

Spilling Tea with Boomers
Matthew, 2023

Video available at <https://youtu.be/weF3dpiAWdk>
Transcript prepared by Sarah TevisTownes with support from Otter.ai

Sarah

This is Matt. Matt B is my guest for Spilling Tea with boomers. Do you want some tea?

Matt

Yeah, tea sounds fine.

Sarah

Okay, I'm gonna go get Matt some tea, Matt -

Matt

Hello.

Sarah

Talk to the fans. I'll be right back.

Matt

Okay. Oh, good day. Hi. Okay, West Virginia! Wow. This is the first time I've done anything like this, so please bear with me as I catch up. Indiana! I'll just introduce myself real quickly.

Sarah

I've already told them about you.

Matt

Oh, then I have nothing to say. I'm just gonna sit here and stare blankly at the screen.

Sarah

Y'all we're playing a game called Spilling Tea with Boomers.

Matt

Yeah.

Sarah

Oh - So Grace wants to know, how do you wind up at COGS? And are we gaming this Sunday?

Matt

Like Sarah, I am a pastor in the United Church of Christ. And I'm not serving the church right now. I had a church in California and between COVID and the economy and all that they decided they couldn't have two pastors at their church and I was just too expensive. So I came back to Albuquerque where I've got family and I knew Sarah and I knew the

church and I had actually attended here in the past. And what grace is asking about is we have a church D&D Group, which, which I run and yes, we are playing on Sunday.

Sarah

All right, Matt, you gotta pick some tea. And while you're doing that, you only have a few choices. Let me show you. We have these choices. <shows massive selection of tea

Matt

Okay.

Sarah Hello, welcome to the stream. Matt - be careful. Don't spill mine, though. It's too early to spill. I mean, we are spilling tea with boomers.

Matt

All right. Yes.

Sarah

Will. Welcome. We know that you love Augustine and Calvin. Will is our Orthodox person in the UCC is holding us to account and Will wants to bring orthodoxy back to the UCC.

Matt

We love we love Augustine and Calvin too. But most of us do not believe in the inerrancy of Calvin and Augustine.

Sarah

Someone argues coffee is way better. I appreciate that. We have people in the comments disagreeing with clergy. Somebody says they are a gay Calvinist rainbow tulip. That is a beautiful identification.

Matt

Oh, I like that.

Sarah

I like that too. All right, so Spilling Tea with Boomers. Remember, this is a new Live series where I interview our "elders." He's barely a Boomer, barely. But we did determine at last night's Justice meeting that he does, in fact, qualify.

The rules are simple, Matt. You can pass on any question.

Matt

Okay. There are no wrong questions. There are also no wrong answers. The audience can jump in anytime. We may or may not read what people are saying in the chat. Folks being rude in the chat will be blocked or muted for the safety of our community, because that is important. Our guest today is the Reverend Matthew B. He is a published author. You can

find him by searching for Matthew Baugh wherever you get your books. The Count of Monte Cristo is a fun place to start.

Matt

Actually, a few years ago, there was a there was a movement, I think it's pretty much died away now, of doing mashups putting monsters into classical stories. The big one, of course, was Pride and Prejudice and Zombies. Then there was Sense and Sensibility and sea monsters. My favorite title of the whole thing was Android Karinina.

Sarah

Find him in your favorite place to buy books because they are very fun!

Matt

I wrote one of these I was asked to by a small publisher. And mine was the vampire Count of Monte Cristo, which was pretty easy to write, because when I reread it, I found a nice new beautiful translation that Penguin Books did a couple of years ago. And there are a lot of references to vampires in there already.

Sarah

So Matthew is a vampire expert, which we'll get to in a minute, and somebody asked "Is elder a title?" No, I'm just calling Matt old today. But there are elders in some communities. In the Presbyterian Church, they are the ruling group. They make up a session. All right. The other thing—Matt has cats. They're really cute. He's an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ. He also has an animated retelling of the book of Job with dinosaurs, animated dinosaurs on YouTube that you've got to check out and I created a tiny URL for this. So it's tinyurl.com/TRexRector that's how you'll get to his channel. They are hard to find on YouTube because he just made this channel. It's brand new, so you're gonna be one of the first first people to see it. And here's what's fun—Karen from my channel has a cameo as a dinosaur! In those videos, she plays one of Job's friends.

