

## Queerology 67 - 2018 in Review: Part 2

### Episode Transcript

Matthias: If you enjoy listening to Queerology, then I need your help. Here's why I create Queerology by myself on a 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 one dollar a month, you can help me improve and keep making Queerology every week. All you have to do is jump over to [matthiasrobert.com/support](https://matthiasrobert.com/support) to make a pledge and listen away.

Hey friends, this is Matthias Roberts and you're listening to Queerology Podcast and Belief and Being. This is episode 67. I have my hot chocolate in hand. I have like this giant little mug of hot chocolate. I have my pajamas on, and I'm in the closet for the last time this year. This is the last episode of Queerology of 2018 part two of a year in review. Going through some of my favorite moments from the podcast this last year. And for all of you who are like, "I thought recording your podcasts in the closet was a joke." It's not like I literally sit in my closet every week and record this podcast. I had a friend come over the other day, and he was like, "So where do you actually record it?" And I was like I opened the closet door, and I was like, "In here, see?" Oh my gosh. Before we dive in... [sound of mug setting down] you probably heard me sit my mug down there, and now I'm going to pick it back up. Hot chocolate makes the world go round.

Before we dive in you've heard me talk about this for the last couple of weeks, but a QCF conference registration is open. The people of QCF just announced yesterday this project that we've been working on. That I've hinted at a couple of times, and I've kind of talked about, but for the first time ever this year, they're having a podcast stage at the conference. The Brian M. Eckstein Podcast Stage. Brian Eckstein was the co-host of I think was like the first ever Queer Christian Podcasts to hit the podcasts world. The Gay Christian Network Podcast with Justin Lee. Brian and Justin co-hosted that podcast for years back in like the early 2000s. I remember listening to it. Brian passed away several years ago. So it's really cool that they're naming this podcast stage after him. I'm so excited and so honored.

I'm joining Kevin Garcia. He's doing a live recording of a Tiny Revolution. Crystal Cheatham doing her Lord Have Mercy Podcasts. Deborah Jian Lee is doing Kaleidoscope. Brian Murphy is doing Queer Theology. And then Sarah Elizabeth Smith is doing Theosophia. So many good, incredible podcasts are going to be on that podcast stage. All happening at the Queer Christian Fellowship Conference in Chicago January 10th through 13th. And if you use the code podcast 19 when you register over at [queerchristian.org](https://queerchristian.org), you can get 10 dollars off your registration. P-O-D-C-A-S-T 1-9 over at [queerchristian.org](https://queerchristian.org). Come join us.

Like I said we're going through my favorite moments from 2018. Is so hard to choose from the second half of the year. I just wanted to include every single episode, but I think I whittled it down to five. This first clip is from my interview with Julien Baker, who was just a delight.

We talked about a lot of things in this episode, but this particular clip is from a conversation that we had about trying to find a church home. And some of the guilt that can come with not going to church and then how we kind of work with that guilt. From episode 47 here is Julien Baker.

Julien: But also, yeah. Like for a while in my life, I would try to read scripture daily. I would just wake up and have quiet time and read scripture daily to offset that guilt. Like to hope that if I would just ruminate and study on my own, then I wouldn't feel so bad about like not being at church on Sunday and being like a spiritual delinquent. Which of course because I have been in and out of church my whole life. And so I have my parents. It has never been such a strong thing for me as some of my friends who their parents have never missed a Sunday and if their parents knew that they didn't go to church, it would be devastating. But my parents are like, "Do whatever you like. We trust you." And we have candid conversations about that. But then I started to feel that as much as I wanted to engage in the academia of my faith and just being knowledgeable about it so that I have this arsenal of discussion whenever the multitude of politicized theology conversations come up.

