

[500th Episode Special Feature Transcript]

[Intro (0:00—2:23)]

Tim: Okay, so I don't need to be looking at anything?

Jon: No. Is there a coaster?

Tim: There is.

[Tim sipping]

Tim: It's fun to be like, "What are we going to talk about?"

Jon: We're rolling.

Tim: Okay.

[Tim clears throat]

Jon: Hey, Tim.

Tim: Hey, Jon. Hello.

[Musical Break (00:14—00:17)]

Jon: There was no plan to start a podcast, but we started having these conversations as a part of making the videos.

[Transition to Tim and Jon's Audio from Podcast Clips in the Past]

Jon's Audio: We're starting a new theme.

Tim's Audio: Yeah, these are good days.

Jon's Audio: I'm really excited about this new series.

Tim's Audio: Me too. These are really fun conversations.

[Musical Break: TENTS' "Defender" (00:30—00:40)]

TENTS: When the fog sneaks up the bay, and when sirens call your name—

[Transition to Tim and Jon from this Episode, the 500th Episode Special Feature]

Jon: I was enjoying these conversations so much, I thought it'd be great to record them so other people can enjoy them too.

[Transition to Tim and Jon's Audio from Podcast Clips in the Past]

Tim's Audio: We are starting a new conversation.

Jon's Audio: What are we talking about?

Tim's Audio: You know, I have all this stuff in my head right now.

[Transition to Tim and Jon from this Episode, the 500th Episode Special Feature]

Jon: Yeah, there was no other strategy than that, and I didn't have a plan for it becoming anything more.

[Transition to this Episode's Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: As we wrap up 2025, the BibleProject podcast is celebrating two big milestones: 10 years and 500 episodes of exploring the Bible together. To mark the occasion, we're taking a little stroll down memory lane to see how it all began. How does a side project recorded in a closet turn into a decade-long global conversation?

[Transition to Tim and Jon's Audio from Podcast Clips in the Past]

Jon's Audio: This was a new paradigm for me.

Tim's Audio: This series, we'll be exploring Genesis chapters one through three.

Jon's Audio: It has become favorite chapters for me to read in the Bible.

[Transition to this Episode's Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: Over the past 10 years, this podcast has reached hundreds of thousands of listeners who've joined us in discovering the Bible as one unified story that leads to Jesus. On today's episode, we're sharing how this project continues to shape us and this community of Bible readers that's grown over the past decade. I'm Lindsey Ponder, the producer for the podcast and your host for today. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

[Musical Break: TENTS' "Defender" (01:57—02:23)]

TENTS: You were just a boy, trying to pretend, pleasing all your mentors, though never quite convinced. Now you are much older, free to skip the test. Now it's time to rest.

[Before the Mic (2:23—11:21)]

Lindsey: Before there was a podcast, before they animated videos, before there was even an organization called BibleProject, there were two friends just having a conversation. It all started there. Tim and Jon met in Bible college and, for years, would process what they were learning about the Bible together. In 2012, they decided to combine Tim's biblical expertise and Jon's experience making explainer videos to create videos about the Bible. By the time they decided to start a podcast, they had already been having the conversations that became the podcast for three years.

[Transition to Tim and Jon from this Episode, the 500th Episode Special Feature]

Tim: We would sit in this room with no windows.

[Laughter]

Jon: With plywood walls.

Tim: Yep. And this is one of my first memories of us sitting in there. We sat in there for like three hours talking—

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: And writing and making notes, and maybe there was a whiteboard. I—it was really stimulating. It was super fun. I think we were both like, “Whoa, this is cool. We just burned three hours.” And then we sat on this couch that was like this metal box frame with cushions made of mi—

Jon: Uh—

Tim: Military uniforms?

Jon: It's a Stephen Kenn couch.

Tim: Okay—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: There you go. I—which is very special.

[Laughter]

Tim: And when I walked into the office that day, there was this jar full of chocolate lollipops—like, a ball of chocolate on the end of a little stick. And I was like, “Oh, that’s cool.”

Jon: Which Starbucks has now made famous.

Tim: Oh, really?

Jon: You could go—

Tim: Oh, okay.

Jon: To a Starbucks and get a cake pop.

Tim: Cake pop.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Okay. Yeah.

Jon: But this was pre-Starbucks cake pops.

Tim: Okay—

[Laughter]

Tim: Apparently—

[Laughter]

Tim: This was 2013. So somewhere on the course of us talking, I had that lollipop, and I must have put it down because I wanted to start typing, you know, some ideas on my computer. I thought I had maybe put it on the wrapper next to me, but I looked down 45 minutes later, and it was like this half-melted chocolate pop on this really nice designer couch in your office. And—

[Laughter]

Tim: I felt so bad. And I was like, “Oh, I’m sorry, man. I’m so sorry.”

[Laughter]

Tim: And that couch has moved with us now.

Jon: Yeah—

Tim: It’s in—

Jon: It’s still here.

Tim: Still here.

[Transition to this Episode’s Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: And just for the record, that couch really is still around. It’s made the rounds over the years and now lives in our classroom soundstage. And if you ever visit the office, you can have a seat on it, if you dare—chocolate stain and all.

[Transition to Tim and Jon from this Episode, the 500th Episode Special Feature]

Tim: And the stain—the stain’s there.

Jon: It is?

Tim: Yes.

Jon: That’s awesome.

Tim: So somehow that memory is locked into my mind about the beginning of how we started to talk about videos and make scripts.

Jon: We had a half-day. I think it was Wednesday mornings—

Tim: Wednesday mornings, yeah.

Jon: Because your job at the local church—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Basically, we negotiated a half day of your time—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Or they just, kind of, generously gave it.

Tim: Yeah, I forget. Maybe I asked for, but the elder team at Door of Hope Church said, “Go for it.”

