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(ACOUSTIC GUITAR THEME MUSIC FADES UP)

**JONATHAN ROGERS, HOST:** Welcome to The Habit Podcast: Conversations with Writers about Writing. I’m Jonathan Rogers, your host.

(THEME MUSIC CONTINUES)

**JR:** Marilyn McEntyre is a writer, a speaker, and a professor of medical humanities at the UC Berkley and UC San Francisco joint medical program. She’s written 20-something books — several poetry books, books about end-of-life issues, and books about the way we choose and use our words in public discourse.

(THEME MUSIC FADES OUT)

**JR:** Her most recent book, *Speaking Peace in a Climate of Conflict*, is a follow up to her earlier book *Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies*.

Marilyn McEntyre, thank you so much for being on The Habit podcast! Your book *Speaking Peace in a Climate of Conflict* is so important for this time. And so I’m looking forward to having a conversation with you about it and all the issues that surround your book. And since w’ere having a conversation, I want to start with that idea — an idea you mentioned in your book — and that is when you talk about how important conversation is.

You say that traditionally conversation’s been “the warp and woof of community life.” What do you mean when you say that?

**MARILYN MCENTYRE:** I mean that to come into conversation with people, if you look at its etymology, goes back to much richer meanings, like to dwell with, to walk with, be on a path with.

**JR:** Literally to turn toward, right?

**MM:** Yeah, or to turn with. And I also think of my grandmother who grew up in Virginia and my grandpa who grew up in North Carolina, and somehow it came out of a particular generation and southern culture where “visiting” was really an active verb. You’d just sit down and you’d visit for a while. And people would just converse without much distraction or without much intention beyond exploring something together. Not just exchanging news, but reflecting on things together.

**JR:** Yeah. Or, I mean, even *not* reflecting but just being present. Right? Discussions about the weather… something you can’t do anything about. You can’t change it. All you can say is, “Aren’t we experiencing this weather together?”

**MM:** Yeah. And in that sense, you can think of conversation as just sort of stitching together the pieces of the day in a way that enables it to be shared.

**JR:** How do you define conversation as distinct from other kinds of discourse? You know, whether that’s… well, I guess there are certainly transactional kinds of discourse. When I tell the server what I want at a restaurant, that’s not much of a conversation usually.

**MM:** Right. And actually, I think that a lot of conversation in our capitalist or late capitalist or post-capitalist culture has become transactional. In fact, people who go to parties often unabashedly talk about networking — how can I use you to further my career? Or what can I offer you in exchange? And to just have an occasion of being together and exchanging thoughts or observations, even, as you say, on the weather, is really for no purpose other than sustained attention to one another.

**JR:** Mmm. Yeah. Sustained attention, I love that. That’s really good. You know, when you talk about “transactional” in a sort of capitalist world, that conversation becomes transactional… you know, there’s that moment in Dante in Inferno — and I can’t remember which circle is what, but where the misers and the spendthrifts are — in every other part of hell, the different individuals are distinguishable from each other, but there, among the misers and the spendthrifts, they’re indistinguishable because they’re like currency. These are people who misused currency. Whereas in a barter economy, what the blacksmith brings is very different from what the baker brings. And as they trade, there’s something individual about that. Whereas when we’re working with currency, the whole point of currency is it’s indistinguishable.

**MM:** That’s right, and I think about this book that’s become a kind of classic of its own kind. I think it was written in the 60s by Lewis Hyde called The Gift. And he talks about — he’s an anthropologist, and he talks about the gift economy, and that in most traditional cultures, there are things that cannot be bought and sold. They can be given.

**JR:** Yeah…

**MM:** But we need, in a healthy culture, to have those things which can’t be commodified. And so I think about the ways in which we’ve commodified air, time, space, water, earth, even our conversational time that begins to be drawn into the marketplace in that way. And people are legitimately paid for teaching, lecturing, those kinds of things. But I think to preserve a space of exchanging the gift of language with each other is deeply nourishing and important.

**JR:** Yeah… who was it? Somebody talks about the idea that maybe teachers, instead of giving a salary, call it an honorarium. We’re paying you to honor you, but your teaching is not a commodity.

