

Queerology Podcast

Episode 51 – Vicky Beeching

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Matthias: If you enjoy listening to Queerology, then I need your help. Here's why. I create Queerology by myself on shoestring budget, recording and editing every episode in my tiny closet. How's that for irony? That's where you come in. Will you help keep Queerology on the air by supporting it financially? By tipping as little as \$1 a month, you can help me improve and keep making Queerology every week. All you have to do is jump over to matthiasroberts.com/support to make a pledge and listen away. Hey, friends. This is Matthias Roberts and you're listening to Queerology, a podcast on belief and being. This is Episode 51.

Vicky: Pry to some important in the sense of mirroring back to God the delight that he has in us and actually feeling his delight and then going, actually, "I sense God's delight in me. I'm going to show the world and God that I accept that delight. I can be proud of myself."

Matthias: Vicky Beeching is a writer, speaker and a quality campaigner named by the Guardian as, arguably, the most influential Christian of our generation. Previously, she worked as a song writer and a worship leader throughout her 20s and her 30s with much of that career based here in the U.S. Her songs are still some of the most sung songs in churches around the world. Try seeing that multiple times, most sung songs. She was a regular guest at America's biggest mega churches and Christian festivals, but when she came out as gay, all of that changed. The door on her music career closed. She was no longer welcome in those churches. Now, several years later, she's based in her homeland of England where she works as an author, a media commentator, a keynote speaker where she champions a message of LGBTQ quality.

Matthias: Vicky also focuses on raising awareness around mental health, both in the church and in the corporate world. She has degrees in theology from Oxford University and has recently returned to academia alongside her writing and speaking to work on a PhD. Her first book, *Undivided*, is out today. Maybe, hop into your car and listen to this episode on your way to the bookstore to pick up a copy of her new book. It is absolutely incredible. Honestly, I think, it's a game changer. It's one of the best books on faith and sexuality that I have read to-date. It is so good.

Matthias: Before we dive in to the conversation with Vicky, two things really fast. If you're on the East Coast, come hang out with me at Wild Goose Festival. We're going to be recording the first ever live episode of Queerology at the festival on the main podcast stage. That's happening July 12th or 15th in Hot Springs, North Carolina. For more information about that, head over to wildgoosefestival.org. If you decide to join us, be sure to use the code, Goose Cast 18 to get 25% off your registration. If you're on the West Coast, come

hang out with me at Spirit Pride in Vancouver BC, Canada. I'm going to be keynoting the Saturday morning keynote of that conference that's happening July 27th through 29 in Vancouver. For more information about that and to register, head over to spiritpride.org.

Matthias: I'm so excited to have Vicky on the episode today. The key has been a dear friend of mine for the past several years. She is someone who I feel like just embodies strength and bravery. You can just hear that all throughout this conversation. Let's go ahead and dive in. Vicky, hi. Welcome.

Vicky: Hello. Thank you so much for having me today.

Matthias: Yeah. I'm so excited to have you here. I was actually thinking about like getting nitty-gritty and ready for this episode. I was thinking about the last time we saw each other, which was, I think, three years ago in Kansas City.

Vicky: Yes. Yes, it was. Yes.

Matthias: We were going to do dinner one night. I remember, you texted me like "Where do you want to go?" I was like "You can choose wherever you want to go." I was expecting you to say like a local, maybe, Kansas City place that none of us had been to or whatever. You were like "Oh, I just saw Denny's out my window. I've never been there before."

Vicky: That is the strange thing about being British. We like the most strange things that your country has to offer. For me, it's really rare to be able to get American style pancakes with bacon and maple syrup. We didn't really have that combination in the U.K. Waffle House is exciting to me because we didn't have them here. It's not that I don't like nice food. I do, but it's like diner experience. In America, we've seen it on so many movies in the U.K. It was just funny that we could've gone to some really fancy Kansas City steakhouse or something. I was like "Oh, I'd really like to go to Denny's and have pancakes and maple syrup and bacon."

Matthias: Yeah. Nobody complained. It was delicious.

