

**JONATHAN ROGERS, HOST:** Hello, Habit listeners! Jonathan Rogers here. Before we get started, I wanted to tell you about my new six week online writing course called Writing through the Wardrobe. Starting February 6th, we'll walk together through *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, to see what C.S. Lewis has to teach us about writing. To find out more, go to [thehabit.co/wardrobe](http://thehabit.co/wardrobe). Thanks. I hope to see you there.

(THEME MUSIC)

**JR:** Welcome to The Habit Podcast: Conversations with Writers about Writing. I'm Jonathan Rogers, your host.

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**JR:** Meredith McDaniel is a writer and a licensed, professional counselor. She just published her first book *In Want + Plenty: Waking Up to God's Provision in a Land of Longing*. Emily P. Freeman has said of her, "Every generation needs kind companions who will teach us how to live, how to relate, and how to remember. Meredith is one of those companions."

Meredith McDaniel, I'm so glad that you're on The Habit. Thank you for being here.

**MEREDITH MCDANIEL:** Thanks for having me, Jonathan. I'm happy to be here.

**JR:** So you, uh, besides being a writer are a counselor.

**MM:** I am... I've been in practice for about ten years.

**JR:** Uh huh. And... I'm always interested in the connection between counseling and writing. I did a one day seminar with a group of counselors once —

**MM:** Okay.

**JR:** — and it was like — I think it was the best live writing seminar I've ever done. They were just so... they totally got it. They were so ready to... to be engaged in what I was doing. I just, I really... I had a feeling it was gonna be good, but it was actually better than I thought it would be. And I just realized stories are your stock and trade as a counselor.

**MM:** They are. I can see that being a fascinating webinar or, um, in real life situation, because... wow. Yeah.

**JR:** Well, for one thing, they totally understood that the mere act of telling the story, you know, quite apart from any kind of, um... well, I guess what I should say is what they understood is that you can just sort of tell the facts of the story, and the emotional impact comes out just in the facts. Even if you don't talk about the emotion. And sometimes the emotion comes out even more if you don't talk about the emotion. And sometimes the emotion comes out even more if you're not talking about the emotion but your'e talking about the concrete facts of the situation.

**MM:** It's so true. There's a lot going on in the room when you're sitting with a person eye to eye, which is a rare thing these days.

**JR:** Is it really?

**MM:** Well, I'm saying in life in general —

**JR:** Oh, gotcha.

**MM:** — because there's such a separation, I think, with all the Internet, and our busyness, our pace of life. Like, to sit with a person and look eye to eye is a rare gift these days, I think.

**JR:** Yeah... so, tell me about the connections between writing stories —

let's just say writing — and being a counselor. What have you learned from counseling that impacted your writing? That's a very big question, I realize.

**MM:** Sure... I love it though! I think they both inform each other. So it makes me think, one of my favorite professors at Gordon-Conwell here in Charlotte, um, said to me one time that longevity in the field of mental health and counseling is variety. And that really stuck with me because counseling has opened up kind of a wide field for me to navigate and cultivate. And part of that has been writing.

So when I first started interning years ago when I was in my Master's program, I started sitting with people. I could not wait to get home to write and just process everything. And of course, early on, I didn't know you were not supposed to do that with your process notes? Um, that you were just supposed to write vague summaries because that's kind of a public record, you know, for 7+ years? And so I realized, oh wow, I need an additional journal to be able to process the stories that I'm hearing of loss and diagnoses and um... just day to day life that people are trying to carry and battle and struggle through. And so that's kind of how, honestly, I feel like writing for me started beyond just my own personal journal. So that has now informed my writing today.

**JR:** Wait a minute, so just to clarify, there are some notes you're supposed to take that you're required to take...

**MM:** Mmhm. Yes.

**JR:** ... but they need to be a little bit... not too detailed.

**MM:** Right, they don't need to be everything I'm thinking. They just need to be facts.

**JR:** Right. Yeah, yeah.

**MM:** And so... but I still, you know — I think that awakened something in

me as far a writer to know that, wow, I have a lot more to think about on this topic than just the facts. I need to analyze this. I need to think what I think about myself in relation to this, and people, and God, and the world, and I didn't have enough space in my little folder to do that.

