanctity. I think the modern tension is to kind of divorce these two, but it is a perennial temptation. I think. One to pray. I mean, it's such a simple thing to say, but to pray with scripture and I'm talking to myself right now, preaching to myself. Am I praying as much as I'm studying and am I willing to take small bites? That's the key for me to take small bites, whether it's reading the readings for Mass or just to kind of chew on a paragraph or a line or a word and kind of not. Let the Lord speak. I mean, what I love more than I think it's just, you kind of get into, to get students to read the Bible historically and theologically. And I try to do the same myself. And what that means is that Jesus' words or the scriptures words are never exhausted by their context. So how do these words register in their context, but speak to it and through it and beyond? That's to read it as the word of God. And so if we read it just as a human word, we can imagine that its meaning is exhausted by its own day, that all these little nuggets that we can look up and it's like the is all there is to say that's the beginning, not the end. So I think I have to remind myself all the time. I think number one, Be around the liturgy, be around mass, pray and to take time to pray through the scripture. So, sister, I, this is a great question because it's an examination for me. Am I doing this regularly? But I think too one thing has been helpful for me. My kids, I've got two teenagers now, 14 and 13, and so really kind of introduced them into the scriptures. Kids are just a great accountability of what are you teaching? What are you really teaching and what are you passing on? Are you passing on the living word of God, a love story that includes ourselves right now that redounds to the present, or are you simply passing on a kind of history lesson? it's it's historically rooted. But that's the beginning not the end.

Heather Khym: [00:27:17] Yeah. Before we go into our one thing, Dr. Swafford. I just want to say thank you for what you're doing and the gift that you're making to the church, especially at a time where our culture is so focused on personal opinions and what people feel and think themselves and the word of God and the power of God's word seems to be diminishing in importance in people's lives. I'm just so grateful that you're devoting your life to teaching people how to not just know the word or respect the word, but to fall in love with God's word and to live it out and to help it guide their life.

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:27:50] Thank you. And thanks to all that you're doing. I just think we really got to kind of reclaim so many aspects of the human person. The scriptures, even the natural order is not just a bunch of bumpy molecules, but the embodiment of divine wisdom. And I think that we have to be out with truth and love, be happy warriors. And, we're all, we're all in this together. The Lord has won the war, but there's people being lost and they don't have to be lost and we've got to get out there, give them all the Lord wants to give them.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:28:17] Okay. I have one more question. We keep on saying to you, but I really do, but we have like, the majority of our listeners are women, but we have a good male counterpart that likes to let themselves be known also, which we love. And we're so grateful.

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:28:31] Count me in that!

Michelle Benzinger: [00:28:32] We love and we honor them and we were so glad they're with us. We want to make a table for all. But especially for the men, I would love to know how do you pray for your wife and children personally? My husband and I were having this conversation with two other friends of ours, just as fathers and husbands. And we were like, It was good. We were chuckling too, but we're like, how do you practically pray for your wife and your children?

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:28:57] Well, that's a great question. So I love the divine mercy, Saint Faustina, and I pray the blood and water prayer for each one of them each night So, I mean, that's one guy's concrete things. Uh, there's certain things I offer up at every consecration, you know cause the mass, why the mass, right? Why this isn't just an add on to the cross where this is so that we can all the head and the body, every one of us can enter into the Pascal mystery and be offered up anything with him, through him, to the father. So those might be, I guess, two concrete, regular things, and then praying with them is, is partly a way of praying for them because. Again, the faith is not just an idea more's caught than is taught if they don't see me praying. And even affectively expressing my love for Jesus at the affect of an emotional way. Right. So we like as Catholics to talk about the will, and the intellect and the will, and love is an act of the will. Yeah. But that doesn't mean the emotions aren't important. They are immensely important and they will affect the will in the long run because the head's going to follow the heart. So I, you know, there's more than we could say. I mean, we are hit and miss, we try to get, try to get the rosary of the divine mercy Chaplet in each night. We're not perfect. The kids called the Divine Mercy Chaplet the small rosary, because sometimes time-wise, it's a little easier to do that.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:30:13] Oh my kids, if they get a vote, they always vote Divine Mercy Chaplet yeah. Quicker.

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:30:20] So, I don't know that those are my two, I guess, kind of regular things. We pray the liturgy of the hours for awhile with Covid. That was, I mean, that lasted for a month. And then so, uh, yeah, it's, I mean, you know, life's work in progress, but uh, it's, you know, what's the Lord gonna judge me on. He's not going to say how many, I mean, well, you know, I keep talking about him, but he's just such a profound mentor for me at that stage in life, in college. But you know, a lot of us had our lives changed by Dr. Sri And so many others, and I'll never forget him saying you know look: 30 years from now, my lectures, people won't, they're not going to remember those, books. not going to remember those. My kids will remember the time I did or did not spend with them and so too my wife. And that just always stuck with me. It's like you changed their lives. And so what. Really matters at the end of the day. And this is, you know, constant temptation because the world can creep in. We want to be ambitious: ambition as an athlete. There's a place for it, but it can be the world, you know, a little bit of Jesus, you know, you put a little Jesus frosting on the world and that doesn't make it virtuous.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:31:16] Yeah. That's a good quote, man. We're going to drop that- like make a coffee mug out of that one.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:31:26] You can tell when it's a good line, when we want to put it on a coffee mug.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:31:33] And amen to it. Amen to it. And that's, that's so true. And like, that's, that's the definition of like, that's how we love. Right. And that's what, at the end of the end of all things, that's what the Lord will look at us and ask us how we loved. And that's the most important thing. That's the eternal thing is we know it's a thing that lasts forever. So yeah. Uh, Dr. Swafford, as you know, Oh gosh, we'll have to have you back another time. We would love to have you back with your beautiful wife, you and Sarah, just to talk about your marriage and your ministry together, and your philosophy of how you raise your children. I mean, you guys are just really a wonderful example just to so many of life and love lived out every single day. So we'll have to have you on another time, but you might know that we have a one thing at the end of every podcast where we just talk about the one or two Michelle or three things that are really speaking to us or just that we want to talk about. So we would just like to give you the first dibs on this week's one thing. So what's your, what are your one things this week? What do you really love that's just really blessing you.