Jon: So you would ride your bike downtown, sit in my office, and then we would have basically three hours, and then lunch. So most of that time was just talking through the ideas that we wanted to turn into scripts. And my experience up to that point writing explainer videos—a large part of that was interviewing an expert to understand what it is we we’re going to write. And so I just really enjoy that part of the process.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And—

Tim: Yep.

Jon: We just would talk.

Tim: Yeah, it was so fun.

[Transition to this Episode’s Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: Despite the fun Tim and Jon were having, these weren’t just casual chats. They were working sessions, deep dives into themes, stories, and words. The goal was to get on the same page before they could ever write a video script. The process was imperfect. It was slow. And it was also transformative.

[Transition to Tim and Jon from this Episode, the 500th Episode Special Feature]

Jon: I remember specifically feeling free to ask certain questions that I wouldn’t dare ask —

Tim: Hmm, that you wouldn't have asked, maybe growing up in your—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Church community.

Jon: Yeah, and I would kind of start to broach a question, and I just remember you giving me permission through the way you would answer the question because you'd push it further.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: For example, you know, I—I had a big question about heaven in relation to Jesus saying there's not going to be any marriage in heaven. And so for me, that feels really uncomfortable to talk about.

Tim: Mmm.

[Laughter]

Jon: And I kind of was tiptoeing around it—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And I think you just plunged in—

[Laughter]

Jon: In a way that, for me, was really startling at first—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: But then I was like, "Oh, cool, we get to just do this."

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "We get to just have this conversation."

Tim: Hmm. Hmm.

Jon: And that was really exhilarating to me.

Tim: Mmm. Mhm.



Jon: Yeah.

Tim: I can't remember a lot of those details—

Jon: I know—

[Laughter]

Tim: So—

[Laughter]

Tim: I wonder what my 12-year-ago self said about that.

Jon: Yeah.

[Musical Interlude and Transition to this Episode's Host, Lindsey Ponder (06:53—6:58)]

Lindsey: From the very beginning, this whole project was built on trust—the kind of trust between two friends who could ask hard questions about God and the Bible without fear of judgment. That trust became the foundation for everything that followed.

[Transition to Tim and Jon from this Episode, the 500th Episode Special Feature]

Jon: If I feel censored, and what I'm worried about is: "Am I going too far? Am I going to make Tim uncomfortable? Am I going to broach a subject that is—"

Tim: "Off limits," or—

Jon: "Off limits—"

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Then I'll start to feel like I have to tiptoe around. And most of my energy now is in tiptoeing around versus just trying to understand. And I think it just for me signified, like, "Cool, I think this is going to work."

[Transition to this Episode's Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: Within a couple of years, Tim and Jon's Bible project had gathered enough momentum for them to bring in a few trusted others.

[Transition to Tim and Jon from this Episode, the 500th Episode Special Feature]

Jon: So we moved across the river, and we were in the basement. I just remember it was the cement floors—

Tim: Yeah, the East—

Jon: Uhm—

Tim: Bank Exchange Building.

Jon: Yeah. We started to bring animators and illustrators to come work with us in that space. And so we started just building out desks, and we kind of had our first office there.

Tim: Yeah, we did.

[Transition to this Episode's Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: Neither the space nor the team was big, but it buzzed with creative energy and a shared vision. Our art director, Robert Perez, remembers it like this.

[Transition to Robert Perez]

Robert: As an artist, you really want to commit yourself to something that you believe in and to do something fun. And this project, obviously being the BibleProject—I'm hugely passionate about the message and the mission. And the ability to start at the ground floor of something was also really exciting. And so there wasn't a ton of rules already set in place. It was like, you get to help craft something. You get to help build something that could be really awesome, or it could go nowhere. But that potential was enough for me to be like, "Okay, I really want to at least try." And it's so important to at least try—uhm—and go after things that you feel are really important in your life.

[Transition to this Episode's Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: The team was coming together, literally and figuratively. But it didn't happen overnight.

[Transition to Tim and Jon from this Episode, the 500th Episode Special Feature]

Jon: You know, we had been prototyping a few videos for, like, two years—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: I think to the point where you started to wonder, "Are we actually going to make a video?"

Tim: I did wonder that—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: At some point, yeah.

Jon: Because I didn't fully understand what we were making yet. Some of our early scripts were like 10 pages long.

Tim: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Jon: And—

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: Just kind of all over the place.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And I don't fully remember that journey, but at some point, we got to our first two videos: Heaven and Earth and Genesis one through 11. And we released those, and then we immediately started working on the next set of videos, which was Genesis 12 through 50, and—

Tim: The Messiah.

Jon: The Messiah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: So we were working on Messiah. So that script was written. And it was at that point I thought, "Let's record these conversations, and I could edit those down and put them on this slick technology called podcasting."

[Laughter]

Jon: Which I was a pretty early adopter of podcasts. When did you start listening to podcasts?

Tim: Hmm. Probably around then. Maybe because you were like, "Hey, we should do one."

Jon: Oh, you were like, "Wha—"

Tim: And I was like, "What are they really?" So—

Jon: Okay.

[Laughter]

Tim: Oh, actually, no. I remember this.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It was around the same time because I was looking for podcasts that were about stuff that I thought was interesting and cool about Bible and biblical theology, and I couldn't find anything that I was interested in.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: And I was like, "Man, it would be so cool if there was a podcast—"

[Laughter]

Tim: "That worked through ideas from one end of the Bible to the other."

Jon: Oh.

Tim: "That would just be rad if that existed."

Jon: While I'm telling you, that's what I want to do.

[Laughter]

Tim: Well, I just remember there was a feeling—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And I was acquainting myself with the podcast app and how it worked and was searching, and found all kinds of religion podcasts, but nothing—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That I—

Jon: It was all sermons.