**JR:** (chuckles) Wow. Okay, so... (pause) In your book *In Want + Plenty...* tells some of the stories that come up in counseling, but in a composite way. I mean, in ways that don't violate people's privacy...

**MM:** Exactly. So, we had — when I first wrote my book proposal and sent it in to my publisher, they're initial response was, "We love the concept. We're very interested. However, um, you know, you're kind of getting lost in your details and your story. Which is an honest mistake, right? We write out of our own struggle and our details. But — and people care about that, but what they really care about it how they relate and how they can see themselves in your story and in the kind of grander narrative.

And so I decided that I was gonna use these composite stories, which is basically just a blending of my counseling clients, people in my life that we've worked with with ministry, and even some friends and family. And it was a really creative exercise for me, because I wanted to be able to envision the person that I had been sitting with, you know, down to what they were wearing and the color of their hair and their eyes, but um, I was having to kind of blend them together. So there's a little disclaimer at the beginning of my book on the copyright page that says, you know, we have used composite stories so that we would not reveal people's identities.

**JR:** Mmhm.

**MM:** And I loved doing it. I think, um, it stretched a different muscle in my writing for me. And it turned out pretty well, I think.

**JR:** So in your early drafts, it was really a lot of Meredith —

**MM:** (laughs) Yeah.

**JR:** And in the later drafts the ratio was changed, a little outward looking?

**MM:** It is, and I'm so glad it is.

**JR:** Haha, yeah.

**MM:** I really am. I'm so glad that, from what I have learned and the beauty that I have been able to pull out of other people's stories — that we really all can relate to. And so much of my story is echoed in all of these different narratives.

**JR:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah. That reminds me of something that James K.A. Smith — he was on an episode of this podcast a while back —

**MM:** Yeah...

**JR:** — and we talked about something that I found very interesting, and I bet you have some things to say about it. And that is the idea, um, that, the... (pause) it's... you know, we value originality so much in story — when I'm the storyteller, I wanna be original so that I draw attention to — you know, people congratulate me on how original I am.

**MM:** Mmm... mmhmm.

**JR:** But the truth of is, a lot of what... a lot of ways that stories are good for people are the ways they're not original. The way they give me a way to find my own identity in a story that has already been told.

**MM:** Yes... yes.

**JR:** And so... you know, I'm wondering about... you sit in these rooms with people, you hear a lot of stories. Which in some ways I'm sure are,

you know, very multi-faceted, very multifarious. And yet in other ways, I'm sure you're hearing the same story over and over again. Is that fair to say?

**MM:** Oh, that is such a good point. It is! And doesn't that just point too to the abundance of our Creator, right?

**JR:** Mmhm.

**MM:** Like, there's this common thread of our human struggle and longing and ache in this broken world, and yet it's playing out in so many different ways in people's different circumstances, their personality types, their backstory... it's really fascinating to watch it unfold.

**JR:** Yeah. And so, um... (turns page) So in your composite stories that you told in your book, umm... (pause) Why... what was... what were your editors or publishers, what were they shooting for when they're asking you to tell those stories. Umm... like, what — I just wanna hear about the purpose of the stories —

**MM:** Sure.

**JR:** — and why you didn't just sort of talk about the general principles.

**MM:** Yeah, well, I think my goal was really to... I wanted anybody who picks up this book to be able to hunt for the manna or the provision in their life. Kind of just like the Israelites did back in the day, um, we still are able to do that today in our own life, modern day. And so I wanted to show that visually and through storytelling in all of my different counseling client composite stories, because I wanted anyone to be able to latch onto something. So, we kind of hit all the hot topics, everything from pornography to suicide to eating disorders to marital struggles to anxiety, depression — I mean, you name it. It's pretty much tucked in there somehow.

**JR:** Mmhm.

**MM:** And I do hear all these different, um... kind of expressions of mental health on a daily basis. But like you said earlier, there is that common thread. And so I wanted people to be able to relate to something personally in their own life.