Vicky: We had lots of calories and lots of fun.

Matthias: Yes. So good. To start, this is a question that I ask everyone. How do you identify? How would you say that your faith has helped form that identity?

Vicky: That is a huge question. You don't let anybody get off easily on this podcast. I identify as British and gay and Christian. I guess, it would be three big parts of my identity. Initially, it was my faith that prevented me from identifying as gay. Right up until the age of 35, I was in the closet and had been brought up in a church that saw being gay as simple and shameful as many of us have been. I know so many of us share that same journey of having faith is the one thing that stops us being able to be honest about who we are. It took me all those years to realize, actually, that my faith could affirm my gay orientation. It went from being my faith that prevented me being gay to actually me

having an experience with God and with the bible. That opened my eyes to the fact that God could actually affirm same sex relationships, could affirm me as a gay person. It was like my faith that kept me in the closet and then, also, my faith then set me free to step into a fully authentic life.

Vicky: The relationship between being gay and Christian has been complex, but eventually, it's led to me feeling liberated and authentic.

Matthias: Tell me a little bit about that process. You have your book out today. Congratulations. I feel like that's what your book is about. Could you share with us a little bit what that journey was like? Because you had a lot happen as you've worked to reconcile your identity and your faith.

Vicky: Yeah. I have to also say that as I decide, Matthias designed both covers for the book, the U.S. and the U.K. edition. They look beautiful. It was all his design work. Well done, you.

Matthias: Thank you.

Vicky: It's fun to work with you. You have many different hats, don't you?

Matthias: Yes. Yes.

Vicky: You're a man of many talents.

Matthias: It was a blast.

Vicky: Yeah. Actually, my journey has been really ... it's just been long and winding. I feel like I've lived about three lifetimes. I think it was partly because when I was growing up, I always wanted to be a worship leader in church and I wanted to write songs for the church. In my early teens, I was locked away in my bedroom with a guitar just writing songs based on scripture. This church just began to sing them in the U.K. I got so excited. I thought, "This is what I want to do with my life. I want to give the church, hopefully, some new songs, have good theology and good music." That became my career goal. It felt like my vocation. My sense of my mission in the world given to me by God. It was so hard to juggle those two things because right around the same time, probably about the age of 13, when people were starting to ask me to sing in churches and it happened super young. I was just this tiny, shy, little British person kind of up to the front singing my songs really nervous and red faced.

Vicky: At the same time, it's getting started in that ministry and that career, I realized that I was gay. It just felt like such an immense amount of stress to feel like I had these two aspects. They were both really important but they could not co-exist. I decided back then. It took me a few years to realize that I was definitely gay. Wondered if it might be a phase and it wasn't, but I just decided to shelf that whole part of my identity so that I could pursue leading worship in evangelical Churches. It began in the U.K. and then after, I went to university. It became the U.S. and the mega church circuit. It was really

meaningful to me to do that job, but I knew that it will hung on me staying in the closet. It took me until the age of 35 to find the courage to actually speak up.

Matthias: Yeah. I'm thinking about that because you describe in the book ... A good portion of the book is, what it was like to co-exist or not even co-exist to try to just force yourself into this world that the U.S. worship industry wanted you to fit. I'm curious about what that was like to live this very public face of this big worship leader who was the darling of the Christian music industry and yet, you're holding the secret that you feel like you can't share with anyone.

Vicky: Yeah. It was just so hard. It gives me shudders just thinking back to it. I would stand up on the stages and look out 5,000, 10,000 people singing along to songs that I'd written. It would be such a surreal experience to know that if they knew that one thing about my identity, all of it would be over. It was just such a strange tension to live in, having people come up at the end of meetings and services or tours and saying, "Your songs really touched us and blessed us. We met God through your music." It was just so hard to weigh that all up with this knowledge that it would just take one sentence, "I am gay," for it all to end for my career to be over because it was a Christian record label and it was a Christian booking agent and my work visa in the U.S., actually, was only for that form of employment.