Tim: That's right. Yeah, or monologue. So—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It ended up being that we created the thing that I wish—

[Laughter]

Tim: E—

[Laughter]

Tim: Existed.

[Transition to this Episode's Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: Thus, the BibleProject podcast was born. Things were scrappy in those days, to put it lightly. When Jon first suggested recording their conversations, there was no studio, no gear closet, no soundproofing, just a tiny storage space tucked under the stairs of BibleProject's first Portland office. The first podcast series Tim and Jon recorded was about the law.

[The Closet Under the Stairs (11:21—20:22)]

[Transition to Tim and Jon's Audio from Podcast Clips in the Past]

Jon's Audio: My name is Jon Collins, and this is the first episode of the BibleProject podcast on the law.

[Transition to this Episode's Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: The Law was recorded in that storage space under the stairs. It was quite literally a closet. Think Harry Potter, but with microphones instead of magic.

[Transition to Tim and Jon from this Episode, the 500th Episode Special Feature]

Tim: And you go down these stairs, and it was more spare—

Jon: Dungeoness.

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah. And underneath them was this—

Jon: The closet.

Tim: Door—closet—a tiny room. When you'd go into it, it had this slanted wall. And that's where you set up recording—

[Laughter]

Tim: Equipment.

Jon: It's the only place that had, like, a room—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: In the whole space.

Tim: Yeah, an enclosed room.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Yeah, but we'd just sit side by side, and I would just start recording.

Tim: Yeah.

[Transition to this Episode's Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: Without a true recording studio, Jon and Tim had the option to record just about anywhere. And sometimes, they did.

[Transition to Tim and Jon from this Episode, the 500th Episode Special Feature]

Tim: And we had some friends and patrons of the project, and they had offered a house that they have kind of in a rural suburb of Portland, if we ever wanted to go there and do some concentrated work time.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: So that's what we did. I think it was just one night—

Jon: One night.

Tim: Two full days.

Jon: Yeah, that sounds right.

Tim: But we wanted to work out the Wisdom series. I think it was just the Job conversations that we had there.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: There was this window nook overlooking a field, and we got these lav mics and cool evening beverages and—

[Laughter]

Tim: Posted up in the window nook. And we recorded the Job conversations that way.

[Transition to Tim and Jon's Audio from Podcast Clips in the Past, the Job Series]

Jon's Audio: Cool. So does Job—does that name have a meaning in Hebrew?

Tim's Audio: Hmm—

[Transition to Tim and Jon from this Episode, the 500th Episode Special Feature]



Jon: It was a small little nook.

Tim: Yeah, exactly. And a—what I remember was “That was awesome.”

[Laughter]

Tim: And “That was so fun. I can’t believe that this is what we get to do. I get to talk about the Bible at a cabin with my friend with a mic.” And I think why the audio for the Job conversations—

[Laughter]

Tim: Is so poor.

Jon: Markedly worse than the others.

Tim: I—I should go back and just listen to that to sample. I haven’t listened to those in years.

[Transition to Tim and Jon’s Audio from Podcast Clips in the Past, the Job Series]

Jon’s Audio: Okay.

[Breathing into the mic]

[Laughter]

Jon’s Audio: Signing off.

[Transition to this Episode’s Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: In those early days, Jon did it all—recording, editing, learning the software as he went. He was a one-man audio department.

[Transition to Tim and Jon from this Episode, the 500th Episode Special Feature]

Jon: I had to learn Pro Tools. I had to learn how to do audio editing.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Yeah, I'm not, like, a—I'm not an audio guy. So I didn't even recognize how bad the audio was to even, like—

[Laughter]

Jon: Think about: "I got to do something to make it better." To me, it was: "Is the content there? Is the idea there?" And: "Does it flow?" And: "Am I getting bored?" Or: "Am I getting frustrated?"

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: I would just edit for that. And as long as it was loud enough—

[Laughter]

Jon: That was fine. I remember at one point, pretty early in, I got an email that was like, "Hey, I listen to the podcast, and I love it. The audio is horrible."

[Laughter]

Jon: And that was the first time I was like, "Oh, the audio is horrible?"

Tim: Hmm.

Jon: "That's something to pay attention to."

[Laughter]

Tim: Okay. Yeah, right.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: I—uhm—remember you edited those first conversations, and you sent them to me, and I listened to them, and I was so surprised at how on point and smart we sounded.

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah. Yeah.

Tim: Taking out all the pauses and coughs and “uhms” and—and then also, I was like, “Wait, remember that one thing that we talked about?” And you’re like, “Oh yeah, I just took that out.”

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: It truly is a distillation and a representation. And it’s a real dialogue. It’s not scripted. You know, we’re not reading anything.

Jon: Yeah. Because it sounds so refined, like we know where we’re going. And it’s not because it’s scripted. It’s because it’s edited.

Tim: Mhm.

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah, it’s good editing. Yeah.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It’s like, “Wow, this is cool. This makes us—”

[Laughter]

Tim: “Sound like we have the next cool, interesting thing to say, like, right on the tip of our tongue all the time.”

Jon: Right.

[Transition to this Episode’s Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: Right around the time Jon realized he might need some help with audio production, help arrived from a listener who happened to be a professional audio producer. Talk about perfect timing. Enter Dan Gummel, who eventually became the podcast’s first dedicated audio editor. I sat down with both Dan and Jon separately to hear their various sides of what they remember about their first time working together. Here’s that story.

[Transition to Jon from this Episode, the 500th Episode Special Feature]

Jon: It was pretty early on Dan emailed me and said, “I really like what you’re doing with the podcast.”

[Transition to Dan]

Dan: I was working out of an NPR station in Ohio, and I just emailed, “Hey, I’m a public radio producer. Here’s a couple of resources that we use.” And I linked them to some workshops and some different types of materials that they could find. And this is like 2015, so not a lot of podcasting was being done outside of radio.

