

Episode5

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SPEAKERS

Laura, Amy Fritz, Scot McKnight



Laura 00:00

Pastors with platforms were silent. That's when I encouraged my dad to write because nobody else was saying anything. And we needed to hear from a theologian.



Scot McKnight 00:14

I was asked by two or three of the women involved in the Willow story, "Why are Christian leaders not speaking up?" This was the question asked.



Amy Fritz 00:32

This is Amy Fritz, and you're listening to Untangled Faith, a podcast for anyone who has found themselves confused or disillusioned in their faith journey. If you want to hold on to your faith, while untangling it from all the things that are not good and true, this is the place for you. Hello, and welcome to Episode Five of Untangled Faith. How about I share a few bits of news related to the podcast? Since the launch of the first episode, there have been over 2500 total downloads. Tennessee, Ohio and Minnesota have the most downloads and this is fun, because I don't know very many people in Ohio. So hello, Ohio. I'm waving at you from Middle Tennessee. Also, you have left the best reviews on iTunes, also known as Apple podcasts. And I've said this so many times and I'll say it again, I had no idea what to expect with this. Expectations are tricky. I tried to keep mine low. But I did have a goal for the number of downloads we would have in April. And we met that goal.

And I want to say that the biggest smile last week came from a tweet from Emily Snook. She called the podcast anti gaslighting. I'm going to update my social media to include that phrase. Thank you, Emily. Over the last four episodes I have shared stories of people I have referred to as wounded resisters. That's a term I first found in the book, A Church Called Tov by Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer. Today I get to share with you my interview with Scot and Laura. Scot is a professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary. He's the author of more than 80 books, and he's a regular contributor to Christianity Today. Laura teaches primary grade students and she is the co author of Sharing God's Love: The Jesus Creed for Children. Scot is Laura's father and he shares in our conversation, how Laura pestered him into writing this book. Before we join the interview, I want to offer a primer of sorts, in case you aren't familiar with the events that led up to this book ever being considered. We're going to wind the clock back three years. In March of 2018, the Chicago Tribune published a bombshell article detailing sexual abuse allegations spanning decades against Bill Hybels, the founding and then senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, the Tribune stated that the elders gave them a statement indicating that they had looked into allegations and they had found no misconduct. Hybels had this to say to the Tribune: "This has been a calculated and continual attack on our elders, and on me for four long years. It's time that gets identified. I want to speak to all the people around the country that have been misled for the past four years and tell them in my voice in as strong a voice as you'll allow me that the charges against me are false. There ,still, to this day, is not evidence of misconduct on my part." A couple of weeks later, in early April, it was clear the allegations weren't going away, and under pressure from the many who are questioning Hybels, Hybels announced his resignation in a meeting with the congregation at Willow Creek. Sara Pulliam Bailey, in her article for The Washington Post on April 11 2018, reported this about Bill Hybels: "He said that while most of the members of Willow Creek accepted the church's findings of investigations, some of the Christian community continued to be confused and conflicted. The decision, he said, was his with the approval of the church's elders. Hybels also said that he placed himself in situations that would be far wiser to avoid, that he was naive, and he committed to never putting himself in similar situations again. At the end of his address to the congregation, he was given a standing ovation and the Hybels family was prayed over and ushered out the back door. 10 days later in an article for Christianity Today Bob Smietana reported this: "So far, at least seven women have accused Hybels of improper conduct and abuse of power. They include the first woman teaching pastor at Willow Creek, a former worship leader, several former staffers, two church members, and the head of a prominent evangelical publisher. One other woman accused him of an affair, then recanted that claim." Okay, this is a lot, but I hope you're seeing the big picture. Serious allegations had been revealed to the elders and Hybels and the church leadership denied any wrongdoing, even while the evidence was mounting against them. At this point, though, Hybels had resigned, the remaining church leadership had yet to