**JR:** Uh huh.

**MM:** How they could see their stories in these other stories I shared.

**JR:** Mmm. You've used the word processing a couple of times...

**MM:** Yeah.

**JR:** To tell you the truth, that's a... that's a word I've never *quite* understood what it means.

**MM:** Mm. Mmhmm.

**JR:** And I know it's connected with storytelling. could you talk about that a little bit? What do you mean when you say "processing," and what does it have to do with storytelling?

**MM:** I love that you highlighted that, because I do. I use that word a lot. I think, when I started going to counseling myself in college — which, I tell everybody as soon as they come into my office, "Hey, you're not sitting with somebody who's got it all figured out. You're sitting with somebody who has their own counselor, who needs to kind of process with God." And so — when I used that word again! Process! It basically just means being honest with God and yourself and others about your story. And you can do that in a lot of different ways. For me, a lot of times it's through journaling or writing. Um... for others, it's in kind of one on one conversation, or it's um — even though reading?

I mean, whenever I read — I don't know about you, but I slowly digest. So I'll read a few pages, and then I sort of look up, and I'll look out the window and need to ponder a few minutes. And that is a way for me to process. What is going on in my body and in my soul? What am I feeling? What am I thinking? What am I resisting? Um... it's just asking a lot of really honest questions of yourself, and bringing that into more full self-awareness.

**JR:** Mm. Does it — you said asking questions. Does it involve answering those questions?

**MM:** Ooh. Not for me. I feel like the longer that I live and sit with people, the more questions that I have, and the more I realize this is not a formula, this life that we live in. It's quite mysterious. And we're kind of along for the ride to get little glimpses into what is to come. And we can't understand it all. We just can't. And we have to hold that space for people and for ourselves.

**JR:** Yeah. So you are... besides being a counselor, you're a mother. Umm... how do you... how do you work in time to write? What is your habit?

**MM:** Yes... well. Early mornings are the greatest gift. I am not a night owl — I wish I was, that would be awesome. Um, but I just have to set my alarm earlier. I just have to get to bed earlier than I would maybe want to, so I will be refreshed and ready in the morning before my kids even get up. It has to involve a candle, and it has to involve some music to kind of give me an entry point.

I do utilize Julia Cameron's morning pages. I go through seasons. Like, sometimes I do it pretty regularly, then I just don't need it for a little while. It'll kinda sit and simmer. But I have to kind of brain dump or clear the cobwebs, I think like she says, every morning. And *then* I can write with more of a focus, or um... I guess agenda and direction. But first I have to



get kind of all the clutter cleared out of my heart and soul before I can kind of pour out the rest on the page.

I try to be really present with my kids in the afternoon, and that is an ongoing struggle, especially getting ready to release a book. But I try to get all my work done while they're at school. And I would love to homeschool, but that is something I'm having to sacrifice right now, because I need that focused time, at least in this season, to be able to do some writing and some counseling while they are gone.

**JR:** Uh huh. Yeah.

**MM:** And when they get home, I try to... you know, I put out paper and watercolor stuff on our table sometimes. It sounds very dreamy. It's not always.

**JR:** (chuckles)

**MM:** But sometimes it is. You know, I can light a candle, and we can all kind of do... I love Andrew's recent video about, like, kind of putting instruments and art supplies just magically appearing in your house, and then your kids kind of latching onto that naturally.

**JR:** Andrew Peterson.

**MM:** So — yes, in his most recent book, *Adorning the Dark*. Which I adore.

**JR:** Yeah, it's a great book, isn't it?

**MM:** It is!

**JR:** Ummm... okay. You said music is a part of your process?

**MM:** Oh man. It's essential, Jonathan.

**JR:** Really?

**MM:** I like... yes! I... ahhh, I've always loved music. My dad was a DJ.

**JR:** (laughs)

**MM:** It was funny growing up. Saturday mornings were like, let's run errands and go to the bookstore and go to the music store and like blare music and sing in the car —

**JR:** Oh, wow.

**MM:** It's one of my sweetest memories. And um... so that has stuck with me, and like I said, as an entry point into writing, I pull up my playlist on Spotify, and it just gets me going. It like, wakes me up, and...