[Transition to Jon]

Jon: Dan told me that he’d love to help. And I think I just said “Thanks,” and then I filed that away. And then I thought it would be cool to interview Greg Baumer and John

Cortines about their story that turned into a book called *God and Money*. I then decided I was going to go to Nashville, where they were, and interview them.

[Transition to Dan]

Dan: And a few days later, I looked down, and my phone was ringing, and it was from a Portland area code. I didn't know anybody in Portland. I thought it was spam. I almost didn't answer it. And I picked it up, and it was like, "Hey, this is Jon at BibleProject." And I said, "Oh—uh—it's great to hear from you, dude." So he started asking me questions about the podcast. And he was like, "Hey, I want to try and make these kind of cool stories on the podcast, and I could use some help." This was, like, early in the year, in February. And he's like, "I'll be in Nashville in the fall. Would you like to come to Nashville with me?" And I was like, "Sure, I can put that on my calendar." I just pulled up the email. He says September 25th and 26th. Like, it's in this email.

[Transition to Jon]

Jon: And months go by, and it's getting closer and closer to the date. Dan might remember better than me. I think it's like a few days before.

[Transition to Dan]

Dan: And then I get a couple of, like, quick emails and texts in succession, like—

[Sound effect: phone ringing]

[Transition to Jon]

Jon: "Hey, Dan, just checking in." Like, "I'm going to be there."

[Sound effect: phone ringing]

[Transition to Dan]

Dan: “I haven’t heard from you. Are you still planning to come to Nashville?”

[Laughter]

[Sound effect: phone ringing]

[Transition to Jon]

Jon: It turns out I’d given Dan the wrong dates.

[Transition to Dan]

Dan: And I was like—

[Sound effect: phone ringing]

Dan: “Oh, shoot.” And I really wanted to work with Jon, and so—“I’ll just figure it out.” So I changed my schedule.

[Sound effect: tires screeching]

[Transition to Jon]

Jon: Dan dropped everything, got in his car, and just started driving.

[Transition to Dan]

Dan: I drove down to Nashville.

[Transition to Jon]

Jon: That's the first time I met Dan, and he helped me do the field recordings.

[Transition to Dan]

Dan: And I had a great time.

[Transition to this Episode's Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: After the Nashville trip and the production of the now classic "God and Money" episode—still one of our most listened to episodes of all time—Dan quickly became essential to the BibleProject podcast.

[Transition to Jon]

Jon: I started having him edit episodes of the podcast, and then at some point, it was enough work, and he was interested in moving out here, that I was like, "Cool. We can hire you to do this." So that was Dan.

[Laughter]

[Transition to this Episode's Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: With the addition of Dan, there was now an official team supporting the podcast. Still, podcasting can feel like talking into the void. There's no faces to observe, no follow-up conversations, no instant feedback. There was no simple way for Jon and Tim to know how the podcast was landing for listeners. But one day, Jon had an experience that made him realize their conversations were having a greater impact than he had imagined.

[Transition to Jon from this Episode, the 500th Episode Special Feature]

Jon: We had just finished the overview videos, and we were celebrating—end of 2016, Jason Nightingale came and recited The Revelation.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And then we played the video. And then he performed the second half. And then we played—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: The final video.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: It was kind of our first event we ever did. And a friend of ours from college, who I hadn't seen in years, came up and she said—with kind of this look of—hmm—like, joy and sadness together, came, and with so much sincerity was like, "Thank you for the podcast. I love it. And I'm listening to it, and it's helping me so much." And that really shook me. Because one, it was the first time I, like, ran into someone who was like, "I listen to the podcast."

[Laughter]

Jon: But I could tell it was so meaningful to her. It shook me too because she came out of the same educational environment that I came out of. And I think I felt kind of alone a little bit in, like, I didn't learn the things I was supposed to learn during that time.



[Laughter]

Jon: And it just felt like, “Yeah, that’s right. We’re all figuring this out.”

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And that moment really left a mark on me, thinking, “Okay, this is significant.”

[Transition to this Episode’s Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: BibleProject podcast was growing on two fronts at once. On the outside, more and more listeners from across the globe were joining the conversation. And on the inside, the show that was produced by Jon, and then later with Dan’s help, expanded to include even more team members.

[Transition to Dan]

Dan: I remember going through COVID realizing that, essentially, like, if I were to have gotten sick or something—

[Laughter]

Dan: Like, nobody knew where anything was. Half of the stuff was still sitting on my external hard drive.

[Transition to this Episode’s Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: So Jon and Dan decided to hire more help. Over time, the team came to include a day-to-day producer—that’s me—a managing producer, and a full-time audio

engineer and editor, Tyler. The process to produce a podcast episode has increased in complexity too.

[A Growing Audience and Team (20:22—23:02)]

Lindsey: The first person to touch a podcast episode is typically Tyler, who hits record. Here's Tyler, in his own words.

[Transition to Tyler]

Tyler: I'm right there with everybody in hearing and listening, being impacted. And the only difference is—and it's a really privileged position—is I get to hear it first and experience it in real time. We're in a room, I don't know, about the size of a studio bedroom. And then there's another room on the other side of a double wall with speakers and a computer. And that's where I sit and watch the meters, make sure everything's recording. Sometimes I respond to things. I experience the version of the conversation which is full of "uhms," "uhs," coughs, sneezes, stomach growling. And I'm like, "Man, you sound so hungry." But here's the thing that I do get to experience that's really precious—is the journey that Jon and Tim go through. And the real hang-ups that you feel Jon has, I experience myself. Actually, if you were to look at me, sometimes I'm just like, "Please, ask this question." And then he asks it. And then—and you know, I'm just, like, with them—what everyone's probably doing on the receiving end. The only difference is I'm doing it in real time.