Matt

The cat's names, by the way, are Basil and Nigel. Bonus points for anybody in the chat who can tell me who they're named after.

Sarah

Basil and Nigel. Could anyone guess? Oh, and Grace—@findinggrace is God.

Matt

Yes, Grace is God. Grace is awesome as God. It was amazing.

Sarah

So, go if you want to hear @findinggrace as God. Go check out tinyurl.com/trexrector. Oh, Sherlock Holmes and Watson! Yes, he got it.

Matt

Yes, the two actors from the old black and white Sherlock Holmes movies were Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce.

Sarah

So the question is, why did you choose lemon [tea]?

Matt

Why did I choose lemon? Hmm. That's a very deep... No, thank you. That's a very deep question. It's probably because I don't like the taste of tea that much. Tea and coffee for me is it's I like them. But I have to be able to put something in them to kill the tea or coffee taste. I never picked up that habit.

Douglas Adams talks about this: he says a tea bag and a very hot cup of tea is one of the most useful Brownian motion generators in the world. Brownian motion. Yes, particles in suspension, which demonstrate randomness in nature, which demonstrate chaos theory, which you need if you're going to create the infinite Improbability Drive, but um...

Sarah

And the answer is 42.

All right, now we move on to the questionnaire which is heavily based on the Colbert Questionnaire, because it's fun. And then we'll move to audience questions.

Matt

I'm six foot five, by the way, six foot five.

Sarah

So this is why it's hard to fit in the screen. Matt is a large size human.

Matt

If you want to convert that to the metric system that's 196 centimeters for you who are coming to us from Australia.

Sarah

And Wende is here! Yay Wendy! All right. This is a real-life church member, by the way. I'm glad Pdx - I'm so glad you're here too. Okay, we're going to talk about the Nicene Creed later. Because I think Matt, as a pastor, could talk about this forever. And we're doing short, short things first, are you ready? Matt? Best sandwich.

Matt

Oh, I'm not a big sandwich guy. Years and years ago, though, probably 25 years now. I think the place is gone. I found a little place in Santa Fe. I was just visiting for the day. And they served a sandwich that was brie, and honey and sliced almonds on sourdough bread. I tried reproducing it and like mine was just a mess. But what they served there was just the best sandwich ever. At least that's how I remember it.

Sarah

That sounds awesome at oh my gosh, well, we should try. Those of you who are chefs and Wende from the conference is, in fact, listening in while she works.

So Matt remembers a time before computers also for those of you who are younger, who are not, don't remember a time... Matt - how old were you the first time you used a computer in school?

Matt

We had a computer science lab in junior high school in seventh grade.

Sarah

Seventh grade is the first time he used a computer.

Matt

And what we had were

Sarah

Apple 2E's?

Matt

Were computer cards.

Sarah

In your school?

Matt

Well, we had computer cards—you filled in the dots with a number to lead pencil, and you would make a pile of them. And you would put them in, you put them in the card reader and they would run through and the program wouldn't run of course, but that was okay. Because you'd have another chair and have a chance to correct it. And you'd probably be able to run the program again in another week.

Sarah

So for those of you who are computer programmers and know what a pain in the behind it is to compile things, they did that by hand. That is horrifying to me. You mentioned last night that our cell phones have more computing power than national mission control. During the Apollo missions?

Matt

Yeah.

Sarah

If there's anybody who's really ambitious. There's a project for you.

Matt, if you were to write a book about Jesus coming back as a vampire or otherwise, where's the first place you would write him going?

Matt

Well, this is probably not fair, but I probably put him somewhere in America because as an American, those are the settings I know really well. I might put him with kind of a middle-class suburban family, just because there's that expectation that he would fit perfectly there. And he absolutely wouldn't.

Sarah

Put him with Karen and Ken? Their 2.5 children?

Matt

Yeah. And I think I thought would be such a great plot. Yeah, I think that would be fun because you know, put them, put them, put them with it a nice, middle class Christian family and let him convert them.

Sarah

Oh, I love that. All right, well, I was gonna ask vampires or werewolves...