As much as I enjoy that pursuit. Like the manifestation of God that I find most tangible is what occurs within a community. But more and more like I find that not limited to church. And this sounds like a bunch of, like ... I don't want to say this word because it also might be offensive, but it sounds just like me being like a white girl yoga mystic. Like the world is my church. You know what I mean? I do find that there's a need for like specific and intentional conversations in faith communities. But I'm almost done unable to think of God in any other way than interpersonal now. And so like that seems to be the most present spiritual task. I don't know if that makes sense or if it sounds like nonsense or if it sounds like I'm being mean to people who practice yoga, which I don't have a problem with. I think it's very healthy. My tour manager tries to get me to do yoga all the time. Yes.

Matthias: I hear you though. Like I mean I wonder that too because I wonder about, so I mean what if church maybe like, "Church," does look different for different people of where instead of it being this kind of like I go to a building on Sunday mornings. I mean I often think about this podcast as church in a way of having like very intentional conversations around faith and there's a community involved. And I wonder sometimes like if that's enough. As in like maybe it isn't enough, maybe that's okay. I don't know.

Julien: Dude, you said one of the most fascinating words to me which is, "Enough." That's like a word that I get super hung up on. Like, "What's enough?" Or "What is it for me?" I guess it used to be, "What's right?" Like, "What is doing the right thing?" And that took on a lot of different faces, whether it was trying to be biblically right and follow the teachings of Jesus. And I guess the legalistic incarnation of rightness and then later it was this like arrogant over intellectual obsession with like philosophical, ethical, right? But then like what exactly? Like what is enough? I don't know what kind of church you grew up in. I feel like I've heard you talk about it and it was like a pretty traditional church, am I correct?

Matthias: Yeah, pretty traditional, pretty conservative. Borderline fundamentalist. But I think they were a little bit too heavy on grace to be fundamentalist. But right about there. So.

Julien: Too heavy on grace to be fundamentalist is exactly what I think of when I think of ... It's almost like a veiled Neo Calvinism of like total depravity is really drilled in to you. Like the worm theology that kind of illustrates God's magnitude by this like parabolic, like opposite, like the worst that we can imagine humanity is. And the less we can deserve God and the more we remind ourselves that we're absolutely nothing when the more impressive and unbelievable God's grace becomes because we're so bad. And that is supposed to be, I guess like an instrument to teach humility. But what it really teaches is it instills uncertainty and self doubt. And often I think self hatred that is just wearing the mask of humility. And I think those two things are different, but then it makes you uncertain that anything you'll ever do will be enough.

Because I mean, it's that ... What I was going to say is the conundrum that you are taught from childhood if you grew up in a church that subscribes to that sort of belief is nothing you will ever do will be enough. But try your hardest anyway. But it's okay if you fail. But don't fail because then that's still bad. And so from a very early age, you have to hold that paradox in your mind, and I just think that there are more ... It's not that is not accurate, but it's the way that I think can be weaponized to make people hate themselves.

Matthias: My goodness. There is so much to unpack in that episode. That's from episode 47 with Julien Baker. Julien just wrapped up another North American tour. And in February for all you all who are in Australia she is headed over to Australia in February, stopping in South Korea and Japan on the way. She's going to be in New Zealand as well. So catch her tour over in that part of the world. I got to see her here in Seattle and like, oh my gosh, she's just so good.

The very next week, the Rev. Broderick Greer joined me. If you don't follow Broderick over on twitter yet. Yeah, you're missing out at Broderick Greer. He joined me to talk about theology as well. In kind of jumping off maybe a little bit of what Julien was just saying in that last clip I asked Broderick about the role of imagination in theology. This is from episode 48.

Broderick: And when I was growing up in the Black Baptist Church of my childhood, the pastors, and preachers would often cue the congregation to do some imaginative work when they would say, "And now I need you to use your sanctified imagination." And if they were talking about the story of the woman with the issue of blood they'd say, "And it was dusty outside." And they'd add all of these textures to the story because for them the tax was not a straight jacket. It was a launchpad for creativity and imagination. And Anglicanism does the same thing. Why on Earth do we use incense on high feast days in the Episcopal church? Some people say it's a symbol of prayer. I am of the school of thought and opinion that we use incense for the sake of using incense. It has no other purpose than to just be incense in the presence of God and God's people. That sometimes beauty has to happen, and it has to be presented for the sake of nothing other than beauty.