[Transition to this Episode's Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: Gone are the days when the podcast was managed by just one or two people. We've made some changes that we believe improve the content and its presentation, which means behind the scenes, there's a lot that happens. And it goes a little something like this. Once an episode is recorded, Jon performs a high-level content edit of the audio where he cuts down and rearranges his conversation with Tim for greater

clarity. Then, a script is written and recorded for the episode's opening summary and closing credits. After that, Tyler does a fine-tune edit and mix of the audio. And then the episode moves down the production pipeline. Show notes are written. The episode is titled. And additional editorial content is created for the app. Audio gets transcribed. And that transcript gets edited and proofread. And all of this has to happen before the episode gets scheduled for release every single week. And that's just the version in English. From day one, BibleProject has cared deeply about making our content accessible in as many languages as possible. We'd been localizing our videos for years. But in 2021, a new idea surfaced: What if we tried to do that with the podcast, too? Localizing a long, unscripted conversation is no small task. But our global team decided to give it a shot, starting with Spanish. I sat down with Anna and Angela from our global team to interview them about our efforts to localize the BibleProject podcast into other languages.

[Transition to Conversation with Angela, Anna, and Lindsey Ponder]

[The Podcast in Other Languages (23:02—30:23)]

Lindsey: So Anna and Angela, I know who you are. But why don't you introduce yourselves so our listeners can know who you are too?

Anna: I'm Anna, and I oversee all the content that we localize into Spanish.

Angela: I am Angela, and I help lead a handful of our localization projects. Right now, that's primarily Portuguese and French, and then helping wind down a few other projects currently.

Lindsey: Great. So can one of you explain to me what localization is exactly and why we prefer that term at BibleProject over a word like "translation"?

Angela: So translation is simply when you're taking content from one language into another. Why we use "localization" is because it goes beyond translation. We're not just looking for word-for-word direct translation. We want to consider the cultures, the regions, and all the context, and so that could be changing colors or visuals because we truly want it to feel native to each language.

Lindsey: So we were already doing this with our videos. Can you give me kind of the backstory on how the global team decided, "Okay, we're going to try this with the podcast now"?

Anna: I think something we had discussed as a team was the abundance of resources that we have in English. That is not the case for lots of other languages. There is a great need for high-quality biblical resources, and I think we were curious to see if the podcast could fit that need. But we weren't even sure if we could localize it.

[Laughter]

Anna: So we decided, "Hey, let's just do a pilot podcast episode and let's see how it goes." We chose to do it in Spanish because Spanish is our second biggest audience behind our English audience.

Lindsey: So how did that go?

Anna: Uh—so there was a podcast studio down in California. They had worked on localization projects before. We also had another lead, this guy in Argentina one of our coworkers knew. We would potentially be his first client. We're thinking, "Okay, the professional studio is probably going to work out, but it's nice that we also have another lead somewhere else." So we worked with the professional studio, and we tried to get some samples from them, and it just wasn't happening. So we were kind of like, "Ugh, is this even possible?" But that little studio in Argentina who had zero clients sent us in a sample, and we were like, "Whoa, they kind of nailed it."

[Transition to Audio Clip from BibleProject Spanish: Luke-Acts Episode 1 An Intro to Reading the Gospels/Introducción a la lectura de los evangelios (25:20—25:30)]

BibleProject Spanish Podcast Clip: Soy Jon de BibleProject. Tim y yo hemos estado preparándonos para una miniserie de cinco partes que explora toda la vida de Jesús tal y como la relata Lucas en su evangelio. [I'm Jon from BibleProject. Tim and I have been preparing for a five-part miniseries that explores the entire life of Jesus as told by Luke in his Gospel.]

[Transition to Conversation with Angela, Anna, and Lindsey Ponder]

Anna: And we felt like this is possible.

[Transition to Audio Clip from BibleProject Spanish: Luke-Acts Episode 1 An Intro to Reading the Gospels/Introducción a la lectura de los evangelios (25:30—25:35)]

BibleProject Spanish Podcast Clip: La primera es sobre el nacimiento de Jesús, que se lanzará justo a tiempo para Navidad—[The first one is about the birth of Jesus, which will be released just in time for Christmas—]

[Transition to Conversation with Angela, Anna, and Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: Anna, you actually told me a really cool story a while ago about Brian, who was the owner of that studio in Argentina, and then became one of the hosts of the Spanish podcast.

Anna: Yeah, I found out later that Brian, a few months before we had reached out to him, had decided to quit all of the work that he was doing, and he really felt like the Lord was calling him to create this studio. And there were a few months where he didn't have any work, and he was kind of frustrated. He was like, "God, what am I doing? I feel like you've called me to do this." But he was praying faithfully every single day that the Lord would just bring work to the studio that would expand the Kingdom. And now it's been four years, and that studio has been the site of over 80 Spanish podcast episodes.

Lindsey: That's so awesome. Why did you decide to get voice actors to kind of reenact Tim and Jon's conversations instead of, I don't know, just sharing the information in some other way?

[Transition to Audio Clip from BibleProject Spanish: Luke-Acts Episode 1 An Intro to Reading the Gospels/Introducción a la lectura de los evangelios (26:27—26:43)]

BibleProject Spanish Clip:

"Tim: Entonces, sí: tenemos un griego, quizás no judío.

Jon: No sabemos con seguridad.

Tim: No sabemos con Certeza. Al final de Colosenses 4, Pablo dice: "Aquí hay un montón de judíos que son mis colaboradores" y luego los separa—"

[In English:

“Tim: So yes: We have a Greek, possibly not Jewish.

Jon: We don’t know for sure.