**JR:** Is this music with lyrics or without lyrics?

**MM:** Um, both? I think I usually start with lyrics, and then as I get into writing I'll have more instrumental, but...

**JR:** Uh huh.

**MM:** I'm just blown away by music that people are putting out into the world. Like, friends of mine, and um — definitely within the Rabbit Room circle. It's just full of such depth, and really informs my writing too.

**JR:** Hmm... yeah. I um... sometimes I think, "I should play some music while I try to write!" And then I do, and I start listening to music and stop writing.

**MM:** Yes...

**JR:** Or I... for me, it creates a, um, a dissonance that I just can't... it just... like when I then turn the music off, I think, "Oh, that's such a relief to have that music off!" Even when I'm enjoying the music.

**MM:** Yeah, I understand that too.

**JR:** If I'm trying to write.

**MM:** Yeah, I mean... you know, it's an ebb and flow for me. Like, I need it on the front end, I need it sometimes during, and then, you're right, sometimes I have to really put my head down, turn it off, have the silence, and just kind of let it all come out. So...

**JR:** Yeah.

**MM:** It's both.

**JR:** Yeah. Although I have to — I definitely agree that there's a lot of music I hear that makes me want to go then go make something.

**MM:** Yes!

**JR:** When I see, um, you know... especially, um, as you said, when it's a friend's music, that makes a big difference to me for whatever reason. I know the heart this came out of, and therefore, I'm gonna go try to do something, to put something beautiful in the world too.

**MM:** And I tell you, I think God whispers His provision and truth over me through a lot of my friends' music. Like, one of my friends from church — they have this band called You, Me, and the Bread — and they have a song about giving and generosity. And there's this one line that says, "Because you're generous, I live in plenty." And that was after I had already named the title of my book, and it's like God was just sort of almost paralleling this album and my book. And now it's so cool, I got to

like list it in the book, in one of the chapters.

**JR:** Ah, that's great.

**MM:** And I feel like it was just a sweet reminder that God wanted me to keep writing in this direction, because he's speaking it to other people too, so...

**JR:** Yeah, that's great. I love hearing that. (turns page) Candles! What do candles have to do with anything?

**MM:** Ohmygosh! So, the one that I have right now that I just lit for our podcast recording is so beautiful. It — okay, it has like a spout on one side, and it's called like a, um... it's like a paraffin wax candle! So you can pour the wax onto your hands after you're done burning the candle! Isn't that crazy? Which is *not* very good for writing. That wouldn't work very well.

**JR:** (chuckles)

**MM:** But, um... yeah, there's something very soothing about it. This one's got lavender in it. It creates an atmosphere for me, and I know that that can sound like a luxury, like... I do like to have a good little setup when I write. And I don't always get to have that. But if I can, I'm a huge fan of it.

**JR:** Yeah...

**MM:** I'll take it.

**JR:** Yeah! It's... I think it is so important. And this is— I've only recently come to think this is important, but I really think it is. That you figure out what are the things that are gonna signal to my whole self that it's time to write?

**MM:** Yes...

**JR:** A candle isn't a part of my process, but I totally understand it. Right?

**MM:** Yeah, it kind of wakes up your senses. For me.

**JR:** Mmhm. And uh, it's a little liturgical moment for you. It's you saying I'm not just a brain on a stick, but I have, um... it's... the whole of Meredith who is sit-in gin this room — not just your brain, but your body and your smeller and everything sitting there.

**MM:** (chuckles) Yeah...

**JR:** And I think that's... I think there's a lot of wisdom in that. So who knows, maybe I'll get a candle. Maybe *that's* why I'm not getting my book written, because I don't have a candle!

**MM:** I'm gonna send you a picture of this one. I think you need it in your life.

**JR:** (laughs)

**MM:** And I was gonna tell you just real quickly, like, I kind of have to kinda usher the Spirit into the process. To use that word again! We're gonna see how many times I've used it in this time.