I mean it's like asking a couple why are you getting each other gifts for your anniversary? Or a very uncreative spouse reading a list of reasons why their spouse is so great instead of just singing a song or playing a song on a guitar. Like we can be really didactic about this stuff, or we can be really creative about it. And like my friend Mark Oakley says

often, "A story is so much more interesting when you say once upon a time than when you don't." I mean, you can say once upon a time, a grocery, and then read a grocery list. And that's more compelling than just reading the grocery list because it's cueing the reader that something creative and imaginative is happening. And so theology must be undergirded by joy. It must be undergirded by creativity, and it must be undergirded by the reality that we are co-creators with God. The God has not given up on us, and that this world is not done being creative.

And I have some friends who were a little more simplistic about kind of biblical narratives, and they say ... And I agree with them to an extent. I won't endorse this fully. But they say genesis begins with a garden and revelation ends with the city. And that's the trajectory that God wants us on, is not to get back to the garden. And you hear kind of murmurs of this in theology. People thinking we need to be more like Eden. And yet it seems that we're being pulled toward a new Jerusalem. This sort of holy urbanism. This sense that people from every tribe and nation and tongue are living out their own context, praising God from their own context. And it's this huge, beautiful, complex urban environment. And that is where we're headed, in the Eschaton, which is very exciting.

Matthias: Yeah, I love that because I think so often I think especially within queer context, I think the garden is used as like that shining example of original creation and God's original design in quotation marks around all of that. But that kind of idea of we have to go back to this idea of like how things were originally created. Whereas like that doesn't seem to be the trajectory of scripture as you're saying. And I'm curious like maybe ... Oh, it sounds like you were about to say something.

Broderick: Well and then you have to break it to those people that genesis one and two are myths. It's poetry. These things aren't literal people. It's poetry. It's music. Like let it be that. It's not a roll list or whatever.

Matthias: I'm curious about like how does that imagination kind of show up in your life as a queer person who practices theology?

Broderick: Well, I think some of it is saying I like giving myself permission and also giving other queer people permission to say we are complex, and we're allowed to tell stories that are not call me by your name or some other kind of gay classic. Like coming of age, coming out story like we have ... There are other gay people also like go to the grocery store and die and get sick, and we are interesting, and we're complex. And that is okay. I mean I have loved ... I watched a couple of days ago, Janelle Monae's new music video called Dirty Computer, which is awesome, and it's like 46 minutes. And one of the cool things about it, number one is that she has black people existing in the future, which is awesome. Because a lot of Sci-Fi and futuristic films do not have us existing in the future. Which just says a lot about white supremacy and whiteness and how we just don't exist in these people's imaginations.

So number one she has us existing in the future. And number two, she has like this main character who experiences joy and love and separation and loss. And ends up winning in the end, ends up taking ... And this is interesting, the two people that she's in a relationship with out from this horrible laboratory. And I hate to spoil it for the people

who haven't seen it yet, but she wins like that's good. Like it's good for like queer people of color, queer black people to like win things. And like be heroes and not always live in the middle of a tragedy and always be ... Because that's not how our lives are. Our lives are complex like we win, sometimes we lose sometimes. We are human beings. We're not just these one dimensional characters who exist for the dominant gaze, G-A-Z-E. We exist and our self referential and have a lot going on and are angry and get angry with our parents and don't always like our significant others and have really, really annoying landlords because we're human, and we're here in many ways just like everyone else. And yet like no one.