Tim: We don’t know with certainty. At the end of Colossians 4, Paul says: “Here are a bunch of Jews who are my coworkers,” and then he separates them from another list of people who appear not to be Jewish coworkers in the second list.”]

[Transition to Conversation with Angela, Anna, and Lindsey Ponder]

Anna: I think why a lot of people enjoy listening to the podcast is, kind of, like, the dynamic between Tim and Jon. And I think we were trying to capture that as much as possible.

[Transition to Audio Clip from BibleProject Spanish: Luke-Acts Episode 1 An Intro to Reading the Gospels/Introducción a la lectura de los evangelios (26:43—26:54)]

BibleProject Spanish Clip: “Ser colaboradores judíos en la segunda lista”. Pero podría ser que algunas personas tuvieran una caracterización intermedia.” [“To be Jewish coworkers in the second list. But it could be that some people had an in-between characterization.”]

[Transition to Conversation with Angela, Anna, and Lindsey Ponder]

Anna: So I think we liked the idea that there was a little bit of personality that people could latch on to.

Lindsey: Well, it sounds like it’s been really impactful to do it that way. Angela, at what point did we decide it’s time to localize the podcast beyond just Spanish?

Angela: Okay, so last year, Global decided this is working really well with Spanish. And we have some really incredible and motivated teams, one of those being our Japanese team. And they came to us in 2023 and said, “Hey, we see what Spanish is doing with the podcast, and we don’t really have Christian podcasts in Japan. There is a huge

need. We see people asking for it. Can we please go ahead and do this?” And we said, “Yeah, we trust you.” And so we shared scripts with them, gave them a little bit of an overview of what Spanish was doing, and said, “Run with it,” really entrusting it to our lead coordinator there, Hisho. And they have created eight to 12 episodes over the last year and a half, with plans to produce another eight over the next year. And they’re going to continue to keep going.

[Transition to Audio Clip from BibleProject Japanese: Heaven and Earth Episode 1/天と地 (27:47—28:00)]

Full BibleProject Japanese Clip: 飛翔: 聖書プロジェクトポッドキャストへようこそ。今回から「天と地」という新しいシリーズを始めます。YouTube チャンネルに「天と地」についての 5 分くらいのビデオがありますけど、このポッドキャストではもっと深く掘り下げたいと思います。神の領域である「天」と私たちの領域である「地」はどういう場所で、どう関わり合っているのか。これについて学んで行きます。それでは、始めましょう！ [“Welcome to the BibleProject Podcast. Starting today, we’re beginning a new series called ‘Heaven and Earth.’ There’s a five-minute video about Heaven and Earth on our YouTube channel, but in this podcast, we’d like to dig much deeper. What kind of place is ‘heaven,’ God’s realm, and what kind of place is ‘earth,’ our realm? And how do they interact with each other? That’s what we’ll be learning about. Alright then, let’s get started!”]

[Transition to Conversation with Angela, Anna, and Lindsey Ponder]

Anna: BibleProject podcast was number one on Japanese Spotify upon release. And there’s just a hunger for the word of God in Japan.

Lindsey: So the Spanish and Japanese podcasts are currently airing. Brazilian Portuguese is underway. And we’ve got other languages in the works. But it sounds like it’s a really challenging process.

Anna: Yeah, I think one of the biggest challenges with the podcast in terms of localization is so many of the stories that Tim and Jon tell are unique to Portland, Oregon—Pacific Northwest.

[Laughter]

Anna: Uh—which doesn't always translate well to other cultures. And so a lot of times we have to get creative with: How should we localize that so that it resonates for a Latin American audience or a Japanese audience?

Angela: Yeah. It even goes beyond the stories they tell to different American idioms or taglines. For example, in Heaven and Earth episode, there was, like, a United Airlines tagline they used.

[Transition to Tim and Jon's Audio from Podcast Clips in the Past, the Heaven and Earth Series]

Tim's Audio: Through the skies. Where do I—

Jon's Audio: The heavens—

Tim's Audio: Feel like "the skies" appears in plural—

Jon's Audio: Is that in the—

Tim's Audio: In English advertising?

Jon's Audio: Is it "the friendly skies"?

Tim's Audio: "Into—"the friendly skies. That's what I'm thinking of. Who's that? Who's the friendly skies?

Jon's Audio: I don't know. United.

[Laughter]

[Transition to Conversation with Angela, Anna, and Lindsey Ponder]



Angela: And our Brazilian Portuguese translators were like, “United isn’t a big airline here. That’s not what we’re using.” And they had to adapt it to a different airline so that it was relevant.

Anna: Yeah. There also was an interesting one where they spend a really long time talking about the commandment “Do not murder” and how the actual translation should be “Do not kill.” And in Spanish, they only have “Do not kill” in their translations. And so it’s like, “Hmm—”

Angela: Yeah.

Anna: “What do we do with that?”

Angela: Keeps you on your toes.

Anna: Yeah.

Angela: You never know what things are going to come up.

Anna: Totally.

Lindsey: How much do you guys get to witness the impact of this amount of effort on people?

Angela: Yeah, it has given us a lot. And I feel like learning more about the Bible through translation of these scripts has been so impactful on my walk with the Lord. And I think that there’s a really cool impact it’s having—

Anna: Yeah.

Angela: On the people who are creating the work.

Anna: Yeah, it’s kind of fun to say part of my job is just to listen to BibleProject podcast episodes.

Angela: Yeah—

[Laughter]

Anna: Which—

Angela: Yeah.

Anna: Is cool.

[Transition to this Episode's Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: Hearing Anna and Angela talk about the podcast being localized into other languages is a powerful reminder that this community of people reading the Bible together stretches far beyond this room where we record. We've talked a lot about what goes into making the podcast, but honestly, the best part has always been hearing what it means to you.