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:32:24] Well, my wife is the best. Yep. Uh, beyond that, you know, so some of this might be a little arcane, but Matthias Joseph Scheeben, I think is the greatest theologian that no one's ever heard of. But, he's got a devotional this a little more accessible called the Glories of Divine Grace. Uh, his famous work called the mystery of Christianity, but he's a Thomist, but he reads St. Thomas on the heels of the church fathers. And he makes you want to pray. The other thing, I guess I wanted to mention, I had just had lunch with a longtime friend who is my philosophy mentor here at Benedict. And he's kind of a veteran father. He was just kind of sharing some advice that he's given to students over the years about fatherhood. And he's like, you know, Don't just play with your kids, but enjoy what you're playing with them. And it just struck me the power of the effect that I think is so right, because in our culture, we think, well, the will is just going to follow the appetite, but the reality is this is what you say. And we are far more fluid than that, right? The will can actually influence the affective and to not just play the game with my kids or my same thing with my, with my spouse, my wife, our friends, you know, those friends that feel it with you, they feel your joys, they feel your triumphs. They take the time to share in what you enjoy and not just as like an artificial force thing, but to really enter into it. That's right. And I think he's just so right. That the effect of is so important. So, I suppose those are the two things. There are two or three. Uh, my wife, uh, the beginning and the end.

Heather Khym: [00:33:50] You're a good man.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:33:52] Very good. Very good. Heather, what about you? What are you, what is your one thing for the week?

Heather Khym: [00:33:56] Yeah, my one thing is an album by a couple of Canadian girls who I encountered one of them. She was leading worship at a women's conference that I did at the St. Therese Institute. And her and her sister had just released an album a few weeks ago, called Victory. And their names are Jay and Jo. And you can look it up on Spotify or wherever you find music, but I just love it. There's just solid Catholic music coming out. This album is

not your regular, I don't know, even worship album. Like it's really creative. They definitely have their own style and I've just really been enjoying listening to it. So I would just want to encourage everybody to check it out. Victory by Jay and Jo. Michelle, what's your one thing?

Michelle Benzinger: [00:34:38] I have, of course, I just didn't want Dr. Swafford To feel by himself. So I have two things. Um, one is a book that I've been really savoring by Fr Iain Matthew, and it's called the impact of God, but it is on the writings of Saint John of the cross, but it is a great introductory. Book on the writings of Saint John of the cross without watering down the message and the beautiful, the mystical wisdom of Saint John of the cross. And I have just been savoring it and it is beautiful and it brings you into intimacy and it brings you into wonder and it just brings you also like. At the times that we're going right now, it feels like very dark night of the soul. Yeah. But he gives such good concrete wisdom go through the different stages of prayer, which I just think, you know, that we need. And my second one thing is I didn't say this when we first started, the season back is, uh, last week or two weeks ago, we had, um, the CFRs come for a home visit. Two of them, Fr Mark Mary and Fr Innocent . And so we know that the CFRs love to talk smack about the Abiding together podcast, but I just have to tell you, like, there was such a beauty about when, um, religious and laity all come together and are portrayed as family. Like they, I mean, we had a great time with them when they come and, but. I love it, that my kids get to see this part of the church. And I told them I was like, it is not lost on me, that my kids get to it tackle you in football or play one on one with you basketball. I just, you know, that you do life with us or do dishes and stuff like that. And I was like, they get to see a beautiful part of the church that I'm grateful. So we do love the CFR is even though they like to talk alot of smack.

Heather Khym: [00:36:17] I love one of their listeners was like, I love the CFRs podcast. It's like Abiding Together, but dudes so funny.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:36:27] So good, Sister Miriam?

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:36:28] Oh, well, you know, mine is says is a little bit more, I guess, on the human level. It's food. Okay. So I love, I love the fall. The fall is my favorite season. And the question we're all asking ourselves is why do you live in South Texas? I agree, but when it's fall everywhere else, and I love pumpkins and I love butternut squash. For some reason, butternut squash just speaks to me of like fall. There's so many different ways to make it. It's such a versatile vegetable and it's just really solid and substantial. And um, so there you go, butternut squash. My one thing I'll throw down a recipe or two and you can make it for your family. So Dr. Andrew Swafford. God bless you. Thank you so much for being on the Abiding Together Podcast.

Dr. Andrew Swafford: [00:37:08] Oh sister. Thank you so much for having me. It's such an honor. And thank you again for all that you do. You're helping so many people.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:37:13] We're delighted to have you, and we're going to put a link to all of your resources that you mentioned. Um, so our listeners can check out your study, the Bible that you've helped edit the Hebrews, Romans, all the other stuff. So we just want people to have access to such great stuff. And dear listeners, maybe as you listened to, you also felt the Holy Spirit speaking to you about just a new encounter with the Lord and scripture. So maybe that's picking up the gospels this week or diving into the daily mass readings, whatever that is for you. We're just going to ask you just to open your heart and just to make one step forward, just to be able to rest in the Lord and his sacred word for us,

because he loves us and leads us ever closer to himself. So until next week we will be abiding together. God bless you. Have a wonderful week.

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