Matthias: I feel like I could listen to Broderick talk about theology for forever. He's so good. And thankfully, I mean I kind of can because his podcast Mile High Theology is stunning. I would highly recommend that. Go listen to it over the break. By the way, Queerology is going to be on break for the next three weeks. I guess I didn't mention that in the intro. That was Broderick Greer from episode 48. This next clip is skipping forward almost 10 episodes to episode 57 with Rika Lively. Rika is talking about the gender journey that she has been on. That journey has continued since this episode. Rika is now going by both Rika and the name Reed and they are transitioning pronouns. Using she, her and they then pronounce now. Reed has a lot of very valuable insight into what it's like to be non binary in a world that wants us to fit into very specific boxes.

Rika: Gender for me has mostly been played out in how I dress because I think ... Like you said, there's such strict rules around gender and that usually comes out in clothing. Like men aren't allowed to wear skirts or dresses. And like women wearing pants was revolutionary years ago. And so for me like, I shop in the men's section now whenever I buy clothes. And that was transformative for me for multiple reasons. One, it was liberating because I've always wanted to wear men's clothes. I did something about styles, something about the way it fits. A lot of women's clothes, like shorts are always way shorter than shorts that I'm comfortable wearing. And so buying men's shorts meant I could buy shorts at a length that I liked. But also shopping in the men's section meant shopping in the men's section, and I was a woman surrounded by men, and I felt really uncomfortable. And I was like, "Okay, how can I look like I'm shopping for like a boyfriend or a brother or something, you know?"

But for me it's really just been how I express myself with fashion. And so I wear my hats every day. I usually have a hat on backwards. And that's been a freeing thing too because before I came out as queer, I dressed really femininely on purpose so people wouldn't assume that I was gay. And so part of this, my gender has also been kind of been tied to my sexuality, which gender and sexuality get looped together all the time, even though they're different things. For me they've kind of been tangled together because with me being able to come out. I've been able to also explore my gender with a little more freedom because I think being part of the LGBTQ community, there's little more freedom to express your gender than there is when you're straight. Because people assume that you're going to fit in this box and that you also that like you may not have the desire to explore when really I imagine there's probably a lot of cisgendered or straight people who want to explore their gender, who don't get a chance to.

But for me it's been an interesting relationship with my body. I have a pretty feminine body. I'm pretty curvy, and I have breasts, and that those can get in the way sometimes

because in trying to shop for masculine clothes, things don't always fit the way I want them to. So I actually I had bought a binder the other day and that was a really freeing moment for me too. Because there's this tension of like, "Well, maybe if I loved my body more then I wouldn't feel this way." But I don't think it's about loving your body. I could love my body to pieces and still have this gender tension. And so having a binder was also pretty liberating for myself because it was a way for me to express kind of what's in my head. And to present more masculinely and that fit with what was in my head. And I don't know, there's just something about being able to present the way that you want to feel. It's powerful.

Matthias: It sounds like ... I mean you said a liberating experience and as you're talking like that's exactly what it sounds like. To be able to present the way that you see yourself in your head or the way that you want to. Like that sounds so freeing. And I would imagine like the confidence that comes with that is probably profound. Is that true? Like-

Rika: Yes, on some days, right? Because it depends on where I am. So we just moved. My wife and I had just moved to Phoenix. We moved from Tallahassee and we're in a new location and so I'm not ... Technically we're in Scottsdale. We're right outside of Phoenix. And so like I'm not quite sure how the queer community is accepted here. In Tallahassee, we had a strong community. And so like my wife and I could go to church in Tallahassee and I could wear like a button down with Khakis and dress really masculinely and probably even where my binder if I wanted to. And feel really confident standing next to my wife, feeling very queer, feeling in very masculine presenting and feeling very confident because I know I was in a safe place. But now that we're in a new town, I'm not sure how the queer community is accepted. And so we'll be walking down the street, and I'm dressed the way I am and I'm holding hands with my wife. And I'm like looking around like wondering like are people looking at us? How do they see us?