[Hearing From Listeners, Plus Jon and Tim on What Motivates Them (30:23—44:16)]

David: When I listen to the podcast, I'm usually walking the dog or in the car on long journeys.

Ausha: I listen to it when I'm walking, sometimes when cooking.

Matthew: I listen to the podcast mowing my lawn, and I go to sleep by it.

Emily: I drop my daughter off at high school, and the minute she gets out of the car and we turn off her music, I turn on the podcast, and I drive home. And then once I get home, I hop on the treadmill, and I walk and listen to the podcast.

[Transition to this Episode's Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: From kitchen tables to morning commutes to background banter while you go about your routine, you've allowed us to be a small part of your days, and we couldn't be more honored. Your stories remind us of the very thing we've been talking about all along—how the Bible keeps shaping real lives.

[Transition to Podcast Listener Interviews]

Matthew: My wife and I, we have eight kids and 16 grandkids. Getting to the Bible, it was always “Be a better person.” That kind of thing. What really happened through the BibleProject is that it was more defined of what being an image of God would be and how we can get deeper into the Bible and find out that wisdom underneath.

Emily: I’ve been a Christian my whole life and went to Bible school, and I love it. But I realized that I don’t know how to go tell someone on a street why they should follow Jesus. And so it just led me into this really cool two years of being like, “What is the Gospel?” And that led me to understanding Genesis one through 11.

[Laughter]

Ausha: I didn’t grow up Christian, so a lot of it was new to me. And I can now listen to the sermons that are dense. It’s like a door that opens another door into more abundance of resources.

[Transition to this Episode’s Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: Stories like these are humbling. They remind us we’re not just dealing with ideas here. As a community, we get to participate in how the story of the Bible keeps transforming people right in the middle of their own stories. So 10 years and 500 episodes later, here we are. The closet under the stairs has been replaced by a fully outfitted studio. Jon’s one-man show has grown into a full production team. And every Wednesday morning, just like in the early days, the mics turn on, and the conversation continues. Some things never change.

[Transition to Conversation with Lindsey, Tim, and Jon]

Lindsey: So Jon and Tim—

[Laughter]

Lindsey: What is it like for you to think about how the podcast has grown in the last 10 years and how many people are listening now?

Tim: I think that as a matter of principle, it's not something I focus on.

[Laughter]

Tim: I think one, because I would get nervous and start to feel overwhelmed and pressure or something. It's just better not to. And then I can shift into a posture of just pure delight and surprise, where it's just like, what a gift of God that this thing that we would do even if our microphone wasn't on—we would want to be doing this to make the stuff we want to make in the world. And it ends up being really helpful for other people, which is astounding to me. But how cool is that?

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: That's how I feel.

Jon: Yeah. In some sense, the thing that I notice changed is just how our equipment's gotten better, and we have more help.

[Laughter]

Jon: Like, that's the thing I've noticed.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: But from the beginning till now, it's just sitting down and talking to each other. And that hasn't changed. And we don't see how many people are going to listen. So the only time that we feel that is if we ever have gone somewhere and decided, "Let's do a live podcast." What have we even done that, like, three times?

Tim: Two live podcasts that I remember.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: One down in our office.

[Laughter]

Tim: Oh, for the 100th episode—

Jon: Oh, yeah.

Tim: We did a gathering and a live conversation.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: And then after that, we did it in Dallas.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And that was fun.

Jon: That was super fun.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: That's it, huh?

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: But at that moment, you see people out there, and they're responding to you in real time. And you're like, "Oh, this is a thing. People are listening."

[Laughter]

Lindsey, To be clear, you're not saying you don't care that people are listening, you're saying you'd be having these conversations the same way whether anyone was listening or not?

Tim: Yes.

[Laughter]

Tim: I—if the mic wasn't on, we would have to have these conversations anyway.

Jon: And we do have more conversations without the mic on.

Tim: Mhm. We often go out to lunch after a morning of podcasting, and we just keep talking.

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah. When I try and process the amount of people, I'm astounded. I still am astounded—

[Laughter]

Tim: By it. And—

Jon: Do you know—do you know the numbers right now?

Tim: Nope.

Jon: What would you guess?

Tim: I have no idea.

Jon: I always forget. And when people ask me, I'm—"Oh gosh, I forget." And then I feel weird because I'll take a stab and I'll be like, "Okay, that could be off by 10 X." I don't know.

[Laughter]

Jon: I can't remember.

[Laughter]

Jon: But—uhm—

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. That's my experience too.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So on one level, the experience of making the podcast from what we contribute is the same—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Except a cool room and great mics.

Lindsey: You know, I really love that it's never been about the numbers for you guys. It makes me think of something our CEO Steve says a lot, which is, "Every number is a person and every person has a story." And it's those stories that keep us coming back to these conversations over and over again.

Jon: Yeah, one thing we've talked more and more about is the goal of all of this media is to help people feel comfortable enough to just read the Bible in community with others. And so I get excited about staying in a passage and working maybe even through a scroll passage by passage, and to give an example of what it looks like to read the Bible in community. But then that can be then a launching point for people to go, "Cool, I'm going to take these ideas, this dialogue, and I'm going to continue it with whoever, my family, my group of friends." And for it to become more normal for people to open up a passage, have a dialogue, meditate on it, find hyperlinks, experience God's wisdom in it, and to feel afterwards, like, charged, like, "Whoa, we just encountered something really cool—"

Tim: Yeah. I still remember vividly the first time—after skateboarding with a group of friends one night, we went to this late-night coffee shop. We were all in Bible college together—

[Laughter]

Tim: And so somebody had an assignment or something about Galatians. So we were just like, "Oh, sweet, let's get it out and just all read it together." And so we did. And then we had this fantastic conversation. And that was my first experience of, like, a communal reading that had all of this cool conversation afterwards. And I was like, "That would not have happened if I just sat down to read it by myself." So I definitely feel like that's what we are. We're a small Bible-reading community. And if we can model that and then invite people along, that's for the win. I also—I feel like if that is something that can help people learn how to read the Bible on its own terms, it produces humans who are encountering God's wisdom through Scripture in community, and that it actually makes people into more faithful images of God. And I hope it produces good in the world through people loving their neighbor.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But the way that I get there is talking about the Bible with Jon Collins for 500 hours.

