

[Theme music: upbeat electronica plays in the background as Katie speaks.]

Katie Axelson: Welcome to Have Hope; Will Travel. When we travel we get to know people who are different than we are. We hear different perspectives, we better understand others' stories. We learn to stand with people instead of having opinions on issues. I'm your host Katie Axelson. Friend, we are entering into one of my favorite weeks of the year, Holy Week. If you're listening to this episode on Monday, the day that it was released, then yesterday is what we call Palm Sunday, it's the day we celebrate Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey and all the people shouting "Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" This year Easter and Passover actually align, so Passover starts on Wednesday and then Thursday is what some Christian traditions call Maundy Thursday, it's the day of the first Last Supper. Good Friday is when Jesus was crucified on our behalf. And then there's the Silence of Saturday. I did a podcast episode of that in March of 2020. I don't know that anyone really wants to go back there but if you're brave, it's Episode {13}. And then of course, Easter Sunday: the day we celebrate Jesus' triumph over death. And in years past, I've created a resource or like fun freebies for Holy Week but yeah, that didn't happen this year. 'Cause life got in the way and... death got in the way. If you've seen on Instagram, my grandpa passed away - he's actually the first of my four grandparents to go live with Jesus and yes we tailgated his funeral. That is real, you can see the footage on Instagram. And I wasn't able to create a resource this year because, well there's other exciting things coming soon that I can't tell you about yet! [Katie sighs.] It's really hard for me to keep a secret. But here's the deal: I can't do this myself. I don't do this myself! I've had a team around me since the very beginning of Have Hope; Will Travel, and it's time for that team to grow and change. So I would love for you to join the volunteer team of Have Hope; Will Travel. Maybe one of your skill sets matches one of our needs, or maybe there's a skill set that you want to practice and we could be a safe place for you to get started doing that. Something like writing show notes, creating graphics, transcribing, finding guests, creating videos - oh my gosh, there are so many ways to get involved! So many cool things that we could do if our team was larger, so many cool things we could do if I didn't have to do the hard things. So let's talk about it, let's start a conversation! Send me an email at Katie@KatieAxelson.com. I would love to hear how you think that you may be a good fit for Have Hope; Will Travel and let's chat about it from there. This week's perspective may be something that some people don't even consider a different perspective or maybe you consider it a really different perspective... or maybe it's one of those things that you've heard of but you don't really know anything about because you haven't taken the time to listen. Meet our new friend Carrie Miller. Carrie's Catholic. Carrie and I met through a mutual friend Anna Rachel Bolch who was our very first podcast guest ever, way back in the day. Carrie is a writer and a blogger, she's blogs at Surrendering for Greatness, she's from New Mexico which is a place I have not yet been to so I'm excited to get to learn about it, and she worked as a Catholic missionary for four years right out of college. Now she works as a freelance writer and marketer. Carrie, welcome to the show.

Carrie K. Miller: Hey Katie! Thank you so much for having me, I'm so excited to get to chat with you!

KA: Yeah me too! So let's actually start with New Mexico: you're from New Mexico. Do you still live there now? Tell us a little bit about what makes that state different!

CM: Yeah so I was born and raised here in New Mexico, went to college in New Mexico, and it wasn't until after college that I left New Mexico. As you mentioned, I was a missionary for four years and then after missions stayed in the South. So I was in Georgia and Tennessee and back in Georgia, and just moved back to New Mexico in 2020, towards the end of 2020.

KA: Okay.

CM: And oh, New Mexico is just such - I do love it. I am so glad that I grew up here. I know a lot of friends, you know from growing up days were like, "Oh gosh I can't wait to get out of this town! I can't wait to get out of this state!" But it's delightful. The beauty here is very rugged, it is the desert. And it's, I think, like the sixth largest state in the country in terms of area.

KA: Wow I didn't know that

CM: Yeah so it's huge, yeah it's pretty large. I grew up in the Northwestern corner, for example and where I went to college in southern New Mexico - that was a six hour drive from south to north. So within the state, because it's so large you have so many different landscapes. So people often picture when they hear "the desert" you know, they picture like tumbleweeds and huge cacti and you know, like nothing alive. [Carrie and Katie laugh.] But, we have - we do have parts of the desert that are that, you know? We don't really have tall cacti, that's more Arizona, but we have desert, we have mountains, we have snow. Like I live in Santa Fe and the elevation there is high enough that it really does snow. Like yesterday morning we woke up to three inches of snow.

KA: Okay!

CM: So most people think New Mexico is just always hot and dry and it actually gets really cold in the winter.

KA: Yeah!