**JR:** Yeah, right.

**MM:** Both for counseling and for writing, I say that I check myself at the door. Now, that is not entirely right, because we're bringing our life experience and the things that we've studied and all the things with us into that space. But at the same time, I really believe that I am not the one that is ultimately doing the inspiring or the writing and the pulling it all together. If that's conversation for counseling or that's writing something on a page,

I mean, I am utterly dependent on the Holy Spirit to make this happen. Um... and then I have to release it back into his care. I have to release people back into his care, 'cause I cannot carry all of that. I would be so weighed down by the world and the weight of it all otherwise.

**JR:** Yeah... (pause) Um, that's an interesting — so checking yourself at the door while you're writing. Um, I'm just trying to... trying to process that, Meredith.... (laughs)

**MM:** (laughs) Thank you for using my word!

**JR:** I'm thinking about the... have you ever seen that TED Talk Elizabeth Gilbert does where she talks about how people used to use the word "genius," and how they use the word "genius" now?

**MM:** Oh, no, but I love her, and I wanna listen.

**JR:** Yeah. It's really interesting, because her point is... um... (pause) when the word "genius" came into the language— and it basically means, it's like an attendant spirit. Alright. So we're not — we're not really talking about the Holy Spirit necessarily.

**MM:** Right.

**JR:** You know, It's kind of a pagan term.

**MM:** Sure.

**JR:** But anyway, the genius was kind of your muse. It would just show up sometimes and help you do stuff.

**MM:** Yeah...

**JR:** And somewhere from the ancient era until now, we've stopped talking

about the genius as being an attendant spirit, and instead started talking about, "I am a genius." I mean, the person is a genius, not that they have a genius.

**MM:** Right! Oh, yeah, I know.

**JR:** And the idea that there's something outside me that helps me, and I'm trying to create a situation in which I'm ready to receive that help... that's such a *very* different way of thinking about writing than, "I've got to be a genius, or this isn't gonna be good.

**MM:** Yeah... and it takes us off the hook, you know? (laughs)

**JR:** Yeah, yeah, I know. And I think you're right when you put this in terms of the Holy Spirit. I think that's the helper that shows up in the room.

**MM:** Yes...

**JR:** But I just love that idea of hopefully I have a genius, but I'm not gonna be a genius. That's not my job to be a genius.

**MM:** Right.

**JR:** And um... and then in terms of, as you said, you can't really check yourself at the door. You bring what you bring. And that's enough, you know? I mean that's...

**MM:** Oh, yeah...

**JR:** That's also letting yourself off the hook from being a genius, you know?

**MM:** It is. It really is. And there's a lot of freedom in that. I think we can crack under the pressure of believing that we're not enough and that we

don't have enough? We don't have what we need to do the things that we think God's calling us into? I love it when people say that phrase that he calls us and he equips us. He doesn't just leave us out to dry. And that's so reassuring to me.

**JR:** Yeah. And I mean, you know, I have something that I call the Fondue Pot Principle, which is basically just the idea that — well, I shouldn't have even brought up the fondue pot, because there's a whole story behind it. But the idea is, when you —

**MM:** (laughs) Sounds delicious!

**JR:** Well, I one time tried to — I needed a fondue pot, so I put out a call on Facebook, “Hey, anybody got a fondue pot?” And somebody did have a fondue pot.

**MM:** (chuckles)

**JR:** Which was great!

**MM:** Yeah.

**JR:** And I was very thankful to that person. But I wasn't and at the other hundred people who didn't have a fondue pot. I was just glad that the person who offered what he had, but I wasn't mad at anybody who didn't have it. And I think in writing or any creative endeavor — or not just creative endeavors, just in our lives — we give what we have to give. And there's no sense, you know, mullygrubbin' about the fact that I don't have a fondue pot. If you don't, you don't. And if you do, give it.

**MM:** Yeah...

**JR:** And so it's important in so many ways to check yourself at the door, but also bring what you have to bring, and say, “Here it is, world. And here



it is, God. And...

**MM:** It's an offering for sure.

**JR:** Yeah, and there's —

**MM:** And I think — Oh, go ahead.

**JR:** I was just gonna say, there's somebody who needs what you're bringing. And it's okay that a lot of people don't need what you're bringing.