Vicky: Literally, the whole life I'd built for myself in the U.S., and I was there for 10 years signed to that big record label, it all hung on me staying in the closet. I knew if I came out, I would lose it. It was a very precarious life. Obviously, with your psychology hat on, you can very much relate to that, I'm sure, for many of your experiences and people you've spoken to. You feel like you're being ripped in two. For me, it was just my mental health took the full, and then eventually, my physical health as well. Coming out of the closet was, I would've chosen it in the end, but in the end, it was actually the effects on my health that, I think, forced me to make the decision that I had to come out.

Matthias: Yeah. I'm thinking of, there's this therapist who wrote a book called, "The Body Keeps the Score." That makes me think so much of your story of, it was ultimately your body that almost forced you to come out where you couldn't escape it anymore.

Vicky: Yeah. It's funny. My therapist had me read that book.

Matthias: Oh. Yeah.

Vicky: That's the right, good one, isn't it? That's exactly what she said. It's like "Your physicality is keeping a tally of every single time you felt shame and fear and tone into ... I thought it was something I could outrun my whole life. I really did. I would rehearse all of the reasons that they give you in the conversion therapy world or the conservative evangelical world. "You're perfectly whole and human without having a partner. You don't need to be married or dating to be a whole person. Jesus is enough for you." I would be trying to live by all of that stuff passionately and purposefully because I wanted it to become true but it wasn't. It was really damaging. I was so isolated. It just felt like I couldn't connect with anybody because I couldn't ... even my close friends

because nobody knew I was gay. I just felt like there was this glass wall between me and everyone in my life. I think that isolation has such a huge knock on your well-being, isn't it?

Matthias: I think about like it cuts us off from our very personhood when we can't live into who God created us to be. It's just devastating.

Vicky: Yeah.

Matthias: It's just devastating.

Vicky: Yeah. It's devastating to have those two things put at war with each other like your sense of vocation, the thing God has called you to, the place in which you see God move and do things. Just ministry, in general, is so exciting, isn't it? When you're in a church, when you see people helped and you see them healed and whole and God's encountering them. You have to choose between that and then your own desire for a family and someone has come home to and build home where this ... it's just crazy. There's no way that you can be a healthy person and have those two things be pulling you in two different directions.

Matthias: You mentioned this world of ministry. I'm curious if, as you've been on this journey and now that you've come out, you're doing ministry, still, but in a different way. I'm curious if your, maybe, perspective on ministry has changed through this journey.

PART 1 OF 3 ENDS [00:16:04]

Vicky: I think it has. I think, previously, I thought ... I don't know. I guess I thought that I could cut so much of myself off. I think so much of the bible is presented to us about denying ourselves and minimizing and limiting everything we desire. I think the gospel has really been misinterpreted in that way because now, I would say that authenticity feels like ministry of its own when I'm in the world as my true self living this abundant life that the gospels talk about as a full whole, authentic person. I feel like anything I do in terms of ministry is so much more powerful and real and genuine, but I just think there's so much teaching in the church about Jesus calling us to deny ourselves and take up our cross and sacrifice everything and lay down everything we want.

Vicky: You hear people saying, "Oh, I don't want to go and be a missionary in a far off country. I bet God is going to send me to do that one thing that I don't want to do." I think that's such a classic example of us having this really walked view that God wants things for us that would never want for ourselves. I think I'd shut myself down to such a degree that although my music, still apparently, according to other people was touching them and inspiring them, I wasn't really alive in the process. I think that isn't ever God's ideal scenario for us.

Matthias: "Authenticity is a ministry of its own."