CM: Or, parts of it do. Not all of it does. So the landscape is very beautiful, it's very rugged and there is an ecosystem here. There is life. You just sort of have to be attuned to it. It's not the green, like the greenery of you know, Georgia or Tennessee but there is life here. It's so beautiful. And then the people here are just lovely. Like they are kind and warm and welcoming and relaxed and very unpretentious, I would say. And then also the cultural diversity is so beautiful. I never knew - I mean I knew like a fact of my brain, but I like didn't understand the lived experience of so many people of color in other parts of the country because here like, we have many indigenous tribes, Native American tribes, and you know we're right next to Mexico so we have a very strong connection to the Latino community and even parts of Northern New Mexico - well all of New Mexico really - was settled by the Spaniards years ago, and so the Spanish that is spoken in Northern New Mexico I have heard. I'm not fluent in Spanish, but the Spanish that is spoken there is closer to the Spanish that was spoken in the fifteen hundreds. It's kind of like archaic in some ways. So yeah we're just all together, all the cultural backgrounds are all together in the state. I grew up with friends basically from every walk of life, every background, every skin color, every hair type, you know? I was just really blessed to have

friends from all walks of life and it really wasn't until I moved to Georgia and looked around and realized all my friends here are white and I - how do I bridge that gap? You know, like I didn't know because - I mean this is such a tangent I guess for our conversation but - rightly so, you know people of color in the South especially are very - their communities are very insulated. They take care of each other because they've had to. And so me, I'm - I'm as white as they come! I'm super pale. If I just show up and start inserting myself into their daily lives, I think they would rightly view me with suspicion, like "What is this person doing?"

KA: Right, "Why are you here?"

CM: And it was really in 2020 that I started to realize I miss diversity. I miss having more than one race in my social circle.

KA: Sure.

CM: And had I stayed in Georgia longer, like if I were there today I think I would try to go to some of the historically Black universities and just listen and just try to learn, you know? Like from their community events, not - obviously I'm not going to like show up to a class that I'm not enrolled in! But -

KA: Just hang out in the cafeteria and see what you hear! [Katie laughs.]

CM: Yeah, "Hey guys!" They're like, "Why??" You know, that would be weird for sure. So if I were still there, I would want to go to those community events and just listen and you know, try to present myself as a friend and a listener. But alas, I'm not there anymore. But I can still do that here in New Mexico. But anyway.

KA: That's true. It looks different and Have Hope; Will Travel is designed to be the show where you can just sit and listen to things like that so you're in the right place and you sold me on New Mexico. I'm ready to visit!

CM: Yes come visit! Listen Santa Fe is so cool, there's so many cultural things here, like parts of Santa Fe you'll just drive around and be like "This is not that cool," and then - at least I do! - I'm like, "This is like any other town in New Mexico." and then I realize there are literally James Beard award-winning chefs all throughout Santa Fe, so like cuisine-wise it's a huge draw. There's a huge art community, there are jewelers, it's very cool. Very cool.

KA: The architecture is always something I notice first in a new place, and I've always been drawn to the architecture that I see as represented in New Mexico, obviously I'm sure that the whole state doesn't look as beautiful as I've seen in pictures but it always makes me want to go, "Oh I want to see that in real life."

CM: Yeah exactly. Santa Fe I think really plays into the stereotypical Southwest architecture, with like Adobe and like the beams that poke out of the building. I don't even know, they have a name I don't know what they're called.

KA: I'm sure they do, I don't know what they're called either.

CM: Yeah, no clue. But the rest of New Mexico is very normal in terms of architecture, like not every town - it's like literally a city ordinance that new buildings have to match that style.

KA: Wow, that I didn't know!

CM: So Walmart has that style, McDonald's has that style. There's a new storage facility [Carrie laughs.] that literally on the outside looks Adobe because they have to match the style.

KA: Wow, sure.

CM: So Santa Fe really plays into it.

KA: Tell us: do you have any advice for people who maybe have a diverse friend group or want a diverse friend group and are like, "I don't really know how to do this."

CM: I also don't know how to do it. I think, just in full transparency, I think one thing that they can do is listen with an open heart and try to put themselves in situations where they will encounter people of other backgrounds. Whether that, that could be a different racial background but it could also be a different faith background, it could be a different educational background, political ideology, it could be any of those things. And when you show up in those places don't come in, even internally, don't come in with your fisticuffs up you know, like ready to debate. Like just listen. Just listen and be willing I think to be quiet and also to say hi and just be friendly. And also be willing to do it for a long time. Because when I was a missionary, my first year of formation we lived in the north Georgia mountains but we helped with the youth group at a parish nearby and for whatever reason most of - there was a huge, huge Mexican immigrant community there and so most of the youth were children of Mexican immigrants or were - had actually immigrated with their parents. And they did not know - they would speak to each other in Spanish, and again I'm not fluent in Spanish but I had been around Spanish enough to be able to pick up on some of the things that they were saying so I like, understood their jokes and would laugh and laugh but outwardly they saw this. They saw super white, blonde you know? And other white, skinned fair-haired people in Georgia are not used to Spanish or whatever. They had no way of knowing that because I'm from New Mexico I actually am more closely identified with them than I did with my other missionaries who were white. Like we - you know racially come from the same background but because they had grown up in other parts of the country, they were outsiders and I look like an outsider but there was no way for me to communicate my openness and love for their culture and appreciation for their traditions and you know, all of the things that they held dear other than to patiently show up for them, and be kind to them, and listen, and not strive I guess. If that makes sense.