And even like on road trips when we made a road trip from Tallahassee to Scottsdale we stopped at a lot of small towns. And just going to the bathroom, there was this fear of like, "Okay, I'm about to walk into the women's restroom. I didn't miss gendered on a regular basis. Is someone going to think that I'm a man in a woman's bathroom? Like are people going to feel unsafe." Because I've had someone come up to me before I was in the restroom and I was wearing a hat. I had like a striped shirt on and jeans, pretty casual. Like not super masculine, just a T-shirt and jeans and a hat. And someone came up to me and was like, "Am I in the wrong restroom?" And I was so scared because I didn't know what they were going to do. And I felt so uncomfortable and embarrassed and ashamed and I was like, "Man this is who I am, this is how I feel confident. This is how I feel comfortable. I just made someone else feel uncomfortable or questions like if they were even in the right restroom."

And so there are days where it's hard to feel confident in a society that doesn't quite accept gender exploration.

Matthias: That is from episode 57 with Rika Lively. You can follow along with their journey over on twitter @rikadonye. That's R-I-K-A-D-O-N-Y-E. This next clip is from an episode that I had no idea would get as much response as it did. Apparently people don't talk about asexuality that much. And I didn't know that. When I decided to do an episode on it. And so then we did another episode on it and we'll continue to do episodes, having these

conversations around asexuality, aromanticism. This is from episode 59 with Bailey Brawner. When I asked her what advice she would give to people who are discovering that they may be asexual.

Bailey: First and foremost there's nothing wrong with you for how you desire to have sex or not desired to have sex or what that looks like for you. There's nothing wrong with you. I would say that first and foremost. My journey sort of took place on the opposite side of that. Thinking that there's something wrong with me. I thought there was something like extra good about me because I wasn't having this sexual desire. So when growing up with this. I grew up in the local church. And my home church it was pretty progressive and affirming and I never got those messages of like, "Don't have sex before you're married." Or this like purity talk about like, "Oh, if your first kids isn't on your wedding day, like it's not going to mean as much and blah, blah, blah." That whole thing.

I didn't get those messages from my church, but I did get it from my friends who were part of other churches. And I sort of was under this impression that, "Oh, like they're all Christian. So if they're telling me that this is true, then it must be true." And so entering my middle, and high school years or whenever society tells you that you're supposed to be like automatically interested in sex and relationships. I had this conception that was in the back of my mind of, "You're not going to have sex till you're married and like this is just how it works." And I was finding that it was not that hard for me to do. I wasn't having like sexual thoughts about people. Or like wanting to be like intimate in that way with people. And so from that, at the same time hearing these things like, "Oh, you're going to struggle with this, and it's going to be so hard. And like you have to have faith that God's going to like help you through this horrible time or whatever."

I kept thinking to myself like, "Wow, you're such a good Christian. You are not even struggling with this. You're just doing all the right things like way to be pious. Like all of these kind of funny things." And then of course like hindsight is 2020, and so now I recognize that as like, "Oh, that was like you are asexual." Like that was what that was. You're not a great christian because you don't want to have sex. Like that's not how it works. And you probably were a worst christian than you thought you were because you were bragging about how great you were, like all of these things. And so that was sort of my journey into it. And the kind of recognition of it wasn't something I never really struggled with thinking that anything was wrong with me necessarily. Or that I should change anything about myself. But hearing the language around asexuality helped me to know that I am not alone.

And helped me to know that like, "Oh, there's a word for this." There's like a label that you can give yourself to help people understand who you are a little bit more. And not have to deal as much with the kind of misunderstanding that so often comes with this sort of ambiguous sense of self when we're not able to say like, "I am filling the blank." It can be challenging for people to accept us and to know us as who we are. And so it was a really life giving thing for me when I learned that language and when I realized that, that was something that more than just me experienced and that there was nothing wrong with me in that too.