**MM:** Yes. In academic settings, that’s what they call it. An honorarium. And I appreciate that.

**JR:** Yeah. Yeah. Except it’s also an excuse to pay whatever they feel like paying… (laughs)

**MM:** Well, that’s true too. That’s true too. And I don’t wanna lay too much emphasis on the capitalist frame, except that I think the language of the marketplace has invaded both the church and the academy in ways that are worth being alert to.

**JR:** Right. Yeah, yeah. So, what’s the difference in conversation and debate? How are those two ideas different or related?

**MM:** Well… (laughs) I will replay with an anecdote, which is that years ago when I was teaching at Westmont College, they had a debate tournament every year with other colleges, which many schools do. But I noticed in preparation for debate how students would just… really work on a position, and boy they were going to “win” something! And again, I think debate has its place, and it’s really good to have a vigorous debate and work out the implications of your position.

On the other hand, it is hard to stay in a debate and honor the ambiguities and the complexities that characterize almost any human situation that’s really worth talking about. Because really where we live is the gray area. I wrote a piece a while back called “The Gray Area is Holy Ground,” and I really think that that’s where God has called us into, is a place where we have to work out our salvation with each other in the midst of very troubling, paradoxical, conflicting, shifting matters. And so we have to be agile and we have to be deft. And I resist the part of debate that locks people into having to prove their point, because I think that is when a lot of people stop listening.

**JR:** Yeah. You know there is a kind of debate, a way to debate that you don’t see very often that really is geared toward finding what’s true. Like, let’s together figure out what’s true. You’ve probably read Alan Jacobs’ book *How to Think*?

**MM:** Yeah, parts of it.

**JR:** He talks about — now I can’t remember the name of the debate society. It’s the Long… the Long something. The Long Era? The Long Now Society, I think. And one of their rules is before you can speak, when it’s your turn to speak, you have to summarize what the person before you said in a way that they would agree is true that that’s what they said. You don’t have to agree with it…

**MM:** Yeah… that’s such a good discipline. And when I teach argumentation in writing courses — or when I have taught it — one of the things we start with is making concessions. Just, how much concession can you make? Because the more you can afford to concede, the more you can recognize that another position is plausible or viable, the more generous you can be about that, and the more credibility you also gain for your own position. Because it says I’ve arrived at my position, after having sifted through a lot of things that have merit, but I’ve found my place on that 365 degree circle.

The other thing that I resist about debate is the either/or mentality. People keep talking these days about listening to “the other side,” and I think we are so bifurcated politically and in so many other ways in this culture, but really there are never just two sides to any question. There are 365 sides. So… so to resist that tendency to just polarize, I think, takes some vigorous attention to the form of the conversation.

**JR:** Yeah, and I think it’s in the same chapter of the Alan Jacobs book that I was just talking about — I think it’s in the same chapter that he talks about a society, a debate society at Yale I think.

**MM:** Mmhmm.

**JR:** And I should know the name of it cause it’s a very well known debating society, but one of the questions when you join is, “Have you ever broken anybody on the floor?” Which is, in the course of debate caused your opponent to change their mind. And then the next question is, “Have you ever been broken on the floor?” And the correct answer is yeah. The answer they’re looking for is yes. Not, “No, I’ve never been wrong!” But “I am honest enough in the way I discuss that I’m wiling to say, you know what? You’re right.”

**MM:** Yeah… oh, I love that. I’ve never heard the phrase — I haven’t read that. I’ve barely skimmed Alan’s book, to be honest. But um, but the idea that someone might actually change his mind when he has more evidence is really getting buried. And I remember a provost I worked with some years ago for whom I had so much respect, because he was a very public person at our school and he had to make some hard decisions, but if you talked to him and presented thoughts or a point of view or evidence that the hadn’t heard, he’d almost always say, “I have to think about that,” and then he would come back in the next meeting and he will have thought of it. And he frequently, if not completely changed his mind, he would have frequently shifted his position to accommodate new information. And that’s becoming rare.

**JR:** Yeah… why is it shameful when you learn new facts to change your mind?

**MM:** Well, I think that we tend to in so many ways — perhaps because of professional sports, I don’t know — but we tend to really have reinforced the model of winning and losing in such big ways in this culture that it’s very hard to construct public situations or social situations in which that win/lose model doesn’t dominate. And I have known people who are so used to that that it’s very hard for them to be in a conversation without them setting it up as an argument.