KA: Yeah, that's good. I hadn't even thought about what does it look like to identify with someone who physically looks different than you do and them not knowing that you identify more with them than the people you look like. What a contrast and an experience that you've got. I also speak Spanish and so I know the look of shock on people's face when this gringa pulls out some Spanish words, and they're like, "Wait what?"

CM: [Carrie laughs.] "Wait what?" Yeah.

KA: So I understand a little bit that moment of, "Oh she actually does speak some Spanish."

CM: Yes yes. Yeah. I was - in college I was in a Latina sorority, and I was like one of two white people. But they were so open and welcoming, like they very much were like "Yes we were

founded by Latino women at Texas Tech, but we - and we are for the Latina community, but by no means are we exclusively a Latina sorority.” And so I - again, that was just another reinforcement of like the beauty of, you know, Central American culture and also just like, just - it's so vibrant and so lovely. But that is really where most of my like, conversational Spanish or at least understanding. I can't necessarily speak it back but the understanding my conversational Spanish came from because my sisters were forever chatting Spanish.

KA: Sure.

CM: It was so fun, it was wonderful experience.

KA: You're also making me miss Latin America now! [Carrie laughs.] So let's chat a little bit about your missionary experience because I also have missionary experience from Latin America but I know our experiences are very different for a variety of reasons. But the one that we're going to highlight here is that you're actually Catholic. So tell us a little bit: have you always been Catholic?

CM: [Carrie laughs.] Yes, I was born and raised born and raised Catholic and have always loved being Catholic. I think part of that comes from, I feel like Catholics anywhere we go at least in the United States are kind of challenged in like, by other people who are not Catholic. And I think our our faith, our religion, is misunderstood. And so even though I grew up in New Mexico which is a pretty culturally Catholic place, I still have plenty of times in school – I went to public school - where people you know would sort of say things that were not true about Catholics. And so that kind of gave me this like pride you know? And just a desire to like stand up for my faith because they were wrong. And they did have misconceptions you know. But it wasn't until I was in high school and went to a - it's called Steubenville. Any Catholic who hears this will be like, “Oh, Steubenville, I know what that is!” So Steubenville is a college, well actually let me back up. A Franciscan University - I don't know if it's a university or a college but there's a pretty well known Catholic institution of higher education, shall we say in Steubenville, Ohio and they for years have put on Steubenville conferences throughout the United States. And they are youth conferences, so for you know, teenagers to come and have praise and worship and really awesome talks, and really powerful prayer experiences. And so I went to Steubenville West in Tucson, Arizona as a sixteen year old in between my Junior and Senior year of high school. And that was really the year that I went from sort of logically being like, loving being Catholic and proud to be Catholic, to actually in my heart be like, “Oh!” Like, “I finally had an encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist.” We, for us in the Catholic church, communion - we have it every single at every single mass. And you know, so we have mass on Sunday but you can go to daily mass too, like you can go to mass every single day other than Good Friday. So for us, communion is not symbolic. It is truly the body and blood of Jesus. The body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus. At Steubenville West was the first time I had a huge encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist, which you know communion is the Eucharist. And finally - and I had known as a fact in my head, like Jesus is in the Eucharist: check. Got it. But after that Steubenville conference like, my heart finally got it and I had an encounter, like face to face with the living God in the Eucharist. And after that was just more and more. Like the love story has unfolded more and more since then. Yeah. So I've always been Catholic. Always proud to be Catholic. But not until, you know, mid-teens did I start to actually fall in love with Jesus and to -

KA: Can you tell us - oh, go ahead.

CM: Oh, I'll just say and to see Him more clearly in the sacraments. So like Eucharist, Confession are the two that happen a lot. All the rest of them are like one and done you know? You get baptized one time, etc.

KA: There are seven sacraments, is that right, in the Catholic church?

CM: Yes, that's exactly right. Seven.

KA: In the Protestant Church, we only have two. So could you run us through what the seven are?

CM: I can!

KA: Do you know them off the top of your head? Am I putting you on the spot? I'm sorry!

CM: I do, I do. You are, let's go back - I know, all I can think of is Mr. Burnham, my CCDC teacher for junior year when I got confirmed. If he ever hears this, he will be so proud. He was the best. We butted heads a little bit, but he was really the best. His whole thing was like, "To get to Heaven! Everything we do is to get to Heaven!" So still to this day, all I hear is "To get to Heaven!" Anyway, the seven sacraments: are Baptism, Confession so First Reconciliation, First Communion, Confirmation, Marriage, Holy Orders, and Anointing of the Sick or Last Rites.

KA: Oh, okay. What is Holy Orders?

CM: Holy Orders is the priesthood. Like the -

KA: Oh, okay.

CM: Yeah. So - well, so priesthood: deacons are also considered part of Holy Orders, they are ordained as well. It's a slightly different ordination than priests, but deacons are ordained and they take on Holy Orders when they get ordained.

KA: Got it. Very cool. Are Catholic missionaries ordained?