Matt

it depends on the vampires, or the werewolves and vampires. Classical vampires, if you go back before Dracula, classical vampires are just monsters. Not sexy. They're not fun. They're not. And Dracula really changed the way we think of vampires. Dracula made vampires classy, and rich and sexy. And I have an issue with sexy vampires. Partly because Dracula was the first vampire book I read. And it strongly influenced me. And what he's doing with Dracula is really interesting, because Bram Stoker was writing in the 1890s—he was writing at a time when European nobility was really on the way out.

Sarah

Oh

Matt

And they still had the title, they still had the prestige, they still had all that, but they didn't have any money anymore. And one of the things you found were at that point, a lot of nobles were, were trying to get money any way they could. And that often meant marrying off their daughters to rich businessmen.

Sarah

Vampires

Matt

And I think what he's doing is he's he's taking a look at that social class. And he's basically saying, Here's what the nobility really are. They look sexy, look sophisticated. But all of that is because they're sucking the life out of the common people.

Sarah
Wow.

Matt
That's the image. The other thing that gets me about vampires, and I think this carries over even into Twilight, because, you know, Twilight talks about well, if you're a 400 year old vampire, but you still look young and sexy, what do you do? Well, you hang out in high schools and try to pick up girls. Vampire, in my mind, is a really good metaphor for predators.

Sarah
Wow. What about Angel though?

Matt
Angel was really interesting. I thought Angel...

Sarah
From Buffy, right?

Matt
From Buffy, Yeah. And later from his own series. Angel was good. And I think Angel is one of the few attempts I really liked about a vampire. And part of that was because they never forgot as good a person as he was, and when he was good, he was great, there was still a monster just that deep under the surface.

Sarah
Like billionaires?

Matt
Elon. The other the other one that I was kind of a fan of just, just because was Barnabas Collins from Dark Shadows, the idea of a good vampire. It can be very compelling, especially if you really look at that tension that's there, between the desire to suck the life out of other people and the desire to be a decent human being. And as you say, it's a good metaphor for a lot of rich and powerful people in our society, who want to be good, or at least to appear to be good. But something about their very nature kind of drains other people dry.

If we go with the Count with Angel and with Barnabas, you've probably got my top <counts like the Count> 1-2-3 Ah ah ah.

By the way, yes, I've always liked monster movies better than horror movies.

Sarah
Okay

Matt

And to me, the difference is the monster is not necessarily an evil thing in its own context.

Sarah
Yeah.

Matt
The werewolf or King Kong or the Frankenstein monster or a dinosaur—they're not evil. They're just they're just creatures trying to live. What makes them a monster is they're in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Sarah
Now, what do you think is something that people of faith should care more about?

Matt
Can we change the question?

Sarah
Yes, please.

Matt
I'm gonna ask, I'm gonna say what they should care less about.

Sarah
(That's my next question)

Matt
Okay, I'll answer them in reverse order.

Sarah
No, you don't have to. But yeah, what's something we should care less about? As people?

Matt
I think we should care less about defending God, and defending Jesus and defending the church.

Sarah
Oh, interesting.

Matt
We, if we trust that God is good, if we trust that Jesus is good, then they don't need us to defend them. And when we start defending them, we then start justifying all kinds of really awful things. And it makes us worse. And I think if we just back away and say, Well, you know, this, here's my experience. If yours is different, then that makes me uncomfortable. But let's talk about it. Let's, let's be honest. Even we're being honest, it's painful for those of us who are in the position of believers.

Sarah

Ah, that's powerful. Thank you, Matt.

Matt, what do you think happens when we die?

Matt

I don't know. And that's, you know, I grew up with the classic Christian understanding of when you when you die, you go to heaven. I grew up in a UCC church. So there was not the emphasis on if you die in your unsaved, or you're a bad person or whatever, you go to hell. And it was interesting because I would ask what heaven is like and I would always get kind of noncommittal answers. And what I, what I've come to as an adult, is, we don't really know what happens. You know, I can't say I go to the through the pearly gate, which is made of a giant pearl because there have been big oysters in heaven. I can't. I can't commit to the details or anything like that I don't have any understanding. And I can't even say with 100% certainty that there is a part of us that exists after death. But we do have a promise.

