



EPISODE 5

SELF ACCEPTANCE AT A QUEER BIBLE STUDY

Programmanus

Intro music

NARRATOR

This show was recorded when the world was a bit different.

Sound of a plane flying

NARRATOR

You could easily fly to the US, hug strangers and you didn't hesitate to share a can of soda.

Sound of a can of soda being opened

NARRATOR

You're listening to Preach Shorts, with Linda Ulfhielm.

Doorbell

ADRIAN

Hello!

LINDA

Hi, Adrian! Hi!

ADRIAN

Nice to meet you!



LINDA

Nice to meet you, too.

NARRATOR

Over the course of eight episodes, Linda is in L.A. talking to people from different faith-based backgrounds about the big questions in life. You're listening to Preach Shorts, snackable edits from the podcast Preach.

LINDA

I've been looking forward to it.

ADRIAN

How are you doing?

LINDA

Good! How are you?

ADRIAN

I'm good. Come on in.

LINDA

Thank you.

ADRIAN

Come check it out.

LINDA

Wow!

ADRIAN

Okay, so, our house is under construction right now.

LINDA

Yeah, I get that.

ADRIAN

Like, being remodeled, so all of our old furniture is like, currently being stored. But we're probably going to buy new furniture and stuff.

LINDA

Today, I'm heading to Orange County, which is an hour south of L.A., to meet with Adrian. His house is one of those super Californian houses. It's green, low, and it has a luscious garden. Adrian is Christian, gay and is a part of an LGBTQ Bible study group that I'm very curious about.

LINDA

Tell me a little bit about yourself.



ADRIAN

Yeah, so, um... Well, my name is Adrian Pastor. My parents are Mexican immigrants. So they immigrated here from Mexico when they were a lot younger. I...recently got my associate's degree in studio art, so I do a lot of art.

LINDA

Congrats.

ADRIAN

Thank you. I do a lot of like, painting and drawing and just like, creating stuff.

LINDA

And you sing as well, I've heard?

ADRIAN

I sing, too, yeah. Yeah, I also sing. I started singing in high school. I did choir in high school. Growing up, I grew up in a Christian household. My parents were both sort of raised Christian and Catholic, and so those beliefs were always instilled in us. It was something that was just, like, a common practice. You know, we would like, pray together as a family and just, like, do different things like that, like, pray before we eat, and...

LINDA

How does a prayer sound?

ADRIAN

Well, it was always, like... It depended on how hungry we were. So if we were super hungry, it would just be like super quick. We were like: "Thank you, God, for the food. Amen!" But like, other times, if it's, like, Thanksgiving or something, we're all like, all holding hands, and everybody's like: "Thank you, God, for like, all this community..." And like, we just get super sappy. And my grandma's usually the one that's like: "Everybody has to go around and say something for our big prayer."

LINDA

Adrian sits with his back against the trunk of a big tree in the middle of the garden. He's wearing a black cap, a yellow T-shirt with white stripes, and a pair of blue basketball shorts. I want to understand how his sexuality has affected his faith, and vice versa.

LINDA

Has it been hard for you, with your faith and your sexuality?

ADRIAN

It's been difficult. Um... I...you know... A lot of, um, people will say that you can't be gay if you are Christian. They see it sort of as an oxymoron.

LINDA

Yeah.

ADRIAN

Um, and in a lot of, you know, Christian faith spaces, you know, you're told that being gay is a sin, you know, that homosexuality is a sin, and that the Bible says these specific things and has these specific verses that state, you know, "This is a sinful lifestyle, and if you don't, you know, change that, you're going to, you know, you're going to go to hell." Um...



LINDA

How do you feel about that?

ADRIAN

It was... It was hard for me to hear that growing up.

LINDA

Yeah, I get that.

ADRIAN

It was really scary, it was um...

LINDA

Yeah. Did it keep you from coming out to your parents? Did you, like... Yeah. Did it keep you from doing that?

ADRIAN

To a degree, yeah. I...I was just so afraid that they might not be accepting, um, which at the end of the day, you know, they were completely accepting, and I'm super grateful for that, um...

LINDA

Yeah.