fully deal with the allegations. They'd backed themselves into a corner by coming out swinging when the first reports went public. More than three months later, Scott McKnight decided he was done waiting for someone to speak out on behalf of the victims. It was a powerful statement that I'll link in the show notes, but he wrapped it up with this statement that summarized his concerns. "What I do know is this, Bill Hybels and Willow Creek leadership have undone 40 years of trust for many. A church that has stood valiantly for women in ministry, that has always stood for Christian grace and truth and forgiveness for repentance, that has supported metoo in various places, that then responds to women as they did with these women, unravels the thread Willow has woven for four decades. Many of us are asking why Bill Hybels and Willow Creek pastors and elders slandered the women, calling them liars and colluders and still refuse to offer them apologies. Willow is being undone as we watch and the pastors and elders are at the center of the unraveling. Two years later, Scott McKnight and Laura Barringer released a book based, in part, on what they had observed from this situation at Willow Creek. Their book is called A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture that Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes healing. If you're wondering what Tov means, I've got you. Tov is the Hebrew word for good. You'll hear it mentioned several times in this interview. Finally, without further ado, here's my conversation with Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer. Good to see you,



Laura 07:29

You too. I know in the flesh, I've seen you on Twitter a lot. Yes.



Scot McKnight 07:35

It's good to meet you, Amy.



Amy Fritz 07:37

It's good to meet you too. I would love to hear the story of where your book came from. The birth story of your book, A Church Called Tov.



Laura 07:51

We never anticipated writing a book. I wanted my dad to blog about the Willow Creek situation, because it was very personal to us. We would hear something come out of the Willow Creek leadership and my husband and I would call my dad, we had so many conversations, Mark, my husband, my mom and my dad, about Willow Creek and what

they were saying and how they were treating the women. And then my dad would explain the proper use of Scripture and how Willow Creek wasn't using it correctly. This journey started for us with me encouraging him to blog, and he didn't want to get involved at first, because we knew a lot of the players on the other side as well. But it turned out that nobody was really saying anything. And I felt like my dad had something to say that all of us needed to hear not just Mark and Me. And from that the book came much later. And it wasn't even something that I saw myself involved in. I encouraged my dad to write the book. He had been contacted by a publisher to write a book about Willow Creek and he didn't want to do that. But then he can tell you the story of how he finally agreed to write more.

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Scot McKnight 09:02

Amy, I often call Laura was a pest about this. She kept pushing and asking questions. And and I had no desire to write about Willow Creek. I mean, even though I was offered a well, I was approached by a publisher about it. And I said, No, I don't want to write about Willow Creek. I'm not a church historian and they're not going to give me access to their records that I would need. So I'm enough I know enough to know that that's not my world. But Laura and Mark and I and Chris continued to talk. Ideas started percolating. And then I was in an airport, waiting had an airplane delay and I sat down and I wrote for a while trying to put together all the things that Laura and Mark and I and Kris had talked about, and it turned out to be I thought it was pretty decent. This kind of puts stuff together that we've been talking about. And that was I believe in April. of 2018. And then we continue to talk a little bit. But I took students in May or in June, it was June, to Turkey and Greece as a tour and Italy, I guess it was Italy too. And when we got back toward the end of middle of June, I, I called Laura and asked what was going on at Willow Creek. She said nothing. And I thought, oh, they're just delaying. They're hoping to wear down the women and the allegations. They hope they'll go away. I said, "Okay, I'm gonna do something then. I think this is wrong, that they have not treated the women properly. And they have not owned up to their responsibility here." And this was Bill had already resigned. But I thought Willow is not taking, taking responsibility. So I put out a blog post. And that blog post went viral, it went right to Willow Creek, and I was told by a dozen different people at Willow Creek that they read it, and it shocked them. And it created conversation throughout the whole building. And then we just kind of sat back and then a New York Times story came on, and boom, it was over. And the whole thing blew up. The women were right, they told the story. They were right. We said from the beginning, we believe the women. Then I read a book on German to German pastors response to the Holocaust, I started seeing parallels. So I started taking notes. And I just, it wasn't till the next December. We were with Laura and Mark, Chris and I were. And I said, I have the outline of something interesting for a book. And it was at that point that we started talking. And

we still didn't have a good idea for the book. But we were getting closer. And I knew I wanted to be redemptive. And then eventually, we landed on the idea of Tov, the Hebrew word for good, and goodness. And so we wanted to work it off from that angle. And Amy, you're right. We have heard one story after another. It's all It's not every day. But I often tell people between two and five stories a week come to us,



Laura 12:16
including yours.