CM: No, no.

KA: No?

CM: No. We, because here's the thing - well they can be. Let me back that up. Lay missionaries like I was, are not ordained. We are lay people right? So lay people are basically anybody who's not clergy. That might be - I don't know if that's also true for Protestants too.

KA: Yeah that's true

CM: Okay great. So lay missionaries are lay people, not clergy, so therefore we are not ordained. But some missionaries, you certainly have missionary priests, so they are ordained. And then some religious orders are -- and you have men's religious orders and women's religious orders -- so some men who are in religious life are only called to that consecrated religious life. Some of them who are in religious orders are also called to priesthood. So if they are priests in a religious order, then they are also ordained.

KA: So what drew you to wanting to become a lay missionary?

CM: For me it really all stems from that one-to-one interaction with Jesus in the Eucharist as a teenager and realizing that today in the Catholic Church something like seventy percent of Catholics don't believe that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist. Which is painful - that, like man, every time we go to communion we receive God, literally God into our body and to understand the intimacy and the love that is available to us with the actual God of the universe. That so many people are missing and also, the more that I got to know Jesus, even as a missionary, the more I realized every single "rule" if you will is because of love. Like from love. So I really just wanted to help other people have an encounter with God who is love. I want them to understand how and I still do. Like, I'm not even officially a missionary anymore but I still have this desire for people to understand how loved they are by God and that when they are able to have that person-to-person encounter with God, it changes everything. And so I wanted people to understand the love that God has from them to experience the love that God has for them and ultimately get to spend eternity with God in Heaven. In the Catholic view of eternity, there is such a choice as hell, and - which, you know, sounds really dire and intense and scary. Really hell, I think even C.S. Lewis wrote about this. Hell isn't punishment for doing bad things, hell is kind of a choice. If we choose to live apart from God in this life, we choose to live apart from God in the next life, you know? Now that's not to say that God's mercy isn't huge and crazy and I think the old school view, like Catholic old school views of, you know, "well if a baby dies before it's baptized it's in limbo, it's soul as in limbo." I think today that's probably one of those stereotypes that people have of the Catholic Church because years ago that was kind of a debate among Catholics of like, "Is limbo a place?"

KA: Sure.

CM: Today though I think we have a deeper understanding of God's mercy and so I think that He knows each heart, he knows each soul. He knows some of us have never been presented with the choice of God or not God, you know? Or some of us never knew that we had a choice, etc. So just because a person might do bad things in their life and, in theory, choose to live apart from God. If they never knew that they had a choice or were making a choice, I think that God's mercy is big enough to - not "see past that" but basically, we don't know. As humans we don't know. God can do whatever He wants, and his mercy is radical, and wild, and beautiful. But I, as a missionary, wanted and still want people to know that that love exists and that they can choose to live in that love and from that love.

KA: That's so beautiful and I feel like that's a common theme, that Catholicism and Protestantism have in common, is knowing and experiencing God's love and then being able to share it with others.

CM: I think so too. We all believe in the same God, you know! I'm such a fan of ecumenism - ecu- [Carrie stumbles over the word.]

KA: Ecumenicism, I think.

CM: There you go! Ecumenicism. Ecumenicalism?

KA: Maybe? You might be right. [Katie and Carrie laugh.]

CM: I have no idea. But I think we have so much that we can learn from each other, you know, like even when I was a missionary we would say like, "Because we believe in the Eucharist, we believe that," – this is going to sound to any Protestants listening, they're going to be like, "Wow, Catholics are psycho," [Katie laughs.] But we believe that we have the fullness of truth because we have the Eucharist. We still have the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus present to us in the Eucharist. And of course we love scripture and tradition, we're both scripture and tradition so we believe that we have the "fullness of truth" but we have so much to learn from our Protestant brothers and sisters. Because for example, just in my lived experience, when I walk into a Protestant church I am so welcomed and like, loved on and you know just there's that kindness and a warmth. And that's not to say that that's lacking in all Catholic churches, but a lot of times in a Catholic church you're just not welcomed in the same way. Not always, some parishes are better at it than others but yeah, there's a lot that we can learn. And just like the study of scripture, there's so much that we can learn from each other because we all believe in the same Jesus, we all believe in the same God. And you know, in John 17 Jesus prayed for unity. And so I am all about building bridges between the different denominations because like, Jesus wants us to be united. So.

KA: I listen to Father Mike's Bible in a Year last year and I loved getting to have him read scripture. I did it mostly over breakfast so he was reading scripture to me over breakfast and it was absolutely beautiful and then I loved the way that he unpacked the scriptures and some of the Catholic views because I feel like I understand a whole lot more. I don't necessarily agree with everything, I mean so sometimes I have to like recommend the podcast with a disclaimer because if somebody is new to the Protestant faith I don't want to confuse them, but at the same time someone who's like eager to learn and at a place where they can hear different ideas and not be completely thrown off in them. I absolutely love it and I highly recommend it because it was beautiful to get to hear him first of all read scripture, I mean there's nothing more beautiful than have someone read scripture to you while you eat breakfast. But also just to unpack it and say, "Hey this is the Catholic idea. This is the Protestant idea. This is how they're different, and this is why they both came from." So it was absolutely beautiful to be able to learn in that. And then my best friend growing up as a young child was Catholic and then my grandma was Catholic, and so there are a fair amount of Catholicism that still exists in my life today even though I wouldn't call myself a Catholic, and I still have a pretty strong Catholic influence in my life.