**JR:** Uh huh.

**MM:** And so I find that one of the things that’s really helpful to me these days is what I keep calling a meta-conversation, which is just to pause and call attention to the words themselves. Like the way you did about the word “conversation”… what do you mean by that exactly? What do I mean exactly? Let me just think about this word and how we’re using it. Because I find that attention to language opens up the realm of reflection rather than getting you locked in to presenting evidence to prove a point.

**JR:** Yeah, okay, that does bring up a point I wanted to check in with you about. And that is on the one hand, you talk about the importance of sorting— you realize that words change — not just that words change over time, but that in a given context words mean different things, and so, um… (pause) I think we have a tendency to… when other people use words, we pay attention to their connotations, and when we use words, we say no, we’re sticking to the denotations with my language. Um… but at the same time, you know, in the same chapter, you talk about the importance of paying attention to the history of words, to what words used to mean.

In some ways, those two ideas can come into conflict… right? Insofar as, sometimes I see people trot out word histories as if that — I mean, it’s a little like trotting out the dictionary definition, right? Which you warn against.

**MM:** (chuckles) In my first chapter, yeah.

**JR:** But then… there’s a way to talk about etymology that’s like, “Now what this word *really* means is what the Romans thought it meant…”

**MM:** oh… yeah. Well, I would never say “what the word *really* means.” But I will say, “now, this word has an interesting history.” It has layers of meaning, some of which are still echoing in the background. That it’s a bigger word than we might realize. That it’s also connotative richness that’s worth recalling. But I think that what it *really* means is a mistaken idea to begin with, because language does evolve. It’s a living language, and it’s got a certain fluidity to it. And there are variations in regional use, for instance.

**JR:** (chuckles) Yeah.

**MM:** What is that line in *My Fair Lady* where Henry Higgins says about American English — she’s speaking about English, and he says, “The Americans haven’t spoken it for years.”

**JR:** (laughs) Yeah.

**MM:** I love etymologies because of the way they can really enrich your own sense of the words you use yourself.

**JR:** Mmhm. Yeah. Yeah. Um, we’ve already hit one of your strategies for maintaining clarity, integrity, and authenticity in discourse. That is, “define your terms.” I have another one of your strategies I wanna talk about, and then I’d like to hear — we can’t cover all your strategies, but I’d like to maybe hear from you on one of your other favorites. But here’s — a strategy I wanna talk about is the idea of — I think you have a chapter titled “Articulate Your Outrage”? Is that a chapter title? Do I have that right?

**MM:** Or “Own Your Outrage,” or something…

**JR:** Yeah. And so… (pause) encouraging people to articulate their outrage… feels to me like you’re coming into conflict with your commitment to civility. I’m asking this in such a way that’s inviting you to… you bring the nuance. (laughs)

**MM:** (laughs) Okay.

**JR:** So how do those ideas square with one another?

**MM:** Well, I think I’ll start with the word civility, that it does mean — it comes from “civitas,” it comes out of that ancient question of how do we manage to live together and negotiate things without killing each other, right? I think that civility often gets confused with a kind of blandness or niceness that’s really not the point. And I think civil people are people who are very attentive, careful about their own speech, willing — as you’ve said and I’ve said — to change their minds or perspective when they receive new evidence. But I also think that it belongs to civility to allow your felt response to things and connect your body, your mind, your visceral responses, your heart so that if you witness an injustice, you will be outraged by that.

There’s a place for indignation, and again, to go to etymology, one of the ancient meanings of rage is passion, and so I think there are things about which it’s not okay to be bland or even soft-spoken, but vigorous and clear. So when I think about articulating outrage, I’m not talking about just fitting and flailing and waving your fists. I’m talking about channeling that passion into a very clear statement of protest — which originally meant to speak for, not speak against. But protest to protect the vulnerable, or to speak for the voiceless. And there are things I don’t think people of faith are quite outraged enough about in some quarters.

**JR:** Yeah. So if civility is learning how to live together without killing one another, when people are being killed that’s a good time to…

**MM:** Be outraged.

**JR:** To be outraged! And that’s civil.

**MM:** The articulate part of it is find the words through which to funnel it so you can speak truth to power, so you can speak truth into the public form so that it can be heard. I think that’s where the advice to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves really becomes pertinent as a paradox to live by.

**JR:** Yeah. So you have diagnosed a tendency to not be willing to change our minds as sort of cultural mania for sticking to our guns, whatever position we’ve taken. What is the… how do we get out of that? How do we move toward being the kind of people who are willing to change our minds when the evidence changes?