Vicky: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

- Matthias: That's beautiful. I feel like that's what your book is, Undivided-
- Matthias: That's what your book is, undivided, coming out, becoming whole, living free from shame. You've stepped into this whole new way of being simply by speaking authentically, speaking truth into the world. What has it been like to take that step, to take that journey into coming out because it certainly hasn't been easy for you?
- Vicky: Yeah, it hasn't. As much as I wish it had been, it has not. I'm going to say I don't have any regrets. I wouldn't want anyone to think that I have any regrets because I certainly don't. I think coming out is always the best choice. I just didn't realize how much damage living in the closet had done to me and how long I would have to spend repairing that damage. I think if I'd come out much, much younger, it would have been so much easier because they would have been less years of damage to undo. I think in my head, I imagined, okay, I'm going to come out and I'd do this newspaper interview in London and tell my story and then I'm going to dance off into the sunset to live this new life, as though I could just click my fingers and it would all change.
- Vicky: In reality, which I think a lot of people don't talk about, but I wanted to talk about in my book, it's not only the journey from growing up to when I finally came out. It also talks about coming out onwards and how the past four years have been, and just the shock it was, I think, to me how much work I'm having to do with my mental health and my physical health to recover. Going in deep, deep depth with therapists to talk about things like disassociation where I've just got so good over the years of completely disassociating myself from my body and my feelings and my emotions. It's no surprise, when now I actually am able to be myself and to go on dates and stuff, actually I'm not really sure exactly what I want or what I feel because so much of that has been shut down, and I'm just through therapy being able to wake that up.
- Vicky: With mental health, it was actually after I did my coming out interview that I got diagnosed with anxiety and depression, which is the other way around than I thought, but I just had a lot of fallout in terms of having to go really deep in therapy and then being diagnosed with chronic illness from all the stress of my coming out process and all the vitriol that I received and losing my career in music. It was a bit of a storm. I think the fallout of it mentally and physically for me was just a lot harder than I thought. Four years on, I'm delighted I came out, but I am still very much picking up the pieces of the damage that being in the closet and then having such a public coming out has done to me.
- Matthias: You mentioned the chronic illness and that diagnosis being somewhat simultaneous with your coming out process. You mentioned in the book, as you talk about your chronic illness, about how some people have said and the anxiety and the depression have used the language around this is God's judgment. I'm curious if you could maybe talk about that, about chronic illness and this idea of "God's judgment."
- Vicky: Just mind-blowing. Anybody who's not a Christian listening to this will be horrified, I'm sure that the church actually says these things to people. It's difficult to process. I think it all depends on your view of God in the first place. I think for people who see God as, I don't know, like angry taskmaster, I need to get my American on, an angry taskmaster.

How's that? Just as a translation in case anybody doesn't understand me. I can translate for myself. I'm bilingual. God is an angry taskmaster in the sky and throwing lightning bolts down every time we slip up. The role of other Christians is to be that judgment again, judging their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Vicky: I think that feels like a lot of what I've had from evangelicals, which is sad, that they feel like it's their job to represent this judgmental God who is pharisaical about what they think the Bible says. It's really sad because so many of them have said things like the fact that I've got a diagnosis of ME, which is a chronic fatigue syndrome illness and fibromyalgia, which is a lot of body pain and muscle aches and muscle weakness. They have said this is God's judgment on you for coming out and having such a dramatic effect on the church and leading people astray, leading people into sin by telling people that it's okay to be gay and Christian.

Vicky: It's heartbreaking because I think already dealing with being so tired and having to constantly reduce my workload, it's just really hard. When people kick you when you're down, and it's hard when they're people of faith. I have to listen to it through a lens where I'm just reminding myself, saying actually this is not my view of God. God is kind and compassionate and loves me and wouldn't do this to me. I have to just keep reminding myself that. It is difficult when that constant message of judgment and hatred and shame from people that claim to follow Jesus.

Matthias: It's mind-blowing to me. I think you're right. It does come down to really what our view of God is and how we believe God works in the world. Sometimes it takes a huge shift as we are forced to look into, what do we actually believe about God?

Vicky: Yeah. Is he the kind of God that goes around making people sick and throwing around illness as punishment? I don't believe that in the first place, but I also don't believe I've done anything wrong that would be worthy of any kind of punishment. I feel like my decision to come out was very God-led. I talk in the book about going on a real journey of soul search where I went back to the Bible and spent time in two beautiful churches in London that are really old and ancient and these big residence organs playing in the background sometimes. It was just the most wonderful place to study and pray. I spent weeks and weeks and weeks going through all of the scriptures again, all of the so-called clobber passages that relate to same-sex relationships.