CM: Yeah. What's funny is my boyfriend is not Catholic and he even he identifies as Christian but he isn't strongly associated with any particular like denomination or tradition within Christianity. But since we've been dating he has come to the realization how much of his life has been kind of surrounded by Catholic influence, even though he had no clue. He had no clue! He was like, "Oh my gosh I had no clue that these friends were Catholic!" We went to, you know, they had their baby baptized and he was like, "Wow I had no clue that there was so much Catholic influence around me."

KA: Sure.

CM: So yeah, we're kind of everywhere in a good way I think. [Carrie laughs.]

KA: And it's beautiful. You bring a lot to the table which is great. And I think sometimes within Protestantism there's this theory of, "Oh they're Catholic, that's different. I don't want to engage with them and they're wrong," or whatever, whatever they come to. And I don't think that's accurate at all. I love having Catholic friends, I love getting to learn from them. There are some practices that I think have Catholic heritage that are very important to me and I love practicing them, especially like Holy Week is one of my favorite weeks of the year! And that is a heavily Catholic practice. I also grew up Lutheran so it's a Lutheran practice as well, but just absolutely beautiful. But then there are some misconceptions so can we talk a little bit about misconceptions that people have of Catholics and things that we need to know?

CM: Yes. I think - oh man there's a few. There's a few. [Katie laughs.] One that I have heard sometimes in life that there are because - I think this comes from, I don't want to say "popular culture" but just sort of how we refer to Catholics and Christian, which is really far from the truth.

KA: Wrong.

CM: It's just wrong, yes. Catholics were in fact, this might be a strong statement, but Catholics were the first Christians because we believe that - not even we believe just like historically, until you know, the split of well first the east and the west Church split and then a couple hundred years later I think. I don't actually know the timeline. But then it was later when, yep the fifteen hundreds when the big schism happened between Catholics and Protestants. And so up until that point, for the first you know, fifteen hundred years of Church history, if you were Christian you were Catholic. There was no distinction. Well I guess there was if you take into account like the Orthodox, the Eastern you know sort of schism but still they, I mean Eastern Churches still have really similar like liturgies and really similar - they're basically, the only difference is that they don't necessarily fall under the authority of the Pope right? But like other than that - now however I will say if any Orthodox Christians hear this [Carrie laughs.] and I am wrong, I hope that they like, write in and are like, "Actually here are the differences," because I would love to learn that too.

KA: I have been trying to find someone who's Orthodox to interview on the show and have yet to be successful in that, so if an orthodox is listening and telling us we're wrong or just wants to share their perspective let us know 'cause lets all learn from you!

CM: Yes please let's learn! Because I everything I know is obviously from the Catholic perspective, which I've already indicated can sometimes sound a little snooty 'cause we're like, "We have the fullness of truth!" You know what I mean? So it's like, I get that we sound a little full of ourselves so I'm sorry about that. I do not mean that in any way other than - I need some humility you guys, that's all I'm saying. [Katie and Carrie laugh.] I do. And I think all Catholics do, because I just think we do. I think we have a lot to learn from other Christians and even non-Christians. Anywho, another misconception that is out there a lot is that is that we worship the saints or we worship Mary, which again: not true because we worship only God. Only God is worthy of worship, only God deserves worship. We honor Mary because she without her, God would have found a way because God again can do anything. But she played such a key role in

Jesus coming to Earth like, in our salvation. And even Jesus because he was a good Jewish boy, honored his mother. And like, you see that at the wedding Feast at Cana. He was not ready to start his public ministry but Mary saw that there was a need and so she pulls him over and is like, "Hey you got to help these people out, they need wine." And He literally says to her, "It's not my - my hour hasn't come, Like, I'm not - it's not time!" And she just ignores him and turns and to the servants and says, "Do whatever He tells you." So that's why we still go to Mary, that's one reason we still go to Mary and ask for her prayers. That's I think another misconception is related to worshiping saints is that we pray to saints, like "Hello you can't pray to anybody but God," and the only reason we call it "pray to the saints" – I use air quotes there – is because they are no longer living, right? Like you can really only become a saint if you're dead. But when we pray to the saints, we're not worshiping them, we're merely asking them to pray for us. In the way it's very similar to how you would go to a friend or your own parents or somebody at church and say, "Hey can you pray for me, for this particular need? Like I really need to find a job," or "I need XYZ," whatever your need is, you are asking somebody else to pray for you. This is where Catholics can learn from Protestants, because I do not remember where in scripture this quote is that I'm about to paraphrase, but somewhere in the New Testament one of the Epistles - perhaps an Epistle of Saint Paul, perhaps in a different letter. I'm not sure-

KA: Likely, likely Saint Paul, because he wrote the majority of it.