Scot McKnight 12:17
Yeah, that's right. And it's and it's and that's not including the stories that we find on the internet. That's people that have talked to us.



Amy Fritz 12:26
It's such a gift to people to feel like there's somebody that will believe them. Yes. And particularly if you've been hurt by somebody that has power, who is going to believe you? And Scott, I can believe that Willow Creek was shocked because it's so rare to hear somebody speak up publicly against somebody, especially since you have your own public, you know, platform, you had already published some books. A lot of times, there's like this bro code. among leaders and pastors, they just don't want to get involved.



Laura 13:01
Nobody was saying anything. I thought this is going to be the end of the story that Willow Creek has slandered the women and it never gets corrected and the end of it. That was something that really bothered me. And I'm certain it bothered the women too, is that pastors with platforms were silent. They still are silent. They haven't said anything in support of the victims or acknowledging that what Bill Hybels did was sinful. I just we couldn't believe nobody was saying anything. That's when I encouraged my dad to write because nobody else was saying anything. And we needed to hear from a theologian who knew the Bible. And who could say, No, no, no, they're not using Matthew 18. correctly. This is actually the verse that they should be looking at. Like I said, I just felt like, this is going to be the end of the story. It's it's wrong. We can't let it be there.



Scot McKnight 13:54

I was asked by two or three of the women involved in the Willow story, that's not mentioning others, "Why are Christian leaders not speaking up?" This was the question as



Amy Fritz 14:07

I was just going to ask you that question. Why the silence? Why do you think



Scot McKnight 14:12

Amy? That's a good question. And I've thought about it. But I mean, you know, let's just take some of these megachurch pastors that you know, I know. And I know some of them. If I had to ask them why they're not talking. They may have told me but it's pretty obvious. Number one, they have gotten to where they are by learning, the gentle art of rhetoric and political speech, to stay out of trouble. You know, these are generally not very many of these megachurch pastors weighed in even to partisan politics. They don't tell people who they vote for. They've learned to stay out. They all would have said, "I don't know all that took place" etc. They also know from experience that there's always more than one side to a story. They've been involved with situations in their churches. All of them have, almost all have faced something like this, maybe, you know, not the major leaders, but someone in their church has had allegations brought against them. And they know it was complex. They didn't know enough, they've learned to stay out of trouble. So they just went silent. I would be willing to bet that 50% of them wrote letters to Bill Hybels, emailed and texted him and said, "We're really sorry about what's happening. We support you. What can we do?" I mean, I would guess, I don't know. I they're not I haven't asked, but they're there. When you call it a bro code, there's some about that with these major megachurch pastors, they know one another. They know how difficult it is to be such a public figure in our world with social media blasting away at them. They tend to protect one another and stay away. The other side of it is of course, well there is the side of publication. If they start weighing in on all these things, they could lose opportunity to speak on the platform at Willow Creek or Let's stay where CJ MAHANEY is or where James McDonald is, you know, they would lose those platforms. These are people we mentioned in the book,



Amy Fritz 16:23

like the Gospel Coalition, you're going to lose that opportunity and that whole network or the Global Leadership Summit, you're not going to be asked to speak there, or Dave Ramsey's Entre Leadership Summit,



16:37

probably some of them thought Bill, believed Bill, or they believe McDonald or they believe CJ Mahaney, and they thought the women were wrong. We know that some people refuse to believe the stories of women. That's part of the story that that is the dynamic here. And it is. This is why this is very important to us. That the chapter on false narratives is. Silence here becomes a form of deception. It's a form of not telling the truth. When you don't tell the truth. Another story occupies that space. And it's not the true story.



Laura 17:15

And it's very wounding for the victims. We've heard them say, "Where are the pastors? Why aren't they speaking out for us?" They expected it and it didn't happen.



