

Scripture Untangled

Season 5: Episode 1 | Philip Yancey | A Best-Selling Author's Search for Grace and Meaning

00:00

Hello and welcome to Scripture Untangled, a podcast by the Canadian Bible Society. My name is Joanna la Fleur. I'm a friend of the Canadian Bible Society, and I'm going to be your guide for today's episode. Today, Lorna Dueck will be interviewing best-selling author Philip Yancey. He grew up in a strict fundamentalist church in the southern USA, and young Philip Yancey tended to view God as a scowling super cop searching for anyone who might be having a good time in order to squash them. And even to this day, Philip Yancey quips about being in recovery from that kind of church and view of God. He was taught that God answers prayers, even miraculous things, but his father died of polio just after his first birthday, despite many prayers for his healing. So, in his childhood that had many troubles, it launched Philip Yancey to probe the most basic questions and the deepest mysteries of the Christian faith. And he's been guiding millions of readers with his books like, *Disappointment with God*, and *Where Is God When It Hurts?* He's written over 30 books with 18 million copies of Philips books that are circulating in some 50 languages worldwide. So, we join Lorna Dueck as she interviews Philip Yancey now.

01:17

For Philip Yancey reading offered a window to a different world. So, he devoured books that opened his mind, challenged his upbringing and went against what he had been taught. In doing so a sense of betrayal began to engulf him. In his words, "I felt I had been lied to. I realized that God had been misrepresented to me. Then cautiously, warily, I returned, circling around the faith to see if it might be true." Those discoveries about God and more are contained in Philips recent memoir, *Where the light fell*, where he takes us on a journey from strict fundamentalism to a search for grace and meaning. Welcome to Scripture Untangled with the Canadian Bible Society, Phillip.

02:08

Thank you so much, Lorna. It's great to be with you. And I brought my Commonwealth mug just so we could feel a little more cooperative.

02:16

That's really great. Because where are we finding you? Are you in Colorado?

02:22

I'm in Colorado, and I know I should get one with a maple leaf. Maybe, maybe on my next trip to Canada, I'll do that.

02:27

We still are proud of the Commonwealth, no, that's just great. And you, you do travel back and forth. And you're still doing speaking. But we've got so much we're going to have a chance to cover with today. But let's start back. It was a serious car accident off an icy Colorado Road, your vehicle flipping over five times and having a broken neck. That's what caused you to as you're laying out there, wondering if you are going to be paralyzed. It caused you to commit to writing your memoir. What has it been like to go public with such a painful upbringing as you have had?

03:13

Well, you're right, it was one of those situations where I was strapped down to a bodyboard really couldn't move my arms or legs. And I lay there for a while, they're doing MRIs and CAT scans and things like that, just to see how serious the injury was. They were trying to determine whether a little fragment of bone, because it was that kind of break, had penetrated my carotid artery. And at one point, the doctor came in and said, we have a jet standing by to fly you to Denver for emergency surgery. But just between you and me, if indeed your carotid artery has been compromised, you won't make it to Denver. So, you should call the people you love and tell them goodbye, just in case. Whoa, that's a wakeup call. And I lay there as it as it turned out, I was here seven hours and all before I was finally released, and I didn't die, obviously. And during that seven hours I thought through okay, if I did die today, what would I regret not having gotten to yet, especially as a writer. And clearly what came to the foreground was my story. My memoir. Because I had been planning for decades really, to write it, but there were family complications. I didn't want to hurt people further, and the story was still unfolding. And when I faced that possibility that, you know, we have no guarantee of the future. I better get to work and write this memoir. And so, I made a solemn commitment to do that. I now see my story as a gift even though it had a lot of unsavory parts a difficult family, a toxic church and some unfortunate things that have happened. But for me as a writer, it gave me a chance to just put my life together. I found as a journalist that everybody has a story. And in my case, it was a story that was a little more extreme at various points along the way than most people. But from that, I could present it in a way that they could come respond with their own stories.

05:26

Well, let's start with something that really was quite extreme. Your 25-year-old polio inflicted father was a passionate Christian. And in a faith inspired move, he took himself off the iron lung that was keeping him alive, believing for healing, he was not healed. But he died days later, after your first birthday. Do you think about your Father in heaven? Do you think about meeting him?