**MM:** Right. Well, I think we have to cultivate circles of trust in which we can have those conversations and practice them. I think it’s partly a matter of practice so you don’t get sucked into the dominant discourse of the marketplace or, say, the sports competition. When you talk about people who say, um, by gum, I’m sticking to my guns… that, I think, is reinforced by a sort of sports mentality. This is my team. I don’t care how much they’ve lost. Or this is my political party. By gum, I’m gonna vote for my candidate. I don’t care what the platform is. That degenerates into a kind of dangerous simple-mindedness.

I think to help one another resist that means in churches, in book groups, in public gatherings, in family circles, to really practice with one another the listening, the attentive listening, asking for clarification, holding each other accountable, exploring things, so that we can equip one another to go outwards from there and foster a different kind of conversation.

I love the phrase a pastor friend of ours uses to describe his calling, which is — I think he got that phrase from Calvin, I’m not sure — but “equipping the saints.” I’m gonna have to provide you with the reminders and even the language that you need to navigate the world with integrity.

**JR:** Mmhmm. So do you see the movement toward that kind of integrity as happening individual to individual and sort of growing circles of individuals and friends and family? Is there any larger scale way to move the needle?

**MM:** Well, ideally I think it happens in classrooms, and I think it can happen in churches. I mean, churches’ adult ed programs are wonderful places for people to do continuing education in an environment of faith. And I think it can happen when any intentional group of people get together for the purpose of really helping one another refine those skills. Book groups are lovely because they gather people around a text and say “let’s pay attention together, and let’s learn something together.” That ideal of lifelong learning is something to be held onto and reclaimed wherever we can.

**JR:** Yeah, yeah. Okay, so we have talked — in your book, you identify strategies, again, for maintaining clarity, integrity, and authenticity in discourse. So we’ve covered two, that is, Define Your Terms and Articulate Outrage. Pick one or two that you wish I’d asked you about.

**MM:** (laughs) Well, one that I wrote about both in this book and the one that preceded it, *Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies*, um, Promote Poetry. Because I think that a lot of people have poetry anxiety, or haven’t read any poetry since college, or associate poetry with some English teacher they didn’t like. But unlike many other cultures, poetry in American culture has tended to be consigned to… kind of marginal groups who sit in cafes and listen to each other’s poems, which is not really where poetry belongs. And certainly Eastern European and Middle Eastern cultures know that the poets are dangerous people.

**JR:** (chuckles)

**MM:** That poetry is where you do that close work with language that dusts it off and cleans it up and sharpens it and makes it visible and makes it usable again in new ways. It feels like poets are the farmers of the soil, if you want to use the soil analogy, for language. And I think even just to know, to remember some lines of poems by heart and carry them with us, those little pieces of what Matthew Arnold called “the best that has been thought and said,” that helps us in the moments when we need it.

Often I’ve asked people, what’s a line from a poem or maybe a hymn that has come back to you. Um, and… I don’t know, I think many hymns will do that. If I think how often I have come back to “heart of my own heart, whatever befall / be thou my vision…” it’s a prayer that I carry as a prayer, but it’s a line from a song. And similarly, I have loved the line from Robert Frost’s poem “After Apple Picking,” where he talks about the end of the harvest and how tired he is. I used to come back to this at the end of the teaching year. He says, “There were ten thousand thousand fruit to touch / cherish in hand, and not let fall.” And sometimes at the end of the day of office hours with students who were kind of whiny and didn’t know what to do with their papers, you know, I would just be like each one of these… there’s a moment to cherish each one of them and not let them fall. And that line would bring me back to the pastoral dimension of my work if nothing else. So I think that those lines we carry from poets who have lifted them up in a structure and context that takes them out of the ordinary flow of language really help to equip us.

**JR:** Yeah. That’s great. You know, when I read poetry, I don’t usually say, “I think I can do that!” But what I do find is that I’m enriched in a way in that I want to go write what I can write. It makes me want to go do what is my calling.

**MM:** Yeah.

**JR:** And even my calling — if my calling weren’t writing, I still suspect it would make me feel like going and pursuing my calling. Good poetry, I mean.

**MM:** Yeah, we talk about how good poetry inspires, and inspiring means “to breathe into,” and it even is a conspiracy in the sense that a poem really calls you to breathe your way through it. It phrases things for you so it changes the way you take a breath. And so it really goes right into the body.