Sarah

Ohh

Matt

We have a promise. We have a promise that life is not it. That life is not the end of life is not the end of us. And that we who are in the church where we would use his communion with other people and with God, that extends forever. And I don't understand what that promise means. But I trust the promise that it means something.

Sarah

That's a great answer.

Oh, Matt, I don't know if we can keep this short. But in a couple sentences, can you answer somebody who asks, How do you reconcile your progressive version of the Bible with obviously bad things that are condoned by the Bible?

Matt

There's an author, who I've found very, very helpful named Marcus Borg. And I think I'm trying to remember what the title of his book was, it might, it might have been Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time. And one of the things he says that I think is very, very helpful in reading the Bible is that the Bible is not written from one point of view. There are a couple of competing narratives in the Bible, because you find books and a couple of good examples are Ezra and Nehemiah, where God is harsh, God is judgmental. God hates foreigners, God only cares about the chosen people. And if you, if you, if you marry somebody who's a foreigner, then you need to get rid of them, or somebody needs to kill you and kill the person you married. And, and there's this idea that you have to then you've got all of these rules and all of these rituals, and and this goes hand in hand with the conquest narratives in books like Joshua. But then you have a different version where it says it's the law to welcome the stranger.

Sarah
Exactly. Yeah.

Matt
And what we're doing is we're hearing two sides of an argument. And the argument is, what is God like? And what are we supposed to be like as the people of God?

Sarah
So what I'm hearing is basically, you acknowledge that it was written by human beings with different perspectives.

Matt
Yes.

Sarah
And it's okay for us to recognize now that slavery, for example, obviously goes against loving your neighbor and is therefore wrong. Even though there's plenty in the Bible that condones it. And I think it's really interesting that the Bible doesn't just cherry-pick out one side or the other and cut the rest out to give a more consistent picture.

Matt
There's a tradition in Judaism that you argue about important things. And we get to see both sides of the argument.

Sarah
What's something that you enjoy about aging?

Matt
Hmm, I'll think on that one.

I think that I am a lot more levelheaded than when I was younger. There are things that still bother me. When people say mean things to me, it still hurts. I doubt that that'll ever go away completely. But when I was a kid, your emotions can just kind of run away with you. And when people said mean things, I would feel, I would take that very much on myself and think, oh, yeah, I'm a worthless, useless, horrible person. And I have learned with age that's not true.

Sarah
Yeah. Did you all hear that? It gets easier. Also, as we practice recognizing that we can be rejected and still survive, and that we're okay. That's a Christian thing—to remember we're God's beloved children, and we don't need outside affirmation to affirm that.

Matt
Yeah, yeah.

Sarah
Easier said than done.

Matt
A lot of the best messages are the hardest to put into practical use in your life.

Sarah
Yeah.

Somebody wants to know, okay, why you spent so much time on Job? And what does it mean to be a reformed Christian, because a lot of people still don't really understand the United Church of Christ and reformed heritage as part of that. And like, what does that mean? Because we have reformed church in America and Presbyterians. And I mean, it's based on the reformation. That's the short answer.

Matt
Reformed is just what the churches that followed John Calvin and his train of thought tended to be called. Evangelicals, what the ones that followed, Martin Luther tended to be called. Some of those churches instead of calling themselves Reformed call themselves Calvinist or Methodist. Some of the ones that instead of evangelical, called themselves Lutheran, after the guy who really started their movement.

Sarah
Evangelical in Germany, where Luther was from just means Protestant now.

Matt
Yeah.

Sarah
Well, Matt, um, last question here that I have is can you describe the rest of your life in five words?

Matt
The rest of my life? Yeah, five words? No. <laughter>

Sarah
Okay. That's the answer. Y'all keep asking questions. Thank you for the challenges. Thank you for all of your insights.

Matt
Yeah, it was really great.

Sarah
Thank you, everyone.

Matt

Yeah, thanks. This has been a lot of fun. And I'm no longer scared of TikTok because I used to be.

Sarah

I'm sure we're gonna do it again. Especially because now Matt's gonna be on TikTok.

See you later.

Matt

Bye bye.