05:57

Every once in a while, my mother would raise that possibility to us as children, sometimes in a kind of a threatening way, your daddy sees what's going on. He knows what you're doing. So, he was kind of a scary mythical character to us. I had no memory of him at all. I was 13 months old when he died. And the fact is, Lorna, I didn't know that secret that you just told until I was 18 years old. I knew my father had died. Of course, a lot of people died from polio. But I didn't know that the reason he died was because people believed he would be healed. And they deliberately removed him from the iron lung. He cooperated completely. It was a terrible existence. He was in a charity hospital. He didn't get good care, he couldn't even breathe, he couldn't move at all. There was no television, there was nothing to distract him. And he was in there for several months, just an agonizing time. And he had hope, he had faith, because they were planning to be missionaries, he, and my mother. And they had raised support, they had supporters, they were ready to go. And then boom, overnight, he went from healthy to being unable to move. And so, they clung to this shred of hope and faith, and people anointed him and really believed that he would be healed. They were not against him; they were for him. But they took upon themselves, something that they really had no right to do, to decide when God answers our prayers, in what way and when he doesn't. So, they were kind of playing God decided he would be healed, and because of that he died. That was a secret that kind of went on to ground, I never knew it growing up. And then I came across the Atlanta Journal-Constitution newspaper, it was a report of him just after he had moved from this charity hospital, into another clinic where he wasn't really getting treatment at all. But he was showing maybe a little bit of improvement for a couple of days. And I looked at the date of the newspaper, and it was nine days before he died. So, then it clicked for me. This explains so much. My mother's moods, her anger her, ... she didn't believe she could take it out on God, but she must have felt betrayed by God. Here, they were giving their lives to serve as missionaries in Africa, and then boom, this terrible tragedy happened. And so, she took it out in other unhealthy ways, including her family, my brother and I. So, that's the secret that came out, and I've been coming to terms with it. And we've had numerous discussions after that. But it kind of determined a lot of my life, we were going to be raised in poverty, because we just, she was unable to really make a living. She was unprepared for that. And she was stuck with these two young boys all on her own and lived as a widow until she died this year in 2023. She died at the age of 99. In May of 2023.

09:08

We're going to get to that in a moment. And because your memoir is so, your mother is a very loud voice in that, understandably so. But do you think about your father in meeting him, meeting Him in heaven? Do you think you'll meet Him in heaven?

09:24

I think it would be great. I really do. You know, his dream was to go to Africa. And then my mother decided, well that won't happen, because he's gone now. But his sons will replace him. And we didn't go as missionaries to Africa, but my books did. And I've been to Africa. And I would like to say to him, maybe I was

able to help fulfill what you wanted to do but were not able to do. And I've had the privilege of going to several places, and my books are in numerous countries in Africa. So, it would be fun to sit down and compare notes along that line.

10:07

I can imagine him giving you a big hug and pat on the back and saying well done. Okay, you mentioned your mother, such a complicated, difficult woman, and you do understand what it is to have scripture tangled and twisted. And here we are on the podcast of Scripture Untangled. Can you explain to us how the Bible was delivered to you as a child, as a young, young teen?

10:39

I think I really heard more from the Old Testament than from the New Testament. Because I heard a lot about judgment I heard a lot about, you get what you deserve for your punishment, anytime you do something wrong, and you're rewarded whenever you do something, right. And if you read the book of Proverbs, you know, there in a general sense, there's some truth there. But then when you look closely, it doesn't really work out that way. Look at Joseph who spent years in prison, not for doing something wrong, but for being falsely accused. And you can just go through the Bible, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and all of the people whose stories are in the Bible go through that test. And later in the New Testament, Hebrews 11, that particular chapter looks back on those people. It's often called the faith hall of fame. Because these were people who, who really weren't treated very well in life, and had to believe, it took faith to believe that God loved them, because they're going through very hard times. What I learned early on Lorna, is that not everybody who speaks for God does so, and my own father's death is a good example. These are people who believed he would be healed and claimed that, and they were wrong, and that had tragic consequences. And then later, as a teenager, I'm growing up in Atlanta, Georgia, just as the Civil Rights Movement is underway, and my church's is very explicitly racist. They teach this terrible curse of ham theory; I hope your viewers and listeners had never heard of it. I hope it's that far into the past. But basically, it was a distortion of Genesis chapter nine, this strange scene with Noah where some people believe that darker races, darker skinned races were cursed by God. If you look at it closely, it has nothing to do with that. But that was seized upon by slaveholders, particularly to justify their behavior. And I, I came to realize that the church was utterly wrong about their racist doctrine. And that became a crisis of faith for me, because if they were wrong about race, maybe they were wrong about the Bible, and Jesus and these other things. And I, I went through this period of just not knowing what to believe, or really not believing anything, just kind of holding everything in suspension. And then later I was able to go back, really my whole career has been going back and retracing what I had learned, and through my study of the Bible, especially reconstructing my faith in a different way, a more personal and hopefully more grounded way.