PART 2 OF 3 ENDS [00:32:04]

Vicky: For me, it was a process of prayer and walking through it with God. It wasn't, as my critics say, that I just wanted an excuse to come out. I wasn't looking in the Bible to see what I wanted. I'd spent all my life thinking it was wrong to be gay. For me, it was actually God nudging me, I believe, saying, come on. Take the step. You've misunderstood the Bible, but look at it with fresh eyes. Look at academic work and pray about it and then take the step and come out. I believe far from judging me from coming out, I believe God celebrated that.

- Matthias: At the end of your book, you described this really tender scene with your grandfather when you come out to him, and he says to you, or one of the first thing he says to you is, "Vicky, you're just seeing what you want to see in the Bible." You go on to describe how the rest of that story plays out. That phrase, and you just mentioned it, that you're just seeing what you want to see in the Bible. That gets thrown around a whole lot as if we're reading the Bible with bias, whereas other people aren't.
- Vicky: It's very frustrating, isn't it? As though they weren't ... Whoever is saying that wasn't also reading the Bible with their own bias. I think it's very important for everyone to realize that certainly not just on this issue, but any issue and any text, we all come to every page of text with all of our preconceptions from our life experiences because all of us are limited in some way and all of us are biased. It just seems very unfair that so many LGBT Christians have that thrown at them, as they were untrustworthy witnesses to what the Bible says because we're wired a certain way. Many of us have not come to the Bible actually looking for permission. Many of us believed what we were taught through evangelical circles for years.
- Vicky: I think if I wanted permission to be gay, I would have seen the Bible differently many years ago. The fact that it took me so long I think proves that it took me so long to be convinced otherwise.
- Matthias: You mentioned earlier, and we did talk about this a little bit, your chronic illness. Something that stuck out to me in the book was you're doing all these keynotes and big events in magazine and radio and TV interviews, and during all of this, we're seeing one side of you when you're on, when you have energy. You described this whole process of going home and having to recover and what it's like for people to not see your whole other part of life and then expect you to just have all this energy. I'm curious if you could maybe talk about what that has been like because I feel like we don't talk about chronic illness much, and yet it's something that affects a lot of people.
- Vicky: Yeah, absolutely. I think whether it's mental or physical, any kind of diagnosis, often we just keep them behind closed doors then we show us living our best life on Instagram or YouTube. I think things like ME and fibromyalgia, the things I have are quite weird in the sense that some people like me do have an energy reservoir. If we're careful and we balance our week, there is enough energy to have some energy peaks and do something like a big keynote or something on TV, but then it's followed by a crash. That's the challenge of the issues I've got.
- Vicky: Basically living in the closet, dealing with fight or flight adrenal issues all my life means that I just have these crazy crashes of my energy, and I can probably do something big like maybe once a week. If I've got a keynote or a conference or a TV thing, I just have to be really limited in what I put in my calendar. Often it means that I have very little of a social life because I want to still work. I'm freelance, juggling all these different things that I do with writing and broadcasting and speaking. The one thing that suffers is that I have to spend most of my free time just resting, saving up energy for the next thing that I have in a couple of days or whatever.