**MM:** Oh, that's such a good point. Yeah! What we write is not gonna resonate with everyone. And I've thought about that a lot, and that's very humbling. It think what we do on the back end of what we're creating is really important. We have to be really intentional, and for me it's just been a default. That I've never been more compelled to worship God than I have through writing a book, because I am so aware of — like, utterly aware — that I could not have completed this task without him and his strength. Like, life's been crazy. Of course it's been crazier when I was doing it. And it is done because of him. Not at all because of me.

**JR:** How do you know that?

**MM:** Gosh... (pause) Just practically, honestly, every day, it felt like there were just too many things to fit in. Like, we found mold in our crawlspace while I was doing the final galley edits. Like, the provision of the book was the provision for the mold remediation. Like, just things like that where you're... he really does go before us, and he has the aerial view. Like, he has seen me through in very tangible and intangible ways, through this process. And it all points back to him. It really does. Um... (pause) So... I just know it.

**JR:** (laughs) Yeah.

**MM:** I just know it in my spirit. Is that a good answer? (laughs)

**JR:** Sure! Yeah! Ummm... you mentioned in a note that you sent me, a mentor of yours who had passed away.

**MM:** Yeah...

**JR:** Tell me about her.

**MM:** Well... her name was Bobbie Campbell, and I always loved that her name was Bobbie, that she went by Bobbie. Um, but I kind of... just really clicked with her. We had really similar personalities, kindred spirits. Um, when I first moved to town — so about 8 or 9 years ago — and she would just meet me for coffee. We would talk about life. She was one of those people that held that space for me, that I could ache and long and also find abundance at the same time. Which doesn't make sense in our little brains, but have found it to be true. And we really, really both clicked with some of Ann Voskamp's writings, with her *Thousand Gifts* and *Broken Way*, and felt a kindred spirit with her too, and just her way of writing and hunting for the gifts in our life. And I think that's very much informed, um... this concept of hunting for the manna in our stories and in that grander story.

And so, yeah, Bobbie suddenly passed away with some type of aneurysm / stroke situation about a year and a half ago. I don't know all the ins and outs of some of the medical parts. But she was here and then she wasn't. And then I got to, you know, sit in the ICU with her and read some Madeleine L'Engle and Ann Voskamp and... some of her favorite verses, and... believe that she heard every word I said. I feel like she was there with me. It was one of those thin places that we refer to where the veil has been kind of pulled back a little bit. And I felt God's presence with me there.

And um... it's been hard not to have her to go get coffee with throughout this editing process, and to talk about the book together, and um... and

yet, I feel like the legacy of all the conversations that we had and all the stories that she told me before we got to that point of her passing away, are still with me.

**JR:** Yeah.

**MM:** And um... yeah I ended up dedicating the book to her. And I have a C.S. Lewis quote in there that just means a lot to me about kind of our relationship and uh... how we feel in the world.

**JR:** Yeah? What's the quote from C.S. Lewis?

**MM:** Yes! Um, it is... I wanted to read it, so I don't mess it up... let's see. Okay. Um... "If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation that we are made for another world."

**JR:** (chuckles) Yeah.

**MM:** Yeah. And then right after that, I just say on the dedication page that this book is for anyone else, like Moses, who might also feel like an alien in this world.

**JR:** Yeah. Well that's... I love that insight, that we... this, um... uh, feeling of being an alien that we all feel is... that's not evidence that life is meaningless. It's evidence that's pointing us toward something else. I and I feel like that's such an important part of a writer's job. To put these little mile markers out there, these little signposts out there.

**MM:** Mmhm...

**JR:** Which as were were saying a little while ago, not everybody resonates with every signpost. And that's all the more reason for us... for more people to put their signposts out there.

**MM:** Yes... yes... it really is.

**JR:** And to give an account for what we've seen, you know?

**MM:** Mmhm. Yeah, we can't keep that to ourselves. Like, we have to — I say this at the end of the book too — like, we are called to be manna makers in this world. Like, we can be manna for other people. Other people can be manna for us. All ultimately pointing to our capital and manna in Jesus, who does provide what we need. And if we can see it, if we can just start to see it and wake up to it, even in the longing, it becomes this treasure hunt and this beautiful journey that we get to embark on between now and heaven.