You know, I should tell you Lorna, I had two create opportunities to do that. One was I did the student Bible, which is an edition of the Bible, where I spent three years going through every word of the Bible and doing some introductions and some commentary that enlightens difficult parts. And then another time, right before I wrote a book called *Disappointment with God*, I spent two weeks doing nothing but reading the Bible all the way through, in a two-week period. So, I've got that kind of, verse by verse, word by word, and then especially the 30,000 foot overview, looking at the whole thing as a story that came together as a story in a different way. And I'm so grateful for that grounding and understanding the Bible.

14:20

Well, we do love to learn on this podcast what your personal Bible reading habits are, what they are today, and how do you currently engage with the Bible, Phillip,

14:32

I start every morning with about an hour. I know they have these Bible reading programs where you should read three chapters a day or something like that, and then you can get all the way through the Bible in the year. I like to go a little bit slower. One chapter is usually not enough, so I usually do about two chapters a day. And I meditate on it, it's a prayer time as well, but I did that this morning. I was in second King's, a strange part of the Bible, these, you know, some of these kings, a few of them were good, but most of them were pretty bad. And we've got a lot of lessons to learn, you know, we worry about our politics in the United States now, well, several 1000 years ago, it was just as bad or worse.

15:19

And you who are such a reader and writer of books, what is it about the pages of Scripture that are important to you to spend an hour with each day?

15:32

It's startling, it's unexpected every time I just check my head, if you were writing a book of propaganda, to try to get people to believe you would write a very different kind of book. The Bible just tells it like it is. I mentioned these kings, you know, you go through, you go through the entire Bible, and it is a bunch of flawed people. The greatest giants of faith in the Bible are the most flawed characters, people like Moses, who committed murder, David, murder, and adultery. Peter, who denied Christ three times, Paul, who made his living persecuting Christians for a time. And those are the best of the lot. It's just a very realistic book. And, and even in the, we'll start with the book of Genesis, it's a book of family stories. And in my own little family, just three people, we had a feud, where my mother and brother didn't speak for 50 years, half a century, I finally got them together in a phone conversation. But you see that in the book of Genesis, not only did they not speak, they killed each other, and then all these terrible things. It's just a book about life. It's a book about wisdom. And then you see, you see God as one of the characters who occasionally not nearly as often as people wanted, but occasionally would intervene directly, and then kind of step back, keep his hands

off. And then finally, we Christians believe, became one of us become one of those characters, so that we had an upfront model of what God is like, and what we should be like.

17:10

Well, I think that does segue to real life. You lay the Bible along with your real life. Just a few months ago, as you mentioned, your 99-year-old mother, such a big figure in your life passed away. She had only two children, just you and your brother. And as you just mentioned, fifty, five - zero years without speaking to your brother. And I want to read an excerpt from your blog. I love your blog, Philip, I'm glad you do it. But you wrote about your mother's last days recently. You wrote, 'after several days of unresponsiveness, my mother's nurses observe, she's clinging to life even as her vital organs shut down. Is there someone she needs to hear from before she lets go? Some broken relationship, perhaps? And so, following the nurses' advice, I get my brother on the phone for one last communication. I hold the speaker to her ear to hear Marshall say, Mother, I just want to tell you goodbye. She never regains consciousness, and two days later, at one o'clock in the morning, she passes from earthly life.' That's just a really powerful story to me, Philip, that a nurse acknowledges physically we need to make amends. How did you feel about that experience?