- Vicky: I think people just have no idea when they see me in a clip of a talk or something I've given on TV, on the BBC, they have no idea that at home, I'm working through stuff. I'm doing Skype sessions with my therapist to keep unpacking all the mental health stuff that coming out has dredged up. Physically, often I'm just resting, saving myself up for the next thing. I think chronic illness for anybody is often two lives. There's a life that people see and then there's life behind closed doors where you're just exhausted and a bit wrecked. I think it's just great to talk about it more openly.
- Matthias: What would you say to people who are living with chronic illness themselves, who are maybe just getting a diagnosis or are hiding a diagnosis or trying to hide a diagnosis? For people who are living with this, what words would you have for them?
- Vicky: I think it's really important to know that you can be authentic about illness. We're getting better, aren't we, I think as humans in society, being honest about things like sexual orientation and gender identity. I think often people are afraid to talk openly about what they're battling, whether it's mental health stuff behind closed doors or massive amounts of fatigue or major illnesses. I think often we fear that it will hold us back maybe at work from being promoted or trusted with new projects or that our friends won't understand this.
- Vicky: It's a hard thing I think. A lot of people are starting to blog about this and vlog about it too. I've got some friends that are doing some great stuff around faith and suffering and what do you do when God doesn't answer your prayers for healing? What do you do when you get a diagnosis that is chronic, which basically means ongoing and there's no sign of an end?
- Vicky: For me with my issues, mainly it's about fatigue and extreme tiredness and muscle weakness and pain. I really hope one day that will go away. I've tried basically every therapy and medicine available because I'm a geek and I research the heck out of it as soon as I got diagnosed. I've had, what is it now, three years since I got diagnosed with these things, and I really have tried everything, but all that seems to work is actually rest and trying to avoid stress and trying to avoid situations that made me anxious and throw my adrenals off and my body floods with cortisol. It's fight or flight thing. All of my doctors agree that living in the closet basically caused this damage, which is just quite a lot to get your head around, isn't it, I think because you process it and try to walk forwards.
- Matthias: You're talking about suffering and this juxtaposition between the suffering that living with the theology that you held caused and the joy and the goodness of living authentically and yet they're coexisting together. I'm curious if your theology has shifted as you've walked this. The last three years of ... because I think like you mentioned this, this idea of we have these fantasies of coming out and then everything being amazing that it gets better, and it does get better. You mentioned this. There's a lot of suffering that happens. I'm curious. Maybe even not your theology, but what has your walk with God been like as that has happened?
- Vicky: I think I've had to make room for grieving and grief, which isn't what I expected to be part of my coming out process after coming out. I thought that the grief was all previous

to coming out and post coming out. It does get better in it. I feel so much better than I did when I was living in the closet. It was interesting to have to grieve for my music career that I lost, grieve for just those moments when I would stand up on those stages and look out at a huge crowd of people singing those lyrics and those songs. It was just something so special about that atmosphere, and just knowing that I was helping them and they were encouraged by my music. Letting go of all of that is huge.

Vicky: I think I've just had to be honest with God and have a lot of honesty about grief and about loss and I guess about unanswered questions that I don't really understand why I couldn't have come to that realization sooner. Like many of us, you lived in the closet for years, I grieve the fact that I didn't get to have a normal teenage experience. I didn't get to be out and gay.

Vicky: ... teenage experience. You know I didn't get to be out and gay and have teenage dating experiences, or talk to all my classmates in high school about who I liked and who I didn't. Just normal things. It's kind of weird to come out at 35 and then be starting all that. It's difficult to learn it, isn't it? If you haven't had the 20 odd years that everybody else has had on me. It's just kind of weird to be starting dating at 35, and getting your head around that while being in therapy. It's just a lot. I guess some of my conversations with God have been quite funny.

Vicky: Just about trying to learn all this stuff on the go, but also I think just realizing that God sits with us in our sadness, and that he grieves with us for the way the church treats people. I think that's been huge for me to realize actually that God is on the side of those who are broken, and God understands better than anyone that the church does a lot of harm and a lot of damage, and that God is not the church. I think that's probably the biggest revelation that has saved my faith from just unraveling that what is done in the name of God by the church is not always a representative of who God actually is.

Matthias: You mentioned dating, and this feeling of like I have no idea what I'm doing. I feel like for so many of us like that's a feeling that I have all the time of kind of not ... At least I have this fantasy about like being able to figure this all out in high school. Everyone who was able to figure it out in high school is doing this great job. I don't know if that's necessarily true, but that feeling of like I'm starting from scratch here, and everyone else has this figured out.

Vicky: I'm glad it's not just me.

Matthias: It's so real. I talked to so many people who have similar stories to us, like who feel the same way too. Could you talk about that a little bit more. What has that been like?

