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**PODCAST START:**

[intro music]

Brian: Welcome to the Queer Theology podcast!

Fr. Shay: Where each episode, we take a queer look at the week's lectionary readings. We're the cofounders of QueerTheology.com and the hosts for this podcast. I'm Father Shay Kearns —

B: And I'm Brian G. Murphy. Welcome back to a new year of the Queer Theology podcast. We're so happy to be back, and hope that you are rested and refreshed after a Christmas holiday. We had a lovely time taking a few weeks off of the podcast and spending time with friends and family, and we're just back and feeling excited. It's a new year! Today we're going to spend a little bit of time talking about what the new year has in store for us personally and for Queer Theology, and most importantly, what it perhaps could have in store for you. So, Shay, you wanna say a little bit more about that?

FS: Yeah! So, we are launching off our new theme for January and into a little bit of February. We're talking about 'new year, new you' – which, I know, sounds a little bit cheesy. This time of year is all about resolutions, and people make these grand plans that they tend to break. I know you and I, Brian, have talked a lot over the last couple of years about kind of a different way to approach this new year, and the idea of resolutions and life-change. I think, for me, I love this time of year, just like I love the start of the school year – not as a way to make a bunch of grand resolutions, but as a way to kind of check in with myself and make sure that I'm living my life with intention. That's some of what we're going to talk about over the next couple of months. Like, how do we do this work? How do we live our lives with intention? What does that look like, what can that look like, particularly for our lives of faith and queerness? I know one of the things that you and I both do is pick a word for the year. So, Brian, have you chosen your word for the year? What is it and what does that do for you?

B: I try to not start off the year with a bunch of, like, resolutions and grand sweeping changes that I'm going to make to my life – because, like, science shows that that just doesn't work, that if you try to change a bunch of things all at once, you might do it for a few weeks and then [laughs] you get burnt out, and it doesn't result in lasting change. For me, it's less about changing some part about who I am, and more about, as you were saying, taking a moment to check in with myself and where I am in my life, and sort of spend some time reflecting on

what's important to me and what's been working well. What do I want to celebrate? What have I learned? And with all that in mind – what do I want to start focusing on, and what do I need a little bit more of in the new year? I end up using my word or words to guide other decisions and choices and goals that I might make for the new year, but I try and be adaptive and responsive to the situations around me, rather than, like, making a list of twelve resolutions that I'm going to keep... that I'm probably not going to keep. [laughs] My word for the year is actually two words. This year it's *decide* and *act*, sort of like one compound phrase or thought. I want to be really intentional about seeing clearly what's going on and what needs to happen, and then, being courageous in taking the action that needs to happen. And that's in all areas of my life – in my work, career, in relationships, in my faith, with Queer Theology – sort of intentionally discerning and then acting is what I want to do more of in this new year. What about you, Shay?

FS: I am still kind of tooling over, I'm coming in right on the wire of picking my word, [laughs] but I'm thinking about a phrase like *deep focus* for myself this year.

B: Mmm.

FS: I'm finding that, over the last couple of years, I've launched a lot of big projects and done a lot of new things, and I'm finding what I'm really kind of longing for is an intense focus on, frankly, kind of the boring stuff. [laughs] Right? Like, making sure that my systems are in place so that I stay caught up on email and so that I get back to people, or making sure that I spend time focusing on creating the work that I want to be creating instead of just responding to things that are happening in the world. I found myself in 2017 in particular to be really scattered, feeling really pulled by the news of the day, the crisis of the day, by email and Twitter and Facebook, and not spending a lot of time really doing a deep dive into creating new things. From what I'm seeing, it feels like a lot of people dealt with that in 2017.

B: Yeah, totally. [Shay laughs]

FS: And so I'm feeling like I want to figure out, what are the things that I need to do to sort of create space to be focused in my life? I think that that does impact my spiritual life, too. If I'm constantly being scattered and responding, I'm not having the time to focus in on prayer practices or meditation practices or any of those things that kind of lead to a revitalized faith life. So, that's some of what I'm thinking through for 2018.

B: Yeah, I was just about to say actually – you read my mind – this idea of new year, new you, or picking a word of the year, or setting intentions, might strike some people as self-helpy and secular. But I think you hit the nail on the head that there's a connection here to our faith life. We can't fully experience the divine in our lives if we're out of touch with who we are, if we're living not in alignment with our values, if we're not in healthy relationships. Doing the work on ourselves has definitely a spiritual, faithful – a personal spirituality connection, absolutely. And, also, as Christians, we believe that our faith is to be embodied. That we're called to love and service and justice. So, whether we're faith leaders running and pastoring churches, leading nonprofits, running a site like Queer Theology, or we're laypeople – we're Christians who are just trying to follow Jesus and live out Christ's message and ministry in the world, that work takes energy and intentionality. We're going to be able to show up and be Christ in the world best when we're healthy and healed and taking care of ourselves as well. I think that spending some time to focus on ourselves, depending on how you were raised, might feel a little either selfish or secular, but I think that it can actually be a really faithful thing to do. Really something that you can do in service of others and of the world is to take care of yourself.

FS: Absolutely. And we've got a bunch of different ways that you can kind of do that work in community with Queer Theology this month. We're going to be releasing a bunch of articles on the blog around these ideas and themes. In Sanctuary Collective, we're starting a new book for January of 2018; we're going to be reading *Juliet Takes a Breath* by Gaby Rivera, which we're really excited about. We're going to be sharing our 'words of the year' over in Sanctuary Collective and talking together about what that looks like. And, it is time once again for the Queer Theology Synchronblog – one of our favorite times of year. We're going to be launching that the first week of February, on February 7<sup>th</sup>. The prompt for this year is 'what does your queerness or transness call you to do and be in the world?' We're inviting everyone to write a reflection, write poetry, make a video, write a song, however you want to engage with that prompt – you'll share it on February 7<sup>th</sup> and we'll link them all together in a giant round-up. It's one of my favorite days of the year, to see our entire community come together to create and to share on the same theme, and it's a great way for you to get involved in queer theology, to be a part of creating content for that day. You can go onto our website, [QueerTheology.com/synchroblog](http://QueerTheology.com/synchroblog), and get all of the information – and hopefully get all of your questions answered for the synchronblog. It's going to be really great and I hope that you will participate.

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B: And if you're not already on our email list, now would be a great time to sign up. You can go to [QueerTheology.com](http://QueerTheology.com), pretty much on any page, and enter your name and email address. And that way, when the synchroblog starts, we can update you with all the different entries that are coming in from all over the world. It's really cool. If you have any questions about what exactly synchroblog means or how to participate, as Shay said, go to [QueerTheology.com/synchroblog](http://QueerTheology.com/synchroblog). And of course you can always email us at [connect@queertheology.com](mailto:connect@queertheology.com), and we're happy to sort of handhold you a little bit more and help you be a part of this. We really want everyone who wants to share themselves with others – this is a great opportunity for you to get involved and do that. We want to be there to support you in sharing your truth.

[outro music]

B: The Queer Theology podcast is just one of many things that we do at [QueerTheology.com](http://QueerTheology.com), which provides resources, community and inspiration for LGBTQ Christians and straight cisgender supporters.

FS: To dive into more of the action, visit us at [QueerTheology.com](http://QueerTheology.com). You can also connect with us online on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Instagram.

B: We'll see you next week.

## **PODCAST END**

Transcript by Taylor Walker