And by the way, when I teach poetry workshops, I really do believe that poetry is the basic human skill that all of us can cultivate. We can’t all be great published poets, but one exercise I’ve given people — and you can try this at home — is write three sentences that start with a simple observation. Like, “My cat got out.” Just something ordinary. Or, “The leaves are falling.” And then add two other sentences to it to make it a little three sentence composition. And then you mess around with the sentences and lay them out so it looks like a poem, and then you see in the phrasing itself the kind of energy that words give each other when they sit on the same line. And your attention is brought in from the idea of a sentence to the chemistry of the words themselves, and you register them differently. So anybody can do that. Three sentences. Really easy.

**JR:** Excellent. I think we have time for another. Do you have another strategy for clarity, integrity, and authenticity?

**MM:** Well, one of the chapters is called “Mind Your Metaphors.”

**JR:** Uh huh.

**MM:** I think that it’s very easy to use metaphors so commonly, and they become some commonplace that we forget that they are metaphors. I’ve done a lot of teaching in medical humanities, and one of the issues that has come up in many conversations is the use of military language in medicine.

**JR:** Huh.

**MM:** Which is not entirely peculiar to American medicine, but I think we do it more than some other cultures. So we talk about killing and eradicating and bombarding and taking aggressive strategies. You know the language, especially in oncology.

A friend of mine wrote a book exploring — called *Reconstructing Illness* — where she explored the social dimension of how we understand illness in this culture. And she tells this story about a young man who was a Quaker, and he develops cancer. He was a lifelong Quaker, committed to pacifism, and the oncologist keeps taking about how, well, we’re gonna beat this, you’re a fighter, and so on, using that language, which is quite common. And it is metaphorical. And finally the young man had the presence of mind to say you know what? I’m not a fighter. I don’t want to fight. I’ve really committed my life and my faith journey to peacemaking, so could we just try to find another way to talk about this? Because I don’t want to think of my body as a battle ground.

To his credit, the oncologist sat with him and said, “Let’s talk about this as a journey,” and it makes a huge difference to think of the journey you’re on rather than the battle you’re in. And so in so many ways I think that we rather unconsciously begin to use economic metaphors, or military metaphors to describe —

**JR:** Or mechanistic metaphors?

**MM:** Or mechanistic metaphors, exactly — for the body. And think of all the computer metaphors we’ve appropriated, with input and output and feedback and… those all have consequences. It’s not that they’re all bad, but at least to understand the logic of the metaphors we’re using keeps us accountable.

**JR:** Well, um, yeah. I have… I think it’s from reading Wendell Berry lately just thinking about the importance of not thinking of the nature and human beings as machinery. It really makes a big difference. The whole point of machinery is to banish mystery, and we live in a mysterious world.

**MM:** Well, I think Wendell Berry is one of the great voices of our time in the way that he models not only elegant use of language, but a use of language that reaches back into that long history of human conversation. And I have noticed in his writing that he doesn’t very often use the terminology from clinical psychology that we so often domesticate.

I mean, I’ve heard so many students, when they’re really just sad or discouraged, say, “Oh, I’m so depressed.” Or talking about neuroses or something. But I’ve noticed that Berry reaches back for beautiful, older words like “sorrow.”

**JR:** Mmm…

**MM:** Now that’s… that’s got a capaciousness to it that speaks of a range of human experience that you can’t get at with clinical language.

**JR:** Yeah.

**MM:** So he’s a good model.

**JR:** Yeah, yeah. And sorrow humanizes the… sorrow. And it… nobody has ever suspected there’s a pill to deal with sorrow.

**MM:** Right. That’s right.

**JR:** That’s great. Well, I always end these conversations by asking, “Who are the writers who make you want to write?”

**MM:** Well, Wendell Berry is one of them. What a lovely transition!

**JR:** (laughs)

**MM:** I think that his sentences slow you down in a very good sense. It’s like someone who’s deliberate about conversation, and the effect is we’re not gonna hurry through it. We’re gonna just dwell on this character, if it’s his fiction, for a while. Talking about Hannah Coulter or Jayber Crow, we’re gonna just sit there in his barbershop and take things in. As my North Carolina grandpa put it, “We’re gonna just set a spell.” Just witness one another.