CM: Right, most likely him. Could be one of the others, who knows? You might know actually when I say this. But it says "Jesus is the one mediator," you know? So if - but we still say that prayer is powerful, right? So if Jesus is the one mediator. why are we asking each other for prayers ever? But I've heard that "well Jesus is the one mediator" in terms of like a rebuttal for why we ask the saints to pray for us and I think I'm actually getting this directly from Father Mike, I feel like he probably talked about this whenever he read this in Bible in a Year, whenever he read wherever this came from because I don't remember. But he made the point of: if Jesus is the one mediator we don't need prayers from other people. Yet we constantly ask each other for prayers because prayer is powerful. And so when we are praying to the saints or asking them to pray for us that's all we're doing. We're only asking them to pray for us in a particular way. And so yeah we don't worship saints, we just ask them to pray for us because listen, they're already face-to-face with God in Heaven and so not that we on Earth are far from God, but we're not seeing Him face to face and so we don't have as "direct a line" if you will, that the saints have. And you know they - and also, #RealTalk: a person only becomes a saint after there's a certain number of miracles associated with them or like, to their intercession. This is such a random thing, don't mind me as I talk to you about the Beatification process. But if they've already worked some miracles, like miraculous healing, miraculous whatever on Earth through the power of God right? Like the saint isn't doing it in their own power, God is allowing this miracle to happen through the intercession of that Saint. So it's really God's power is what it comes down to. Anyway so yeah, we don't worship Mary. We don't worship the saints. God is the one that we worship, God is the One whose power we extol but He allows the saints to pray for us in a particular way. I think because their example of their Earthly life kind of lifts us up. It gives us something to aspire to and shows us how, how boundless God's love is and how we can be God's instruments, God's hands and feet in our lives and in our particular calling here on

Earth.

KA: That's good, that's really good. While you were chatting I looked up the verse that I think you're referring to and I have my personal Bible set to the Passion Translation which I'm sure people will judge me for, but if what I've just searched is what you're referring to I think it's from 1st Timothy. So we were right, Saint Paul. And the Passion Translation says "For God is one, and there is one Mediator between God and the sons of men—the true man, Jesus, the Anointed One."

CM: Yes.

KA: So that may be what you were referring to.

CM: I think it probably is.

KA: There's also a passage in Hebrews where it talks about Him being a high priest, but I think that may be where you were going to.

CM: I think so, that sounds right.

KA: So let's talk a little bit more about your missionary experience. You were a missionary for four years, you're not anymore. You've been not a missionary I think at this point longer than you were a missionary. And I know that we've talked about there are some things that you've had to unlearn from that time. Would you be willing to be vulnerable and share a little bit of that with us?

CM: Oh I totally will. I think the biggest one - there's two main ones that I can think of. The biggest one is the feeling of having to be constantly available to other people. Constant availability. I lived in community as a missionary which means that my fellow missionaries and I live together, pray together, work together, ate together. You know we - our whole life was together and in Ministry. And we did have a Sabbath day, every Monday was our Sabbath because of course Sunday is a big Ministry day, so Sunday was not our Sabbath day. But Monday was. And there were a couple of years where I, in my community, I had missionaries who were from Europe. And so they can drive in Europe but to get a driver's license in the states it was like a hassle for them then it was worth but a lot of times if they needed to go somewhere or do something on Monday, I wasn't the one that had to take them but those of us who did have American driver's licenses - because we were in America - needed to be available to take them. So even on days off, it felt like I wasn't really off and that it was in fact selfish to say no or even like - and so for years, after missions I have really struggled with not filling every single day chock full of commitments. Not even commitments but you know, helping other people or you know, meetings or what have you. Like it's been a whole thing to learn or unlearn I guess, that taking time to myself is not selfish. Resting is not selfish. Yeah that, especially my particular missionary organization seemed to really favor the extroverts among us and so they are more you know, extroverts love - not that introverts don't love people but extroverts get their energy from being with people - and so for me, to - I'm an introvert. For me to take time for myself, for years, just felt so selfish. And I - you know, even when I - after missions, I continued to lead a high school girls Bible study for two years I think. Until I moved back to Atlanta. And then once I moved to Atlanta, that was the first time that I lived by myself

because after missions I was really lucky to get to live in a Catholic household of women in Nashville for those few years after missions. So I'd never lived by myself and I really wrestled with the feeling of "I should volunteer at church. I should get back into some kind of ministry." But also just feeling so tired and so unenthused you could say, to give of myself that way. And for years it really took me - I just feel guilt in the back of my head like, "I should still volunteer in some way," but I was so tired. Just like tired in my spirit, of having been surrounded by people for, you know, for four years. And then even when I lived in the Goretto house in Nashville. So for six years of my life just surrounded by people, living in community, but not really having time, a lot of time, to myself. Yeah. I felt selfish for a long, long time. And I still talk some people who are former missionaries. I don't think all former missionaries feel this way, but I think some of us are still really wrestling with that giving ourselves time to rest and time out of ministry is selfish. You know we just really wrestle with that. And then I think the other thing that I really struggled to unlearn is my own, not my worth personally, but the value - especially because I'm a freelancer! - the value of my work in the skills that I bring. Because as a missionary, for four years we fundraised our whole entire livelihood. I was not the best fundraiser among the missionaries, and so that meant my mom was like my best mission partner because I think she was terrified that I was going to you know, be homeless one day if I continued down this path.