18:45

Yeah, I felt very mixed. We were there about 10 days with an interruption in between her last days on Earth. My wife and I were there, and although I tell stories in the book that don't make her look very good. I was aware that she had a dramatic effect on many people. She was a Bible teacher. She taught Bible stories to children. And there are many people and many people after her death, wrote in blogs and posted on Facebook about how they're different because of her. Maybe they found Jesus because of her. There are a lot of beautiful stories and I saw that. I have to go back to the incident we talked about at the very beginning of my father dying. And I think what happened there was my mother was deeply betrayed and hurt, wounded. But she wasn't able to get that out. She wasn't able in her theology to express herself to God. Actually, I wish she had read the Bible because in Job, in Lamentations, in many of the prophets, in a lot of the Psalms, people are angry at God. They're upset, they let him know how they feel. This is not right. This is unfair. It's not fair for a young man like that to be paralyzed and die of polio, and to leave you and that. But she didn't feel she could express that to God. So, in some ways, she took it out on us or took out her, her pent-up demand. So, she had a public persona, and then she had a private persona that only my brother and I knew about for a long time. And I guess I would say, looking back, there's a lesson I learned from the Bible, and that is that God uses the talent pool available. God uses the talent pool available. It's not always the best talent pool, but it's people who are willing to serve and she was willing to serve, and she was flawed. But she was also effective, more for other people than for her own family. But that's not so unusual either. My goodness, you look at Christian leaders, and you can find a lot of them, who have children who don't follow in their steps at all and emerge kind of wounded or broken or angry. So, it's not really unusual, but I do honor the good that she did, and the life that she lived. And I'm very grateful, she had a kind of hard draw in life. When my father died, she had never driven a car, she had never written a cheque. She was now in Atlanta,

Georgia, where she grew up in Philadelphia, very different environment. And she had to start from scratch and create a new identity for herself. And she succeeded in that and lived a long and fruitful life.

21:43

And how did she process you going public with the hard parts of her life, and you do write what an honored Bible teacher she was. But it's peppered in between just the very difficult woman that she was. How did she feel about having her warts and all read by all of us?

22:03

She could not read my book because of macular degeneration. So, she was unable to read toward the end when the book was published. And I went to the people close to her, and I said, this is hard for me to do, and I don't want to hurt my mother any more than she has already been hurt. So just please protect her. She knows I'm writing a memoir; I actually interviewed her in the course of the book several times, went to places from our childhood. So, she, she knew I was writing the story. And but it's my story. It's not her story. It's my story, and any portrait of her is a portrait through my eyes, and I tried to make that clear. She has a very different view, I'm sure of me, and of her own life. I learned that there's an author that I admired greatly and learned from named Frederick Buechner. He died not so long ago. And the seminal event of his life was when his father committed suicide. I think Fred was 12 or 13 years old. And he didn't write about it for years and years and years, because he was so afraid of what his mother would think. She was a fierce woman. And then he suddenly decided, I don't have the right to write about my father's death from my mother's point of view, or its effect on my mother. But I do have the right to write about my father's death and its effect on me. That is my story. And I finally decided that too. I tried to be fair, and be clear and honest with my mother, and yet I know she would write it differently. My brother would write it differently. And that's what memoirs do. They're one person's point of view on a life that involves other characters as well.

23:53

Pausing the conversation with Philip Yancey to talk to you about the Bible course, because whether you're a seasoned Bible reader or you're just starting on the journey, the Bible course offers a superb overview of the world's best-selling book. This eight-session course will help you grow in your understanding of the Bible. It uses a unique storyline, and the Bible course shows you how key events, books, and characters all fit together. It's great for in person groups or can be used for digital gatherings. It really can be used anywhere. Watch the first session for free and review the accompanying course guide. Go to [Bible course.ca](https://biblesociety.ca/thebiblecourse) to learn more, biblesociety.ca/thebiblecourse.

And the link will be down in the show notes. Now back to the conversation.

24:36

I think that's beautiful that you suggested your mother be protected from having to think that through at the end of her life. But what do you recommend to us about traveling into those very broken events and

emotions of our lives? I mean, you were over 65 when you're writing this kind of broken past. What do you recommend about how we travel when we travel there.