Vicky: I think it just feels like a lot of us that have been in the closet until our 20s or our 30s we're kind of on this different timeline to everybody else. It feels like most of my friends around the same age as me have sort of progressed through all these life milestones that I was unable to. They did all the dating in high school, and many of them found somebody in their sort of mid 20s-ish and got serious, and got engaged. Many of my friends have actually got multiple kids by now.

- Vicky: It's just very strange because I feel ... I've talked to a lot of other LGBT Christians who feel the same, and it's almost like our lives got put on hold, because we had to live in the closet. We just kind of pressed pause on all of those hopes and kind of milestones of life, and then when we come out we're kind of pressing unpause. I'm looking at all my friends who are mostly all married with multiple children, and I'm just kind of thinking, "Okay, I'm going to start dating. I feel so far behind everybody else."
- Vicky: But, I guess on the flip side also hopefully it means that we've put so much work into coming to know ourselves, to figuring out our identity. Because I think anybody that comes out has to do quite a lot of work on who we are, and our own just human makeup and who it is we are in the world. Sometimes I think maybe that gives us a really good foundation. Although we're starting later, perhaps we'll just avoid some of the pitfalls that other people fell into maybe. That's what I'm hoping. That we avoided all the tumultuous pitfalls, and we just kind of cruise in right at the moment when you're old enough to know who you are, and you've done the work through therapy. And then you can meet the right person and then live happily ever after.
- Matthias: That's the journey.
- Vicky: That's what I'm choosing to believe, because I've done a lot of work about kind of grieving the loss of my teenage years, and losing my 20s in the same way because I was totally in the closet. I just felt so committed to my faith and to integrity that I didn't feel able to live any kind of double life. I literally did not date while I was in the closet. It's a lot to start, isn't it? At 35. It's kind of awkward and hilarious to be honest about it. It helps to have other people there in the same boat.
- Matthias: Yeah, because it is awkward. It's already an awkward process, and then to add that on top of it like my goodness.
- Vicky: But I do believe. I just have to keep encouraging myself thinking actually my [inaudible 00:36:44] have been on these crazy journeys of coming out of the closet and the church. The work we've had to do is deep, isn't it? It's deep therapy for a lot of people. Many people out there just haven't done any therapy, and maybe they're not really even in tune with who they are kind of in their authentic core. I'm just hanging onto that kind of.
- Vicky: I think it's quality and not quantity that matters in terms of the years that you spend with someone. I just really hope that ... I mean, if I had been married before now it would have been a disaster, because I probably would have tried to marry a guy according to church teachings. I'd rather be where I am now than living a life that's not authentic.
- Matthias: This is a little bit of a shift, but it's June so that means it's pride month. I'm going to be asking everyone who's on the podcast in the month of June to talk about pride. I'm curious. I haven't actually formed this question yet, because this is the first time I'm asking it. What are your thoughts on this idea of pride, and what have you learned about quote on unquote pride? Because I think so often in the church we see pride as

like one of the seven deadly sins, and yet there's this whole tradition in the queer community to celebrate and to take pride in who we are.

Vicky: Yeah. Well, my first experience with pride was before I came out. In 2014, I went to Pride and then came out in the August. I remember going to that Pride in London, and I was like super stealth. I think I was wearing a baseball hat. Just walking around with my head down, and I just wanted to kind of hide. It was almost like looking through a window into a world that I didn't belong to yet, but I just needed reassurance that it was there. I needed to know this huge family of people existed, and that when I took the step two months later in August 2014 that they would be there.

Vicky: It was amazing, because it gave me so much more courage. I think that for me will always be what I think of when I think of Pride. I've been in the Pride March for the past few years, and when I marched I just kept thinking of the old me, and that there would be other people out there with baseball hats on hiding watching the crowd as though they were just sort of like on a shopping trip not really bothered. Like secretly but really deep down going, "Oh my gosh, I'm not out and I need to see people that are proud of their sexuality and their gender identity marching together."