**JR:** Yeah... and by manna, you just mean that sort of daily nourishment that keeps us going?

**MM:** Yes. And I just think it's uniquely tailored. I mean, something could happen in my life today that would mean so much to me, and I know it's right from the Lord. And it could happen to you and totally unfaze you. Just like my candle. (laughs)

**JR:** (laughs) Yeah. Well, great. Well, okay! I always like to end these conversations with the question "Who are the writers who make you want to write?"

**MM:** Mmhmm. Well, I know it sounds like a cop out answer to say Andrew Peterson, but I will say Andrew Peterson *and* Madeleine L'Engle, and this is why.

**JR:** Okay.

**MM:** So, when I walked into a bookstore recently — well, a couple years ago — I wanted to get my hands on everything Madeleine L'Engle. And I

was like, “Can you tell me which section to find all of her books?” And I kid you not, the guy walked me to like 5 or 6 different genres in the bookstore.

**JR:** (chuckles)

**MM:** And I was like, this is my woman. Like, wow, how did she do this? Um, and she just stirs something in my heart. And it’s been the same way, I think, with Andrew with his books and music. Like, and now *Adorning the Dark* is kind of pulling it all together for me, and seeing an inside glimpse of his process — ha! Just to end on that. But um... yeah, it’s just the way he’s written for children, but also for us. I think Madeleine L’Engle says that. If you wanna write for adults, write for children. And it’s true.

**JR:** Yeah.

**MM:** So, I’ve grown a lot from both of them, and their influence.

**JR:** So, not just their books about writing, but all their other stuff too.

**MM:** Oh yeah. Yeah.

**JR:** I wanna hear just a little more about Madeleine L’Engle, and what it is about her work that gets you.

**MM:** Yeah....

**JR:** Beyond the fact that she writes a lot of different genres, um... what is it that gets you going?

**MM:** I wanna read you another quote! Let’s see if I can find it. It’s at the very end of my book, right before the epilogue. Um, and this kind of sums it up, I think. But it says, um — and I think this is from *Walking on Water*. I should know. I think it is. You can affirm that for me. “We draw people to Christ, not by loudly discrediting what they believe, by telling them how

wrong we are and how right we are, but by showing them a light that is so lovely that they want with all their hearts to know the source of it.”

**JR:** Mmm...

**MM:** And um...

**JR:** That's great.

**MM:** Gosh, if... oof. I mean, I feel like you taught us a lot about that without saying those words that day at the barn, um... in Franklin, right before Hutchmoot a couple years ago. Because it's all about show not tell, right? And... um... that is my prayer, I think, for all of us through writing, is — and again, whatever creative outlet, and just our lives. Because by living, we are living creatively, because we are created by a beautiful and amazing Creator. That we could somehow show and point to the truth and the light in this at times dark world.

**JR:** Ahh. Well, great. Well, thank you, Meredith. I'm really glad to know that you are putting out there the light that you have to give.

(THEME MUSIC FADES IN)

**JR:** So uh, so keep on trucking. Keep writing.

**MM:** Thanks, Jonathan. Thanks for creating this space for people.

**JR:** I hope this book does great.

**MM:** Thank you, sir.

**JR:** Thanks, Meredith! See ya later.

**MM:** Bye!

(THEME MUSIC)

**DREW MILLER:** The Rabbit Room is partnered with Lipscomb University to make this podcast possible. Lipscomb has graciously given us access to their recording studio in the Center for Entertainment and Arts Building. We're so grateful for their sponsorship, their encouragement, and the good work they do in Nashville.

Special shout-out as well to Jess Ray for letting us use her song "Too Good" as part of this podcast. Visit [jessraymusic.com](http://jessraymusic.com) to hear more of her beautiful songs.

**JR:** The Habit Membership is a library of resources for writers by me, Jonathan Rogers. More importantly, The Habit is a hub of community where like-minded writers gather to discuss their work and give each other a little more courage. Find out more at [TheHabit.co](http://TheHabit.co).

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(THEME MUSIC OUT)

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