25:04

My wife was quite nervous about that. I often do my writing out in the mountains about an hour from here in the real mountains. And I would leave and she, she would know what I was going to write that week, and it would be a difficult painful period to bring up. But there's something about putting it on paper, Lorna, that tames it. You know, these ghosts floating around in our past, if you capture them, and somehow put them down on a computer screen or on a pad of paper, they're no longer ghosts, they're no longer scary. And I would come back, and she would say, Are you okay? Are you okay? So yeah, it was great. Because I had these dramatic scenes, and as a writer, you know, you respond to those. And I kind of would step back from them, and then every once in a while, I would think, yep, that was me and that scene, but in writing it, you know, I had written so many things by then already, I knew how to go through with the scene. Almost without thinking this occurs to me. Sometimes I was able to do that, other times I did not, you know, I'd have to stop. I would be emotionally affected by what I was writing and just go get a Kleenex, and just stop and sometimes be very grateful to God, that I survived those moments and lived to tell about it. And, they all fit together, into a story. The story was my life.

26:33

And there's many people listening. They have an emotional chasm of an unresolved past. What would you say to those listeners?

26:43

I have done many articles on people over the years. And my first book was a book called, *Where's God When It Hurts*. So, I often am involved in writing about pain and suffering. And then I'm called to difficult places, like in the United States, we have the school shootings, and I've been to Virginia Tech, and Newtown, Connecticut, and Columbine, in these places of tragedy, and talked with many of the people involved. And I came up with a phrase, Lorna that, has come out of my journalistic experience, and that is it goes like this, that redeemed pain impresses me more than pain removed. Pain redeemed impresses me more than pain removed. Our natural reaction is to wish it were true, you know, to roll back the clock and keep me from having that accident or whatever was going on. But actually, when you interview people, and you do surveys, the vast majority say the times I grew most, especially grew most in my faith, those were hard times, difficult times. And if we hang in there with trust and faith, independence and help of others around us, later, we can often look back on those, 'Oh, that was a time of redeemed pain, I wouldn't wish it on anybody, I wouldn't wish it on myself, but those things that were most difficult for me,' become pillars of faith for most people. So, I would say there are some people on radio and television who will promise you the bad things won't happen to you, and they're just wrong. You know, bad things do happen. But I call God the great recycler. He takes

things that we wish didn't happen and turns them into things that are useful for us. The apostle Paul was a great example.

28:43

So, what is needed for grace to shine brighter than your suffering, than a person suffering? What is needed to be effectively recycling? What seems like pain?

28:57

I would start with community. Pain and suffering should come with a warning label that says, 'Do not attempt this at home alone.' You need people around you, you need somebody, when the doubts come up that you can feel free to say, 'why would God treat somebody like this? I don't know if I even believe in God anymore.' You need somebody who's not thrown by that but will say, 'well, I understand I've been there too. But you know, I trust that God, keep hanging in there.' Be aware that what we do here the way we respond truly matters and point to people like the Apostle Paul who went through all kinds of suffering, and later he was able to look back and say, but God used every one of those things for my benefit. I grew through them. And they included shipwreck and snakebite and torture and prison and all these crazy things. But he said all of these things can be used by God for my good. That's from Romans 8:28. And that's a powerful statement that I believe.

30:00

Beautiful. I want to shift gears a bit because you're an amazingly active person. And you and your wife of 52 years, Janet, she's a social worker in hospice chaplain, you've been mountaineers like I mean, serious mountaineers, you climb. Tell us a few places you've submitted.

30:22

In Colorado, we have these mountains that are right around 14,000 feet, which I think, is 4300 meters, by your standards. And we call them fourteeners. There are 54 of them. And we moved here from downtown Chicago, we were flatlanders. But we wanted to get to know our new state. So, somebody invited us to climb the shortest one, it was 14,001 feet called Sunshine Mountain. And we did and it was such an exhilarating experience. Just the view you get at the top and the exertion and the ecosystems that you go through to climb, that we started climbing several every summer, and it took us maybe 15 years. And finally, we climbed all 54 of those 14,000-foot mountains. So, it's been my way of getting to know our state. And it is a marriage tester, I must say Lorna. Especially if you get lost and start blaming each other for getting lost. But we survived and feel very proud of that achievement, just the thrill of accomplishing something physical like that over a period of years.