So the beauty of his lines is really enriching and quieting and empowering for me. But I have to say that on a very other note, one of my very favorite writers is Annie Dillard. And I keep kidding with people about how I wanna write like Annie before I die.

**JR:** (laughs)

**MM:** She’s… I had a colleague who said I don’t know, she’s just a little too dazzling. But I love her bedazzlement. She just brings into her writing this sense of astonishment at the world. There’s something so childlike about it. And she manages in a very articulate and educated and practiced way, as a lover of language, to hold onto the “hey, what?!” energy of a little kid.

Or you remember that line from the Hopkins poem that starts, “Look! Look at the stars! Look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!” The “oh, look!” element in Annie Dillard’s prose makes me want to offer that to people. She’s got that kind of vitality and vigor in it. So I think there are writers you love for their clarity. There are writers you love for their agility. There are writers like, um… Brian Doyle is a wonderful writer who died way too young.

**JR:** Oh, man…

**MM:** A poet, and a wonderful humorist! I love his Book of Uncommon Prayer. Have you read it?

**JR:** Oh, I haven’t read it. I’ve seen the title, but I haven’t read it.

**MM:** Oh… put it on your list. It’s such a delight!

**JR:** Okay.

**MM:** But these prayers he writes really are prayers, and yet they’re also, some of them, quite funny. Especially the titles. He gives each of them a title. And they’re so quirky, they all serve as a reminder that we can come to God in a completely openhearted and sincere way, and if we are to bring all of ourselves, part of that is a sort of comic sense of the world and the mess it’s in.

**JR:** Yeah.

**MM:** So he’s another one. I think it’s really good to collect writers and recognize what you love in them. Like your friends, you know? There’s some friends you love for their quick sense of humor and their wit, and there’s some friends you love just because it’s so relaxing to be with them.

**JR:** Yeah… yeah. Well, as you said at the beginning of this conversation, there are things that can’t be solved. They can only be given. And these kinds of gifts you’re talking about — the gifts that people have for humor or insight or whatever — these are things that they can give that nobody else can give. And they’re not anonymous, and they’re not commodified.

**MM:** That’s right.

**JR:** You can just… you give what you have to give. And that’s such a helpful thing.

**MM:** Can I just mention two others while we’re thinking of this?

**JR:** Oh please, yeah.

**MM:** One is — I think one of the greatest writers of the 20th century and now the 21st has been Toni Morrison.

**JR:** Oh man, yes.

**MM:** I think that especially… she’s just a superb storyteller, and she draws so deeply on both the literary tradition in English and African and African-American folklore that goes way back. And I think in this generation when we’re thinking so much these days about how to rectify a miserable history of racial relations in this country, that, along with the writers who address that head on, I think to read someone with a voice like hers and an awareness like hers that’s so generous and so spacious… it’s got its hard edges, but I think that her novels by themselves give us a much needed education in what it is to listen across profoundly different historical and racial experiences.

**JR:** Oh yeah, I so agree, and I’m so glad you mentioned her. She comes up pretty often in these conversations. And you said you had two, so who’s your other one?

**MM:** One other is a tiny book that I would recommend to many people by Timothy Snyder, who is a Yale historian, called *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the 20th Century*. What I heard just recently about that book was that he had to kind of fight with his publisher to keep it very small. If it weren’t full of such depth you could read it in one sitting, but he wanted it to be small because he said it’s too important to have people put it off. And the question he’s addressing is “What can we learn from populations that have succumbed to authoritarianism in order to avoid that?” It’s timely, and it’s simply written. It’s deceptively simple, because he’s digested so much of the history of the 20th century that we so desperately need to learn from.

**JR:** Yeah. I’ve read that book too, and I thought it was incredible. I wish everybody would read it.

**MM:** Yeah. That’s why he kept it little.

**JR:** Alright. Marilyn McEntyre, thank you so much for being here, and I hope people continue to read and digest and benefit from *Speaking Peace in a Climate of Conflict*, as well as your other books.

(THEME MUSIC FADES UP)

**JR:** So thank you, and I hope we can talk again soon.

**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)

**DM:** Every year, it seems that the clamor of consumerism threats to drown out the true song of Christmas. But in *The 25th: New and Selected Christmas Essays*, Joshua Gibbs recovers for us the myriad reasons to robustly celebrate Christmas with the confidence that we are participating in one of the oldest and deepest mysteries of God.

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