Vicky: It was really powerful to be part of it. I actually marched last year with YouTube which was cool, because YouTube have such a commitment to LGBT people that they actually had like a big red London double-decker bus. You know those red buses we have in London. They just decorated the whole bus with YouTube and all these rainbows. Some of us were like riding on the top of the bus, and some of us walking behind it. It was amazing to just feel so proud of who I was at last.

Vicky: To pick up on that thing you said about the word pride. I think it's really unfortunate that the church takes that stance, because anytime I tweet about pride or Facebook about pride now, all of these Christians pile in with exactly what you're saying, "God tells us that pride is a sin. Pride comes before a fall. We're supposed to lay down our pride." I kind of almost wish that it was called something like courage, because maybe the church wouldn't be able to take such a shot at it. But, actually, pride is so important in the sense of mirroring back to God the delight that he has in us, and actually feeling his delight, and then going actually, "I sense God's delight in me, and I'm going to show the world I'm God." That I accept that delight, and I can be proud of myself.

Vicky: I just think it's so important to embrace it as an annual thing. It is desperately needed. People sometimes say, "Oh it's outdated. Everybody can be gay this day and age." But we know that's not true. There's a lot of places that don't embrace LGBT and equality yet. I think pride is crucial. Whenever I'm in the march, I always think about the year when I watched secretly from the sidelines. I just hope that I can be that someone else that by showing up there will be one person in the march to encourage people to take that step and come out themselves.

Matthias: That's so beautiful. I remember watching Prides before I came out, and watching it with this mixture of like fascination and like, "Oh my gosh, I will never be like that." And also being like, "But, I want to be." I feel like every year when I go I step more and more into the celebration that it is.

Vicky: I don't think people that live in a kind of heteronormative reality realize how rare it is for us to be the majority. I think that was the thing that amazed when I was part of my first march. That everybody around me for miles I think it was in London. It felt like it was just this long stream of people going down Oxford Street and the center of London. I just thought everybody I can see is either LGBTQ or is an ally.

Vicky: That's so rare for people like us, isn't it? To be surrounded by people like us when almost all of the time we are the minority in every room and every classroom or congregation or anywhere, grocery store. We're just always in the minority, aren't we? As a minority. I just loved that feeling that I was surrounded by my people. It was just an amazing feeling. That's why I go every year I think. It's kind of partly for my own sense of solidarity, and then also hoping that it helps people too.

Matthias: Vicky, this has been so good. Thank you.

Vicky: You're a great question asker.

Matthias: Thanks. How can people find your work and your book?

Vicky: I'm always online. I'm addicted to Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, all the above. Everything's just Vicky Beeching, so just search for my name. My website's vickybeeching.com if you want to check out the book. At the moment I don't have any US dates or speaking or anything lined up mostly because of my health. I've just had to really pull back on that, but hopefully in the future I will be coming back to your beautiful land of Denny's and pancakes, and maple syrup.

Vicky: As soon as I have any dates for the US they will be on my website in case anybody's got questions about that. But come say hi especially on Twitter. Come say hi on Twitter. That's my favorite place. I'm always excited to meet new people there, and hear where you're from, and just talk about these kind of topics on social media. I think we can have really great conversations across the miles using social media to kind of understand each other better and be support to especially for the LGBT Christian. So, come find me.

Matthias: Thank you so much Vicky.

Vicky: Thanks for having me.

Matthias: Be sure to pick up a copy of Vicky's new book 'Undivided' wherever books are sold both in the US and in the UK. It is out today. You can find Vicky over at vickybeeching.com and across social media @vickybeeching.

Matthias: Queerology is on Twitter and Instagram @queerologypod, or you can tweet me directly @matthiasroberts. Queerology is produced with support from Natalie England, Tim Schraeder, Christian Hayes, and over 70 other Patreon supporters.

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rating or a review. Do that right in your podcast app or head to mathiasroberts.com/review and it will take you right there. As always, I'd love to hear from you. Reach out. I'll get back to you. Until next week y'all. Bye.

PART 3 OF 3 ENDS [00:45:13]