Amy Fritz 17:26

Laura, I am. So I'm thrilled that you are involved in this whole thing, because it seems to fit with a theme of what I've seen with addressing spiritual abuse. And I talked to Kate Shellnut who works for Christianity Today. And she said that she had noticed something. She says the women are really leading the way in discerning spiritual abuse. So Scott, when you talk about all these conversations you've had, you include your wife's name. And Laura, you and your husband are in these conversations. I think there's some wisdom and nuance that just comes from including all of those voices.



Laura 18:08

I didn't have a platform. My mom didn't have a platform. My husband didn't have a platform, but my dad did. I didn't know the terminology. At the time, I didn't know that it was things that were happening were spiritual abuse. I didn't I hadn't read Diane Langberg yet. I just knew in my spirit, that it felt wrong. By "it" I mean, the language that was coming out of the Willow Creek leadership. It felt I couldn't let it go. And my husband would probably say you're obsessed, but I couldn't. It just, there was something in my soul that would not let it go. I said it at the beginning, I felt like this cannot be the end of the story. We just kept encouraging my dad to write because, like I said, we didn't have a platform, but he did. And he was willing, eventually to use it. And I agree. I've noticed that too, that a lot of women are leading the charge.



Scot McKnight 19:03

Oh, women are the ones who are most often taken advantage of. Let me just put it that way. I mean, I'm not even talking sexual abuse. They women in our society don't have the power. They're not in positions of power to resist. And males can power up on women easier than men. And you know, I understand that in in powerful workplaces a president or CEO or whatever you want to call, pastor, they can power up over all other males pretty easily too. But women are particularly powerless in our culture are more powerless. They're more powerful than they were. They're there. They're powerless in many situations. And so they are taken advantage of in power structures. And in physical structures. Women have to are the ones who have experienced this. I have, I have some pretty courageous students, women students. They do not hesitate to speak up. Now, of course, this is they're in a safe place, they're in my classroom, or they're in our school, and they can say what they want. A lot of times the men will just shut up, because they have a voice, and they get to talk. But, you know, I have to say that I have women who were abused sexually, and with power. And when they see it, they recognize it, and they speak up. So they've they've had the experience, I've had men do the same thing. I've had, I had an unbelievable story of a student who suffered horrible power abuse at his church, male student, but I would say nine out of 10 of the stories I hear are from women who were sexually or sexually abused or abused with power.



Amy Fritz 20:58

Yeah, I love, and so many people resonate with this, that term, "wounded resisters", and how you have created a gift for them. And I would love to hear where that term came from, what is a wounded resister?



Laura 21:12

Well, I can tell you what it is. We'll probably argue about who invented it.



Scot McKnight 21:17

I did. I invented it.



Laura 21:19

We both have a heart for those who are resisting abuse in powerful systems. I hope I'm not I don't I'm not trying to sound overly dramatic. But we found God there in the heart of fighting for truth, thinking of our friend Carrie in the Willow Creek story. She's a hero of my

faith, she refused to back down. She stood for truth, from the beginning to the end. Steve Carter's another name, those resisters are the ones that, for us, are heroes. They are the ones that are ushered in light and hope and truth and Tov. Dad, I'm pretty sure that it was my idea: the wounded resisters.

 Scot McKnight 22:11

But I'm pretty sure that I typed it in for the dedication. But wounded has two meanings here. Wounded means people who were wounded by church people, because we're mostly concerned here with church people. But we are aware of people who are wounded in Christian institutions or just in businesses, with Christian leaders who claim that they're operating by Christian principles. So they were wounded by these leaders. And then, by resisting, they got wounded again, over and over and over re traumatized in their trauma by people. Like Vonda Dyer, or Carrie, or any of these women that we've talked about, when they came forward, they got pounded by people in power, who had huge platforms, and used their platforms against those people claiming to do what was right and godly. And what they were doing is just inflicting intentional damage. And gaslighting these women are or people who, who they were wounding. The wounded resister has been wounded, who has the courage to resist which is difficult to begin with. And then when they resist, they get rewounded over and over.