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Which how cool is that that that gets to be the way that we make that kind of contribution?

[Laughter]

Lindsey: So what's next for the podcast?

Tim: Yeah, mostly what we've done is explored big ideas through the storyline of the Bible—themes. We did the How to Read the Bible series that we broke up into, like, mini-series scattered throughout the years.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: We did almost a year's worth of walking through the Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. We also did a year of Sermon on the Mount. Other than that, we've just traced themes throughout the Bible. So I love tracing themes through the Bible, but the way that I actually do my work in studying the Bible is to just pick a certain scroll or a book and just read and reread and reread and get it all uploaded in my mind and see how all the parts fix together. And we haven't really walked through a book of the Bible like that in long-form detail. I'd like to experiment with that in the future of the podcast with you.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So I shared that with you, and you were excited about that. I think it'd be really fun. We won't finish the whole Bible before we die or retire, but—uhm—we could get through a lot of it.

[Laughter]



Tim: Yeah, so why not try?

Lindsey: Guys, as we wrap up, I have just one more question for you, and it's this: What continues to inspire you about these conversations?

Jon: There's one podcast in particular I remember finding about five years ago, and it was a guy who was an evangelical Christian who became an atheist and then kind of found his way back to Jesus. And there was something about his podcast. When I started listening to it, I was like, "You made this for me." And to some degree, that's why I'm doing this—is because I'm trying to create the thing I want.

Tim: Mmm. Mhm.

Jon: And when I think of someone out there that I don't know spinning this up for the first time and then having that feeling, like, "Oh, they're having that conversation that I wanted."

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: "They made this for me." That just gives me so much joy to think that there's people having that experience that I've had.

Tim: Yeah. Man, I think for me, what I experience in making the podcast is, somehow, these conversations are unique for me, and I regularly am forced to reach a level of clarity of things that I think, but I rarely have a chance to say it out loud and wordsmith it. So a couple of times I've gone back and listened to series from, like, four or five years ago—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That I've forgotten most of it—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Like I'm learning from our past selves—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: As if it's not ourselves.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It's really strange.

Jon: I've had that too.

Tim: So I have that experience a lot now, and I'm just so grateful. And I don't have another venue in my life where I'm being forced to be in the moment, talking, working it

out real time, without a script. Somehow, us doing that is beneficial to other people, and I just can't believe that. I'm still astounded. But I'm grateful for it and cheers. Cheers to that.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: God's very generous to have given us the chance to do this.

[Transition to this Episode's Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: The conversation Jon and Tim started in a closet under the stairs never ended. It just grew.

[Transition to Tim and Jon's Audio from Podcast Clips in the Past]

Jon's Audio: Hey, we're starting a new theme study. What adventure awaits us?

Tim's Audio: Yeah, we've been learning rigorously about these texts for two decades now, and we are still able to have this robust conversation.

Jon's Audio: Yeah.

[Transition to this Episode's Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: Ten years, 500 episodes, and an ever-expanding community of voices and languages that have drawn us deeper into the story of Scripture.

[Transition to Podcast Listener Interviews]

Victoria: Hi, my name is Victoria, and I'm from Israel.

Sean: Hi, my name is Sean, and I'm from Austin, Texas.

Ramon: Hi, my name is Ramon, and I am from Ukraine.

Alma: Hi, my name is Alma, and I am from Romania.

[Transition to this Episode's Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: Thank you for listening, for learning, and for being part of this journey. This conversation has grown because of you.

[Transition to Podcast Listener Interviews]

Victoria: I first heard about the BibleProject when I just came to Christ.

Sean: I use BibleProject for podcasts, videos, and Classroom.

Alma: My favorite thing about the BibleProject is it clearly explains Bible stories to my grandchildren.

[Transition to this Episode's Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: And as we look ahead, our hope is the same as it's always been—that together, we'd keep discovering the Bible as one unified story that leads to Jesus.

[Transition to Podcast Listener Interviews]

Sean: We believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus.

Victoria: That leads to Jesus.

Ramon: That leads to Jesus.

Alma: That leads to Jesus.

[Transition to this Episode's Host, Lindsey Ponder]

Lindsey: Here's to the next 10 years and the story still unfolding. Thank you for being a part of this with us.

[Musical Break: TENTS' "Defender (Remix)" (42:34—42:58)]

TENTS: You were just a boy, trying to pretend, pleasing all your mentors, though never quite convinced. Now you are much older, free to skip the test. Now it's time to rest.

Lindsey: Production of today's episode is by producer Jon Collins. Tyler Bailey is our supervising engineer who edited today's episode and provided the sound design and mix. Our Managing Producer is Cooper Peltz. J.B. Witty does our show notes. And I served as the creative producer and host. The BibleProject theme song is by TENTS. Special thanks to all those interviewed: Jon Collins, Tim Mackie, Robert Perez, Dan Gummel, Tyler Bailey, Anna Wych, Angela Keuter, and our audience members Matthew, David, Emily, Ausha, and Angie. BibleProject is a crowdfunded project, and we exist to help people experience the Bible as a unified story that leads to Jesus. You can find all 500-plus BibleProject podcast episodes on all streaming platforms, as well as on our website, alongside tons of other resources that are all free for you to use because they've been paid for by generous people just like you. Thanks for joining us today. See you next time.