Matthias: Bailey is a pastor at a small United Methodist Church in Alaska. She posts a lot of her sermons up to her blog. So if you're ever looking for a good sermon, go check those out.

baileybrowner.wordpress.com. This final clip. The last highlight of the year is from episode 62 with Alyson Stoner. This episode was such a treat. I grew up watching Alyson on TV and in movies and in to be able to sit down with her, and to have this conversation was so much fun. And I feel like Alyson's words in this club and in the whole episode is just a great reminder for us as we walk into this holiday season to stay in tune with our bodies because they're incredible tools.

Alyson: I'm done with the dance. I was so uncomfortable in my own skin. I was very prudish anyway for many reasons. And my face kind of contributed into that. I didn't date until after I was 18. I was in certain dance classes that were provocative and all I could hear were like scriptures. And I wasn't able to explore anything because there was just no freedom and I didn't want to get it wrong. I just wanted to be the perfect christian for God. I look back and I'm like, "Oh no, where did we get off the path?" The body, Oh, it's full of intelligence and guidance and wisdom and wow, it's your gift. It's giving you clues all day long as to what feels right and doesn't feel right, safe, not safe. Your God is holy. Like using the word God as a Christian to me for five years ago would have been like, "Ooh, can you at least say the Holy Spirit." And now I'm just so grateful for my skin, for my body. And I have to remain grounded in it.

That sort of, I feel the way I'm able to encounter the divine all day long as opposed to having to retreat to a prayer room and pray for an hour to get back in contact. My cells are a reflection of the divine. Everything is spiritual. I remember going to ... I believe it was a Rob Bell.

Matthias: That sounds right. Yeah.

Alyson: Yeah. [crosstalk 00:33:42] conference. And for the record, I had only ever listened to interviews of him years prior during which I like scolded [inaudible 00:33:52]. And finally, when I was able to hear him firsthand relay the full story, I went, "Ohhh." And of course I was there standing next to my girlfriend at the time. And even she who didn't come from the church, we were like, "Okay, this is sort of a happy middle ground for now while we're figuring out what this is. We don't have to agree with everything. We don't have to disagree with everything." But he connected a lot of dots for me and he brought the body into the equation and he brought science into the equation. And I was like, "Oh, wow, this doesn't sound like some kind of like whitewashed Evangelical Washington version of science and body." Where you're still like are scared to really talk about how things feel in your body. It was a real rooted, rooted display.

I am just rambling today

Matthias: I love it because again and I know I just said this. To me it doesn't feel like rambling. Like I feel like all of these things are so deeply connected in the way-

Alyson: Everything is connected.

Matthias: Everything is connected. Everything is spiritual.

Alyson: Everything is spiritual. Even if you don't use the word spiritual, I invite everyone who is listening, who might have come from my audience and is not Christian or whatever you



feel about things. Like if the word spiritual is uncomfortable, I am so okay with recognizing like that there are literal frequencies and energies that you could measure scientifically. And that's okay. Like that's more than okay. That is real. It's true. So I just want to be as inclusive as possible and thankfully I'm no longer intimidated by like getting the words right and wrong. That's been super freeing. Although I know it scares a lot of people based groups.

Matthias: We all find that freedom.

Friends, that's it. Consider Queerology at we're wrapped up for 2018. Like I said, going on break for the next three Tuesdays, which means Queerology will be back with all new episodes on January 15th. If you can't wait that long, come join us at the Queer Christian Fellowship Conference, January 10th to 13th and the Queerology Live. I'm sitting down with Dave and Tino Khalaf to talk about their new book, "Modern Kinship: A Queer Guide to Christian Marriage." And a huge thank you to each, and every one of you who listened to Queerology this year in the midst of all of these episodes that we managed to raise enough money to keep Queerology on the air. So grateful for that. Couldn't do that without you. Know that I'm mindful of each, and every one of you, all of this big queer family over the holiday season. And I know that it can be really hard. So know that I'm mindful of all of you as we walk into the season together. Go back and listen to some of these episodes. Listen to some of the other podcasts mentioned, and until next year you all bye.