31:39

Climbing all the fourteeners so what do you learn in mountaineering? I mean, I read the incident where you guys were in a lightning storm on a mountain and like what do you all learn when you do such a feat?

31:53

You learn humility, you learn your place in the universe, you know, you read the end of the book of Job and God is saying, 'you have no idea Job,' and describes the world. Well, we're you're on a mountain, you feel so small, and the mountain is so big. And it can be scary. You can be in terrifying times like lightning, storms and snowstorms, hail, things like that. But it teaches you if you just put one step after another one step after another and don't give up, you can usually reach the top and usually make it down. And you know, it's not Mount Everest. Not everybody does survive those. But these were tall enough to be a challenge, and to feel good about when you reach the top.

32:43

There's other people listening, they may not have mountaineered, but there are people who have something else in common with you. People who never had children, Philip, you, and Janet didn't have kids, what did you learn from that?

32:57

I can't imagine how people do life with children, frankly. Because it is so hard just to do your job and keep your car running and your house repaired and all that, the grass cut. And then when I watch these parents how, you know they'll spend hours at night or maybe even in the daytime they're doing homeschooling with their children is just amazing to me. It's a good thing, that God ordered that so that you're in your 20s and 30s when the really tough times happen because at my age, I'm just amazed at what parents go through. We tried to; we didn't have that opportunity. So, we tried to fill it with something else in our careers, in my case, my writing and Janet's case as a social worker, and hospice chaplain. So sometimes we joke, well, we did have children. I have like 25 books, that's like we have 25 children, I've been kind of shepherding them along, and seeing how they're doing and responding to people who write me in my books. And Janet has a lot of children too. They tend to be senior citizens because she ran a senior citizen's social work program. So, we did find fulfillment in other areas. Now that we're reaching age ourselves, of course, it complicates life because a lot of people my age, are spending time with their grandchildren and making plans for different living situation for their children to help out and we have to face different challenges because of that.

34:31

Well, and you do have a new mountain to navigate. You've written on how you have been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, a 2023 diagnosis for you. You wrote about it in Christianity today entitled, 'Parkinson's the gift I never wanted.' How are you doing navigating a life with a diagnosis of an incurable disease?

34:56

I'm doing quite well, better than I thought. It was a blow, you know this, a blow in the gut when you hear a diagnosis like that, because Parkinson's is a degenerative disease, it gets worse, it doesn't get better. The good news is that it took me a while to get into a good neurologist, but I got some good care. I responded well to the medications, some of the medication is difficult, challenging for people, and some people just give up on the medication because of side effects. And I haven't had those side effects. And these symptoms we associated with Parkinson's, most of the major ones, are under control at this point, and I, hope that continues. I have to be careful; it changes life. The other day, I spilled a big cup of coffee all over my nice, light-colored carpet. And I am not used to that, you know, I'm, I'm not as coordinated as I used to be, my handwriting is deteriorating, and I don't know what else lies down the road. I have to practice balance, because falling is a danger for a person with Parkinson's. So, I just have to be a lot more intentional and careful and kind of slow down to get through life.

36:15

You actually have had an immersion into disability already, Phillip, when your only sibling, Marshall, had a severe stroke in 2009. And you have been so present with Marshall's recovery and new life. What have you observed though about people, as you immersed yourself into Marshall's world of disability, and helped him navigate with a broken body.

36:42

One of the first things I noticed is how other people treat a disabled person. So, a lot of times they avert their gaze, you know, they don't want to be staring at you. So, they kind of look away. And my brother has a condition called aphasia, which means it's hard for him to speak. And he actually wears a t-shirt every day that says aphasia, 'I know what to say, I don't know how to say it.' And I like that because that puts it right out there, and it kind of breaks the ice. If someone's looking at his T-shirt, they may start a conversation and they know he may not respond right away, or he might get his words mixed up, which often happens. But I also noticed that children were the only honest people around him, they would walk right up to him and say, 'what's the matter with you? Can't you walk?' If he was in a wheelchair. 'Why are you using that cane? Or does it hurt?' You know, whereas other people, the polite people just kind of pretend it doesn't exist? Well, he knows he's disabled. Now I know I'm disabled. And it kind of helps if people just put it right out there and acknowledge it and accept you regardless, or accept you because even, so that's one thing I've noticed. And the other thing I've noticed, I've just become a lot more sensitive to being patient and compassionate to people with disabilities. Shortly after I wrote that article and got my own diagnosis, I was on an airplane and there was a man in first class who I think had Parkinson's and he was quite elderly. And he couldn't get his suitcase out of the upper bin and kept falling into his seat, getting up again, and the people behind me, you know, they're businessmen wanting to catch the next plane. And they're getting very frustrated making these bad comments. And I realized this could be me in a few years. And he needed patience and compassion and being disabled myself, to a lesser degree, I'm trying to learn that. That it requires patience from other people,