 Laura 23:32


We've heard over and over again how that term has been really meaningful for a number of people. It's meaningful for us too. Like my dad said, it takes courage to resist, then on top of it to be wounded in the process of resisting, is heroic. So

 Scot McKnight 23:50


there was a tweet this week, somebody took a picture of that page, the dedication page and said, "This stopped my breath."


 Amy Fritz 24:00


Did you know when you came across that term? whomever invented it, Laura? Did you think, Oh, this is it?


 Laura 24:08

Yeah, yeah. Because it was, I believe we use the term "resisters" often in the book, or we did at one point, maybe the publisher took it out. But there's resisters resistance. I'm reading a book right now about World War Two. the resisters are the courageous ones. Dad, for those of you listening, my dad just typed in the chat that he created the expression, but we use the term resisters a lot in the book. The wounded part, I believe was initially connected to the heroic women of Willow for Vonda Dyer, Betty Schmidt, and all those that we haven't named.

 Scot McKnight 24:47
Nancy Beach. Nancy Ortberg

 Amy Fritz 24:49
Yeah. And I know that there are people that have watched these things unfold and thought, Oh, this is how people react when you tell your story? Huh. And they are thinking, they're thinking, "Is it gonna be worth it for me to tell mine?"

 Laura 25:06
That's why many people don't come forward. We had a meeting with some of the Ravi Zacharias folks before that story broke. Some of the inside, they were working for the organization at the time. And I remember we, my dad, and I texted ahead of time before our meeting with them. "These are these are resisters." They haven't been wounded yet. But there's a high likelihood that they will be

 Amy Fritz 25:29
Yeah, yeah, I can't imagine the bravery. And it's costing them a lot to resist. So I mean, their livelihoods. I totally understand that betrayal blindness that people have been talking about, because our brains sort of shut down and say, "I can't see that. It costs too much.

 Laura 25:48
Amy, It happened to you with the Dave Ramsey story. You're You're also a wounded resister.



Amy Fritz 25:54

Yeah, well, I feel like I wonder if there's something magical about a couple years of space and being able to tell a little. Mary DeMuth, I don't know where she came up with this, or if she coined it, but she said, being able to tell your story, "an untold story doesn't heal." And she talks about being able to tell it, there's just something about getting it out there, that gives some relief, regardless of how it's received, because you feel like you've done at least your part to move, move the needle a little bit. And people can decide what they're going to do with that the rest of the way. But there is something and now it's been almost two years since we've left. Someday we'll be able to tell the whole story without fear of legal repercussions. We didn't sign anything. But you know, when you deal with people with a lot of power and are litigious, you just don't know. So



Scot McKnight 26:44

Well That's right. You know, and this is why Diane Lindberg talks about, you have to be in a healthy place to come forward. There are so many people that said, "Why didn't they speak up earlier? maybe, you know, Bill Hybels came up, "20 years, and now you're bringing it up." And so many people in the congregation clapped for that. Because it wasn't safe, number one, for women to come forward. Number two, they knew the implications, what this meant for the church, for the leaders, for the business. And the third, they know that it is going to cost a lot to come forward, they're going to lose friends, they're going to lose a business, they're going to lose income, they're going to lose trust. And maybe the longer you've worked at a business, let's say you've worked at a place for 20 years and you decide to come forward, you're going to lose 20 years of networking, just like that or most of it. And that that's costly. And you know, and furthermore, it's very existentially personally, psychologically, emotionally painful to take the heat, because it comes at you on the internet, like, it doesn't matter. This is a world of cruel people. And if you come forward, if you do something, you risk being pounded, and that's, this is what happens. So



Amy Fritz 28:10

the longer someone's in the system, and the more they've benefited from it, once that realization is that it's abusive, or even if you haven't been hurt, you have to make that decision of, "Oh, do I keep benefiting from this?" And what role do I have? How many bodies did I walk over or close my eyes to, where some of them coming forward, probably at a certain point, when they start resisting, they know they've been the bad guy at some point, too. So it's, like, really complicated.