ADRIAN

Yeah, it...it was definitely scary coming out to them, because I...I just wasn't sure how they would react to it. But, like, I mentioned, like, being a part of this community, and, like, seeing these people live confidently being queer, being Christian and just being outspoken and proud about it, like, that was so inspiring to me, because I had never seen somebody like that exist before, you know? It was always, you were either gay, or you were Christian, but you weren't both. That's, like... That's not... That's not possible.

LINDA

The group Adrian is talking about is called G3Y, a Bible study group for LGBTQ people. They meet every two weeks to discuss the Bible, their faith, and what it's like to be young, queer and Christian. Adrian invites me to their meet-up. We drive to the Open Door Worship Center in Bellflower, just a few towns away.

Sound of a car engine and a car door shutting

PERSON 1

Hi!

LINDA

Hi! I'm Linda. Linda.

PERSON 1

Hey, Linda. Good to meet you.

LINDA

Nice to meet you, too.



PERSON 1

Are you friends of Adrian's?

LINDA

Yeah. Yes.

Music / background noise / unintelligible talking

PERSON 2

Questions...?

LINDA

We're in a quite modern church. The chairs are cushioned and there's a plastic tarp banner, kind of, with the words, "That Jesus May Be Glorified" hanging on the wall. We sit in a circle, and a box is passed around with questions from the participants. Another guy, a bit older than Adrian, pulls out a card. He turns to Gloria, a twenty-something woman with short-cropped hair.

UNKNOWN PERSON

Oohh...

Sound of paper being handled

PERSON 3

How did you reconcile your faith in Jesus Christ with your sexual orientation?

Background noise / more paper sounds

GLORIA

Can you say it again a little louder? I couldn't hear you.

PERSON 3

How did you reconcile your faith in Jesus Christ with your sexual orientation?

UNKNOWN PERSON

Umm...

GLORIA

I ran away from my faith for, like, at least, let's see... About 14-15 years, after I found Jesus the first time. And like I mentioned earlier, you know... There's that one sermon where I'm finally comfortable at a church, and I feel, like, I'm in my community of people, and you have the pastor, the head pastor, saying: "I don't even know how to talk to a homosexual person." Like, as if I'm, like, a disease, or you know, I'm an alien. Like, "I'm a human being. The same flesh and blood that you know, even was of our own God Jesus Christ. And you... You don't know how to talk to someone like me?" And that was the moment I really stopped...trying to pretend in church that I wasn't gay, and I left church instead. And I couldn't separate from what Christians were telling...were telling me, or, like, heard "normal," like, Christian, you know, culture, um, from what Jesus' love was. I believed all the people, and so I spent my entire teenage years into my late 20s, you know, running, running, running. And... I was unable to fully accept and reconcile my faith until I came to G3Y.

Music



ADRIAN

I think um, what really set it off for me, and like, really helped me change the way that I viewed myself, was being a part of that community, G3Y. Um, a lot of them, you know, are older than me and have lived through, you know, similar experiences that I have and been through these things, and so, in a way, they sort of know the ropes, and they're familiar with what I've gone through because they've gone through it themselves.

And you know, I look up to them so much, because they are so sure of themselves and they...they love themselves, and they are confident, and of course they're imperfect, because you know, we're humans and that's our nature, but you know, they've really been incredible examples of how to, you know, to receive, you know, not only God's love but, you know, a love for yourself, too.

Music

LINDA

You've just heard snippets from my conversation with Adrian. I just feel so strengthened after talking to him. He's overcome so much adversity, and found a way to love himself. I was a bit shocked, though, to hear that in some churches in America, being queer is still taboo. It made me think about the things that are still taboo in Sweden. What taboos have you encountered in Sweden? For instance, is being religious something that's accepted or discouraged?

Music

NARRATOR

You've just finished Preach Shorts with Linda Ulfhielm. Preach is a production from The Swedish Educational Broadcasting company, by Daniel Persson Mora, Nanna Olasdotter Hallberg, Ludvig Widman, Tove Jonstoj, Karin Winther & Martina Magorin Borg. With host Linda Ulfhielm.

Music