KA: Sure.

CM: And so she donated a lot to my mission fund because she was so concerned that I wouldn't have what I needed. But I did have other mission partners too, but still, all of them together. I was not the best fundraiser and so that I think sort of, and I wasn't good at asking for money for myself because it felt so like, eww. I could fundraise for other missionaries all day long but when it came to asking for myself I already struggled with that, but then you know, some of the work that we did was unpaid. We were basically glorified volunteers in a lot of ways, and so ever since then I've just really struggled with asking for raises - and I think women in general, in this country at least, struggle with asking for raise and struggle with having their time seen as being as valuable as a man's time - in some situations, not all of them. But yeah, especially as a freelancer, I think, "My skills aren't that great. I'm not worth that much." Which isn't true! Like, I've worked hard to get a Master's degree, I've worked hard to learn all of the skills that I use every day in my work and so I've earned the right to set fair rates. But that is something that I still struggle with and kind of need to unlearn, because so much of what we did as missionaries we were expected to just do for free. And we're expected to, in a way, just be free labor for certain aspects of not even our mission organization but our - missions was like a separate, but related, entity to a larger youth ministry organization. And so in some ways, that larger organization I think just thought they were part of our mission. But you know, we kind of struggled with, "No, no. We have given up years of our lives to evangelize and preach the gospel. Not to be unpaid labor in your store." You know? So, but there was like a disconnect. Anyway, so still to this day I feel challenged by needing to, especially as a freelancer, but to say "I have skills that you need to pay me for." That still is really hard.

KA: No that's so valid. Do you have any tips for overcoming those challenges?

CM: In terms of the feeling that not serving all the time is selfish, I think my biggest tip as you know, as brisk as this might sound, is still to just take the time. I think we hear a lot that "You

can't pour from an empty cup, you cannot serve people. You can't give other people what you don't have." And I think that's true especially for anyone who is a former missionary or has just left missions or is leaving missions soon. For whatever length of time that you were a missionary, you probably have some vestiges of like lingering guilt for not still being a missionary. And I would say for me, I was a missionary for four years. I left in 2014 so now it's 2023. So it's...

KA: Eight years.

CM: It's eight years, thank you. I was like, man I majored in English. Math is hard. [Katie and Carrie laugh.] Eight years, I would say it took not all eight of those years, but probably about a solid two years after missions. Maybe even longer. Maybe even five years. Listen, all I'm saying is that it was not until 2022 that I returned to any capacity of ministry at all.

KA: Wow. Okay.

CM: Like I - this past fall finally felt like God was really nudging me into the direction of adult confirmation at my parish, at my church.

KA: Yeah.

CM: And so that's when I - and I didn't want to, I was like, "I don't know Lord. I just, I don't know." And it was because I mentioned to my mom - we go to church together - I thought, "Mom I think I need to help with adult confirmation or young adult something," but then I was just going to let the opportunity pass. And after mass one day the person who does adult confirmation at the church, and RCIA, and lots of other a faith formation things for adults, was available after mass. You know to like, really I think she wanted to talk to any adults who wanted to go through adult confirmation but instead my mom you know, sort of elbowed me. I was waiting for the priest, he was going to bless something for me and he said, "Oh hold on," like, "Let me say hello to the rest of the people after mass and then you know once they all leave, I'll bless this thing for you." And so while we're waiting I was like, "Okay." Like I'm just going to peacefully stand in the lobby of the church and then my mom nudges me and is like, "Hey, go talk to Bernie!" who is the person who - you know. Anyways, so if it weren't for my mom actually telling me to act on my inkling to return to ministry, I wouldn't have done it. But yeah. So it took eight years, basically for me to - so twice as long is what I'm saying. Twice as long that I was a missionary, it took me to be ready to return to ministry in any capacity.

KA: Wow.

CM: So I don't know that it's a general, that this would be a general rule of thumb for anybody who's ever been a missionary, but I would say be willing to give yourself twice as long to just rest to receive from God what you worked so hard to give to other people. Because I think there is there - can be - I don't want to say there is but there can be - this tendency to believe that God's love. And I think this is for anybody, but we can have the tendency to believe that we have to earn God's love in some way, and especially as missionaries if we are like "woah, I only earn God's love if I am like, selling all my possessions and going to be a missionary." We need to take time to unlearn that we cannot earn God's love. And to just receive it and to learn how to rest in His love in a way that we might not necessarily get to rest when you're active in the

mission field.