Scot McKnight 28:43

It is, is very complicated. And that's, that's exactly why so many people don't speak up. And we have to respect that space. And that time, until they're in a position where they can come forward and deal with it.



Amy Fritz 28:59

So you work with men and women that want to go into ministry



Scot McKnight 29:02

Yes, I do



Amy Fritz 29:03

You get to sit across, in classrooms with them, and have conversations. What would you tell them? What are you telling them to help them avoid the whole of the pitfalls that come with power? And you can correct me if I'm wrong, but I feel like you can't just accidentally avoid you can't accidentally find yourself with a goodness culture in your church. So what are you telling these young leaders?



Scot McKnight 29:32

One of the great questions I had from one of my students who called me and said, "What can I do now so that I won't become," he used one of these pastors names. Now, it wasn't Bill Hybels. So "I don't become that person later." I think I think that there's there's a couple major issues Chuck DeGroat, In his book, When Narcissism Comes to Church, so helpfully basically sketches the idea that every Pastor is a narcissist at some level. They're on the spectrum because they're up there performing. And there's a sense of performance. This is a little bit of a job. The second thing is, so you people need to recognize they're in a position that is going to promote unhealthy dimensions of their personality, if they're not aware of it. Okay. Second thing is, I think every everybody who's going to be a major leader, significant leader in a church, leadership over people, needs to have psychological testing to become aware of their psychological pattern, their personality, their strengths and weaknesses. And the they need to become especially alert to dimensions of their personality that can become narcissistic or power. And coercive forcefulness. Then the third thing is I think pastors need to concentrate on character, instead of success measured by numbers of people in a church and the amount of money that comes in. And then fourth, I believe pastors must practice the disciplines of diminishing their authority

and power, and celebrity. And this can come in a variety of ways. Some people are not over, overcome by preaching on a platform every Sunday. They don't get a big kick out of that, as if I'm really somebody. I have to tell you, because I've been teaching for so many years, I've been on some of these big platforms. And yeah, it's kind of cool. But it's just doesn't do anything for me, I got to teach what I believe. I get to teach so and I got to do it to 20,000 people. So that's even better. Some people, this really makes them feel big. If you get a rush out of being on a big platform, you need to be aware of that rush, and you need to work against it, and diminish your yourself. And I would say, share the platform, become aware of your personality, admit your need of other people. Don't nurture your celebrity-ness in a leadership position. Just you must not only not nurture it, you have to work against it, because it will come back to eat you alive. When you become a narcissist Pastor, instead of a servant of Christ. That's pretty good. I wish I'd tweeted all that.



Amy Fritz 32:34

I'll transcribe it for you. I'll transcribe it. Send it to you. Laura, I have seen you grow into an advocate. And I do not know what God has for you, obviously. But where do you see your ministry and your gifting being used in helping promote a tov culture in the particularly the American evangelical church culture?



Laura 32:57

That's a good question. I don't know. I'm a teacher by day. I teach primary age children. And so sometimes it's a shocking transition for me between the world of kindergarten and then I come home and I look at emails and read things that readers have sent us or do a podcast or an interview. I don't know, I don't know if I know the answer to that question. I never expected to be in this place to begin with that I would be speaking about abuse in churches, institutions. I'm excited about a tov assessment that we have some churches in the UK piloting right now. I don't know I'm excited about the next step because we've had a lot of questions about well, now what do I do? How do I know if my churches is healthy? I know my church isn't healthy, how, what is my next step? And so I feel like that's gonna be really helpful this assessment tool that we're starting to develop as a next step for individuals and for organizations and creating healthy cultures.



Amy Fritz 34:01

So what would you say to somebody who feels like they have no power in their church, they're not a leader, but they really, really are bought into a tov culture, and they want to make a difference in their church.