and to be as sensitive to them as possible, and especially to be compassionate to other people who are even further along than I am at this stage.

38:59

Yeah, you spent so much time explaining how you journeyed alongside your stroke ridden brother Marshall. What might those differently abled, people with afflictions have that can contribute to the family of God, that we're maybe in too much of a hurry to see. What might they contribute?

39:20

Well, my brother is a much kinder, more thoughtful, calmer person today than he ever was before the stroke. Before the stroke, he was on a kind of a whirlwind search for who knows what, but he tried every kind of addiction you can imagine. He should have been a concert pianist, but he damaged his brain taking too much LSD in the 1960s. And, was addicted the most of anything that you could get addicted to and people would call him arrogant. He was very smart, but he was defensive and off putting. It's not like that now he's pleasant to be around, people enjoy him. And he has friends that he never had before, he went through a divorce along the way, and he's managed life on his own. And he's, he's heroic in many ways. So, I like that. And I've also, we have a great nephew, who has severe disabilities and of course, others in the family. And watching them, I have never heard a parent say, I wish he or she had never been born, I've never heard them say that. It can be a shock. If you have a Down syndrome or something, you know, there is going to be adjustments that you have to make in life, but again, and again, with the parents of those people, and hear them say, this is the greatest blessing in my life, I've learned so much through my child. And it's one of those examples of pain being redeemed. You may when you hear the news that you've got a problem with a baby that's not yet born. You may think this is the end of my life. But many people look back and say, that was the greatest gift that I was trusted with, for my life.

41:11

And you do articulate, both in your books, but on your blog community, that you want to be, you Phillip, want to be a good steward of this latest chapter in your life. What are you hoping that would look like?

41:29

Yeah, again, as a journalist, I sat there thinking one day of the people I've interviewed, and some of them are very successful, and very wealthy. You know, I've interviewed presidents of the United States and rock stars and actors and football players and people like that. And then there's another group of people that I've interviewed who are people who are broken by pain, leprosy patients in India, that's, that's one of the most difficult states I can imagine. And when I look at them, together, I find that the people who have these struggles, maybe it's poverty, maybe it's a challenge, maybe it's pain, are more likely to be a good steward of that, than these people are to be a good steward of their success. It's a funny thing, we keep thinking, oh, I would like to be one of those rich, famous persons while I've been around these rich, famous persons, I don't

want to be one of those. I think it's, you're less likely to be a good steward of that. So, I've got who knows how many years left, and they may be different couple years now than they are now for me, maybe much more challenging physically. So, I want to be a good steward. So that at the end of my life, I wouldn't be known as this kind of crabby, crotchety complaining person, but someone who looks back with gratitude, for the life that I've had, and the life that I'm living now. I want to use the time I have left in a productive way to continue writing as long as I can. And then to ask God for that kind of calm, attitude of acceptance and gratitude. I think that's so important. Gratitude for the rich life that I've already enjoyed.

43:20

Well, we are grateful that you've shared your story with us today on the podcast. In your recent memoir, *Where the Light Fell*, I heartily recommend it. And Philip, we're grateful that you have taken time to go away to that cabin in the mountains and write your thoughtful books. And treat them like your children. And it's just been wonderful to have you here at Scripture Untangled.

43:48

Thank you. Well, it's been a pleasure. I love what you're doing, keeping the Bible alive and in the minds, and hearts of Canadians and people all over the world. It's a book of Wisdom. It's God's message to us. And it takes some work to figure out and understand what God is saying. But my goodness it's full of surprises full of insights, and it's my handbook for life.

44:12

Philip Yancey, joining us from his home in Colorado. Thank you very much.

44:17

My pleasure.