KA: Mmmhmm. Yeah. That's really good. I have so many more thoughts on that but we do not have time to unpack all of them so you and I will continue a conversation offline! But for the podcast, a couple final questions for you: if we have enjoyed learning from you, where can we find you online?

CM: Come find me at CarrieKMiller.com. That is my blog that you mentioned at the top of our podcast, and I'm also on Instagram and my handle is @CarrieKMiller_. So no dots or anything, just @CarrieKMiller_. And I'm on, I'm yep - writing on my blog, posting on the 'Gram, and yeah just generally out in the world.

KA: Wonderful! Wonderful, wonderful. Carrie, would you be willing to pray for us?

CM: Oh I absolutely would!

KA: Okay, great.

CM: And because I'm Catholic you know I'm going to start, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

KA: Great.

CM: And so, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, amen. Lord Jesus, we thank You so much for this day. We thank You for the stories that You give us to tell and the breath that You give us to breathe. We thank You for every day to learn from You, to receive love from You, and to give Your love away to others. Lord I pray that we would each be receptive vessels, that whatever segment of our hearts you need to open wider, that we would give You permission to do that. That You would heal any wounds that need healing, that You would love any hurts that prevent us from receiving love. Lord, we ask that You would help us to be faithful to You today in whatever way that looks like. You call each of us to faithfulness in a different way based on the stage and circumstances, and so Lord help us to be faithful to You in our circumstances and not compare our faithfulness to someone else's faithfulness. Help us to receive Your love, help us to share Your love, help us to rest in Your love. And Lord help us to always be mindful of how precious we are to You, so that we don't have to live in fear or strife or worry, but can live in confidence. In the most Holy and precious name of Jesus we pray, amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

KA: Thank you.

CM: Thank you Katie.

KA: I love getting to hear people pray. Yeah, I love getting to hear how they encounter God personally. So I love that the Catholic tradition of starting off being like, "This is in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit," like this is who we are coming to and then being able to encounter Him intimately and then at the end being reminded: this is about the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. So thank you for being willing to do that for us.

CM: Thank you so much for letting me-

KA: I have one final question.

CM: Yes!

KA Yeah. I have one final questions, sorry to cut you off.

CM: That's okay!

KA: At the podcast we're always learning something, we're always experiencing something different. And so I would love to know, what's something you've learned recently?

CM: So much! I feel like I'm forever learning. But the first thing that comes to mind is I recently started listening to this podcast called Jimmy Akin's Mysterious World.

KA: Ohh.

CM: It's so interesting! He talks about many different mysteries in the world and he's Catholic but he designs the podcast to be accessible for anybody. Like, you don't have to be Catholic to listen to it and to appreciate it but he talks about each mystery from the aspect of like, faith and reason. So it's a pretty interesting take. But I recently learned that there is a belief or thought process called transhumanism which is crazy, I mean to me it's crazy. Maybe to transhumanists it's not crazy. But. So I learned from that podcast like, that transhumanism exists, what it is - I can't really explain to you what it is, but it's basically like the biggest definition, if you will, of transhumanism is that eventually will be we will be able to upload our conscious, our consciousness to robots. Like we'll all live in the cloud that we - age, lifespans will be extended. You know, we could get like implants in our brains that help us like automatically do things. It's like a whole thing. I think some of it is within, within our reach. Like I think we're getting close to some of it being true but I hope that not all of it becomes true because you know, especially as Christians, we really believe like our bodies - like we are body and soul and intellect. Like, we are all of those things. We can't - we're not just our brains. We're not just our consciousness [Carrie stumbles over her words before correcting herself.] Whatever. We're not just our brains. So, we - I don't know. We won't still be human if just our memories are uploaded to like, a robot. You know what I mean? It was fascinating. It's a fascinating podcast.

KA: That is fascinating, interesting. I've got some things to think about!

CM: Yeah!

KA: Well Carrie, thank you so much for your time today. I have loved getting to learn from you, getting to hear your perspective. Really excited to someday visit New Mexico and to further embrace our Catholic brothers and sisters as we all follow Jesus together. I think that's who we are as brothers and sisters, right? Because we're all following the same God, the same Father. So thank you so much for sharing your perspective with us and experience as well.

CM: Thank you so much Katie! It was such a treat to get to chat with you today.

KA: It was!

[Theme music: upbeat electronica plays in the background as Katie speaks.]

KA: As always, a big thanks for listening. Be sure to connect with Carrie on Instagram at @CarrieKMiller_. Or her blog at CarrieKMiller.com. I would love to connect with you as well, I'm @KatieAxelson on Instagram and of course KatieAxelson.com is my homebase for all things internet. If you're interested in hearing a Jewish perspective because well it's Passover week as well, be sure to check out Episode {55} with Lisa Waldman. Highly educational, highly informative, and I found it incredibly helpful. Hit subscribe so you don't miss future episodes. Happy Easter, my friend. And until I see you next, know that you are loved, know that you're seen, know that you matter, you are cared for, your story adds value. We'll see you again in two weeks. Bye!

[Katie stops speaking and the theme music: upbeat electronica ends.]