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Scot McKnight 34:13

This, this is a really interesting one, because there are a lot of people, Amy who recognize these toxicities, and they want to do something about it, but they can't, or they don't, or they get defeated. So the first thing I would say is they need to be in a healthy place, then they need to be surrounded by two or three minimal advocates, maybe even a therapist who can help them process what they're going through when they are going to go forward with this sort of thing. And a third thing is really important to me is they have to develop realistic expectations for what's going to happen. You know, some people think, "I'm going to go tell the pastor." "We're going to change this church to from toxic to Tov." And that is not going to happen. You know, what's it called organizational transformation theorists say it takes seven years to change a church culture, or an organizational culture. So let's just say if it's going to take seven years do you have? Do you have the stamina to work at this for seven years? Most people don't. So I would say, expectations have to be realistic. What do you expect to happen? I expect them to hear my concerns. That may be all you expect? I expect that they'll hear my concerns, and then consider my concern. They'll not only consider it, but maybe bring me back and ask for more. No, that's that sort of thing. And then? Well, I think I think those are three of the major things. But I would say that they need to find other people who are committed to Tov, as we write about the circle of Tov, in the book, I think that they need to be with those people. Work with those people. Try to live sort of like a pocket of Tov inside the church, rather than to expect the whole church to cave in to their ideas. I mean, they can expect to be opposed, they can expect to be gaslight gaslighted. I guess that's a word gaslit. They can expect to be maybe lose their position. Those are some of the things that have to be considered when they decide they're going to come forward. The other thing is that they need to follow the protocols of the church, because this is the first thing that powerful people do." You didn't follow the rules. Now you've ruined it." It's all it's they think they're a judge in a court. All right, you brought forth information before it was legitimate. Therefore, that information has to be excluded from the jury. That's the way they operate. That's just not true. But that's the way they operate.

**Amy Fritz 37:01**

What is giving you hope right now for the church?

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Laura 37:06

I was gonna say our little Anglican Church gives me hope, because I've seen an example of tov-ness in our pastor especially and in being known at a at a church.



Scot McKnight 37:18

I'll tell you what gives me hope. I mean, it's very discouraging to pick up the emails and the text messages and the I don't even know what they're all called, you know. All these things that come to us in different forms. But the number of people who have suddenly erupted with books that matter in this topic are, it's really pretty significant. I think of Amy Byrd, I think of Kristin Kobes Dumez. I think of all these books, and Beth Allison Barr, I'm very encouraged by the number of people who think we need to speak up.



Amy Fritz 38:03

I hope you enjoyed this conversation with Laura and Scott, I have a link to their book in the show notes. I appreciate the redemptive focus of their book. It's easy to get caught up in being against something that I have found it's far more healthy and sustainable to be for something. It's a subtle change and focus that can make a profound difference in your overall well being. When you read this book, you'll find a work that champions empathy, grace, truth telling justice over loyalty, service over celebrity, and Christ likeness over leadership culture. In a conversation with my dad last week, he challenged me to share a story of a church that was getting it right. Hi, Dad, this one's for you. It's easy to talk a good game when someone else's church reputation is on the line. But will you consistently champion truth telling and transparency when it might cost you something? That is exactly the situation that Tates Creek Presbyterian Church found themselves in. In November of 2017, Senior minister Robert Cunningham had this to say about the me too movement. "I say let the stories come. Let them all come out. Let every attempt to deflect or defend come to an end. And let us instead listen and learn from the courage of the abused. They are our prophets now with voices that will no longer allow us to hide or ignore the epidemic. Indeed, the overdue purge has begun and may not relent until every hidden darkness faces the light of justice." Seven months later, Cunningham. when learning of abuse allegations against a pastor that had served at their church, he was faced with a decision. Would he protect the institution, reversing his words about welcoming the light into the hidden darkness or would he reject it? Here's his response. "I still believe that. Let it all come out. Let the purge continue undaunted, even when it is my own Church's past that needs purging." May God raise up more brave shepherds. Thank you to those of you who are faithfully serving and to those of you who are wounded resisters I hope you feel seen and less alone. Thanks for listening to Episode Five of Untangled Faith. If you enjoyed this episode, I would be so grateful if you would share it with a friend and leave a review on iTunes. You can also find me on Instagram and Facebook as Untangled Faith. For transcripts and show notes, check out untangledfaithpodcast.com. I'll see you back here next week as we wrap up our first season

