

PODCAST START:

[intro music]

Brian: Welcome to the Queer Theology podcast!

Fr. Shay: Where each episode, we take a queer look at the week's lectionary readings. We're the cofounders of QueerTheology.com and the hosts for this podcast. I'm Father Shay Kearns —

B: And I'm Brian G. Murphy. Hello again! We are glad to have you here. We're still in our month of new year, new you – sort of getting ourselves situated for the new year and taking stock of our faith life and our whole life, and figuring out how we can live into our best selves. A few days ago, over the weekend, Shay had an article that went out on our website, and it went out over email, about setting spiritual resolutions. We had a question that we wanted to share with all of y'all because we thought that some of you might be thinking about it as well, which was: "So, this idea of spiritual resolutions resonates with me, but how do I get started? What do I do?" So we wanted to dig into that a little bit. Shay, could you expand more on your spiritual resolutions article?

FS: Yeah, definitely. One of the things that I love about the idea of making resolutions is that it's a chance to, like you said, take stock of where you are in your life, and to think about what is maybe missing. I think it's really important that we do that with our spiritual lives as well, and do it in a way that leads us towards health and wholeness, and doesn't become this 'checkbox' that inspires guilt and doom. I remember, growing up, it was like – I *have* to do my devotions and quiet time, every single day, or God's gonna be pissed at me. [both laugh] And so I had this checkbox of, like, okay, did I do it Monday? Shit, I missed a day; now God's gonna be really mad. Like, I don't think that's a healthy way to make resolutions, just like it's not healthy to make resolutions like that outside of our spiritual lives. When we think about making spiritual resolutions, the first thing is to think about, where are the things that are missing in your life that could lead you towards health and wholeness? How do you start small in building a practice around that? You know, we had a lot of talk in Sanctuary Collective this month about the difference between resolutions and habits. To me, yes, there are distinct differences, but it feels all a little bit like semantics. To me, a resolution is this idea of forming a new habit. What comes up for you, Brian, when you think about how to start a spiritual habit, or how to rekindle a spiritual habit – or even how to find one that actually works for you?

B: You know, as the new year was approaching – you and I have talked about how we each would pick a word for the year, and I did that for this year again. I was really impressed with all of my friends sharing their book lists from the past year that they had read, and so this year, I decided, for the first time in a really, really long time, to set a new year's resolution of reading twenty-six books over the course of the year. And then before you even wrote this spiritual resolution article, I was like, oh, I think I want to also come up with a spiritual resolution as well. And just like in an instant, I switched back to being middle-school Brian, like, oh, well my resolution should be that every day I should do a fifteen-minute quiet time in the morning and read my Bible and pray. [both laugh] I haven't done that in a decade, probably, but the second I thought about spiritual resolutions, that's *immediately* where my mind went, because it was just so drilled-into me for so long, that I have to read the Bible every day and I have to have a quiet time every day. Even though I know, in my own life, waking up early and reading, either a random passage of the Bible, or working my way chapter-by-chapter through the Bible, following a Bible guide – doesn't actually necessarily connect me deeper with my faith. I think reading the Bible is a lot like reading Shakespeare. So much of what's happening in Shakespeare, and in the Bible, is in reference to the culture of the time. If you're not versed in that, you might miss that, Shakespeare is really sexual and bawdy, and there are lots of jokes that are crafted in puns. If you don't know that, and you're just reading Shakespeare now in the modern era, it comes across as being stilted and academic and serious when it's not any of those things.

I think that just having a daily quiet time practice actually can be distancing from my faith and distancing from God. And so, I quickly threw that resolution out. [both laugh] Instead, what I wanted to commit to this year – I don't have an every-day type thing or an every-other-day thing, but I want to focus on three areas. Sort of, like, my personal, internal spirituality and mental health – so that for me is some combination of yoga, meditation, journaling, reading – and I want to do that pretty regular, like hopefully every day, but I'm not going to beat myself up if I miss a day. And I want to commit to studying my faith, and for me that looks like Christian theology, and also Buddhism has been really helpful for me. So I'm trying to read more about Christianity and Buddhism. And I want to be intentional about being in service, sort of translating those internal things into tangible actions, both spiritual service through the work of Queer Theology, and also service out in the world on the ground, whether that's volunteering or donating, things like that.

FS: I really love all of that. I think one of the key things for me when thinking about what to start with or what to do is to, like you said, really think about what's been missing in your life. I know some people who, they volunteer *all the time*,

right? They are always doing service. But they don't have a lot of time to reflect on their faith. So maybe for that person, it's figuring out how to start a meditation or prayer or journaling practice. Or maybe if you are like, all into the intellectual, and you're reading theology books all the time, then it's about figuring out how you can put your faith into practice by either serving somewhere or being in a community of people who are living out faith together. Like, it becomes less intellectual and more practical and more embodied. But again, it's all about figuring out what is going to lead you towards health and wholeness. If a fifteen-minute quiet time doesn't work for you, and adds stress and anxiety, then that's not the practice you should be embarking on. For other people it's being out in nature, and so finding ways to connect with nature, even if you live with a city, that's really important.

B: Right.

FS: And I think, too, this idea of the fact that we can just pick up the Bible and read it [laughs] is really damaging and dangerous sometimes. I just started reading Rob Bell's book *What is the Bible?* and I really want to recommend that to folks. It's such an accessible and easy-to-read book, but he really dives into what's going on behind the scenes and why it matters, and how it leads to both more enjoyment of reading the Bible and also a better understanding of scripture and theology. Like I said, it's super accessible. If Bible reading is on your list of things that you want to dive more into as a spiritual resolution, buy that book. Make it your companion on your journey.

B: Yeah, all great things. If setting a spiritual resolution is something that you would like to do, we would love to support you in that process. Sanctuary Collective is a place where LGBTQ Christians and straight, cisgender supporters from around the world come together to be in community together and dive deeper into our faith. Just last week, we launched three new channels within our Slack discussion app: one for folks who are looking for affirmation that it's okay to be LGBTQ, to wrestle with those questions of 'is it really okay, and how do I know it's okay'; another channel for diving deeper, really looking at what our queerness has to say about our faith and what our faith has to say about our queerness, recognizing all the ways in which Christianity has always been queer; and a section for leaders, so if you're a pastor, or a teacher, or a volunteer leader, a Sunday School teacher, we can support you in that. We would love to walk alongside you as you make spiritual resolutions. Shay and I are in the Slack channel talking and interacting with folks every single day. Not only do you get to benefit from us, but you get to benefit from the wisdom and support of the whole community. I think we recently passed a hundred registered users of Sanctuary Collective, which is really cool. We would love to see you inside of Sanctuary

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How to set spiritual resolutions

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Collective. You can learn more at QueerTheology.com/community. Get all the details there. And we will see you soon!

[outro music]

B: The Queer Theology podcast is just one of many things that we do at QueerTheology.com, which provides resources, community and inspiration for LGBTQ Christians and straight cisgender supporters.

FS: To dive into more of the action, visit us at QueerTheology.com. You can also connect with us online on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Instagram.

B: We'll see you next week.

PODCAST END

Transcript by Taylor Walker

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