

Episode 128: The Bard and The Bible

- Speaker 1: Welcome to The Bill Walton Show, featuring conversations with leaders, entrepreneurs, artists, and thinkers. Fresh perspectives on money, culture, politics, and human flourishing. Interesting people, interesting things.
- Bill Walton: Welcome to The Bill Walton Show, I'm Bill Walton. For the past year or so I've been taking some time in the morning to read a fascinating book titled The Bard and the Bible. It's organized with daily entries where each one includes a quote from Shakespeare and a related verse or passage from the King James Version of the Bible. Then there's a devotional reading based on the quotes which concludes with a short question about how you can use the messages from the Bible and Shakespeare in your daily life. And then there's an interesting factor too about Shakespeare. It's a remarkable book and I highly recommend it.
- To join me today to talk about it is it's author, Bob Hostetler. Bob's written 36 books including two bestselling devotionals and has won two Gold Medallion awards, an Aimee Foundation award, and is the Founding Pastor of Cobblestone Community Church in Oxford, Ohio. Bob, delighted to have you here.
- Bob Hostetler: Bill, it's a pleasure. It's a joy to be talking to you and to a fellow Shakespeare nut. It's a joy.
- Bill Walton: Well, I feel like I know you very well because you've been teaching me every morning now for the last year and a half or so. What led you to write this book?
- Bob Hostetler: Well, the Bible, as someone who's been raised in the church and especially raised on the King James Version of the Bible as I was, I know I don't look old enough to have been raised on the King James Version but...
- Bill Walton: Well, at least it wasn't the Geneva version.
- Bob Hostetler: That's true, that's absolutely true. But I've always had a familiarity and a comfort and a passion for the Bible. But when I began to study Shakespeare, not so much in high school but in college, I remember one day sitting in a classroom where I was attending as a, I don't know, late '20s, 28, 29-year-old and of course most of the others in the class were 19 or 20. And we were just doing Romeo and Juliet, as I recall and everyone else in the class, these were smart kids. Everyone else in the class was really struggling with Shakespeare's language, and Romeo and Juliet is probably the most accessible or one of the most accessible of Shakespeare's plays.
- And I looked around the room and just thought, "What's wrong? Why are they struggling so much?" And then as time went on it dawned on me, "Oh yeah, see, I was raised on the King James English because of my upbringing in the church

and my exposure to the King James Version of the Bible. And so I had that language, those cadences, that way of speaking and reading and hearing already in me. And so it was no stretch for me then to read and understand Shakespeare. There's still some parts that were puzzling to me.

Bill Walton: What was the spark that said, "I'm going to find a passage in Shakespeare and a passage in the Bible." How did you put all that together because it's a prodigious thing.

Bob Hostetler: Yeah, it is. Well, it actually started... That part of it sometime after that class and that realization. I just in my daily Bible reading and exposure to Shakespeare I saw these correspondences such as when Shakespeare has Hamlet say, "What a piece of work is a man. How noble in faculty," et cetera, et cetera. That soliloquy just paired up neatly for me with Psalm 8, "What is man that thou art mindful of him? Thou has made him a little lower than the angels and crowned him with glory." And so on.

And so I saw these connections and sometimes contrast between the Bible and Shakespeare especially the King James Version. So I just for my own enjoyment I put together a flip calendar, it's a homemade flip calendar. This was 25 or so years ago, I suppose, and I just paired a quote from Shakespeare with a verse from the Bible and thought, "Look, I found 365 of those, isn't that cool? And then I tried to sell that idea several times as a calendar or a gift book and it never happened.

And then five or so years ago as I flipped that calendar, today is by the way is from Othello, Act 1, "Let me go with him." And of course what I paired with that is Ruth saying to her mother-in-law, Naomi, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee for whither thou goest I will go and where thou lodgest I will lodge. Thy people will be my people and thy God my God."

So I tried to sell this as a flip calendar or a gift book for many years but then one day it just dawned on me, why have I never done this as a devotional? So I pitched the idea to my agent, Steve Laube, and that was the first time that I had multiple publishers bidding on a project which became The Bard and the Bible: A Shakespeare Devotional.

Bill Walton: Well, it's a terrific book and you pick purple which is the Royal color for the Crown of England, I believe, which was a great choice. And also the Pope I think is familiar with purple, so the graphics here are fantastic. You can find this is on Amazon?

Bob Hostetler: It is.

Bill Walton: You have a Kindle version?

Bob Hostetler: Yeah. The Kindle version, the ebook version is available on Amazon and christianbook.com and so on.

Bill Walton: Well, I bet you can back into a calendar. Once people get using the Kindle they're going to say, "Gee, why don't I?" Anyway, you're off to a great start. There are just so many connections. You do the comparison quotes. You take one from Henry VI, "Smooth runs the water where brook as deep." And then you jump to Proverbs where it says, "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out."

Did Shakespeare... Let's go back into Shakespeare's world. He was born in 1564 King James was born in 1566, I believe. And Shakespeare grew up with the Geneva Bible which was the predecessor to King James. So he was contemporaneous with the creation of the King James and I want to talk about whether he was involved in writing that. But the world of Shakespeare if you didn't go to church you were arrested and the Bible was on the present in day-to-day life. It was read out loud every day in church. They had a Bible they read from the pulpit called the Chained Bible. And I guess they had a chain because they didn't want people borrowing it. So, talk about Shakespeare's world.

Bob Hostetler: Yeah. It is a fascinating study that in the Elizabethan world in which Shakespeare grew up and started writing, the Bible was just a part of daily life. It was the province of the clergy, it was chained to the pulpit and the clergy considered themselves the experts. But because of several developments in that era the Bible became more and more because of Wycliffe and because of the Geneva Bible, the Bishops' Bible, those were popular translations of the scriptures that entered the lexicon of English-speaking people.

And for Shakespeare as a school boy growing up and as a man who started to write plays and so on it was just ingrained within him. It oozed out his pores because it was not only read in church but it was a part of their intellectual property. It was just the way they thought, the way they spoke. And so for Shakespeare in his world those cadences, those verses, those from the Geneva Bible, the Bishops' Bible, those were just part of what it meant to be a literate person in 16th century England.

Bill Walton: Well, the Geneva Bible was the first mass-published Bible and it was annotated so it was very popular. But most people weren't... I mean, they read aloud at home from the Bible but it was an oral tradition not a tradition of reading in it, it was a tradition of listening to it. And I think that tradition has been largely lost today although it seems to be coming back with podcasts. And Shakespeare, go to The Globe Theater, 3000 people, half of them were in the cheap seats, which are... by the didn't he coin that phrase?

Bob Hostetler: That's right, yeah.

Bill Walton: That's where all the groundlings stood around the stage and just listened to it. Most people couldn't see what was going on, so it was the experience of hearing Shakespeare when they went to The Globe that was... And they brought the experience of hearing the Bible to the globe.

Bob Hostetler: Right. In fact in Shakespeare's day in common parlance people didn't speak of going to see a play, they said, "I'm going to hear a play."

Bill Walton: Yes.

Bob Hostetler: Because the language was paramount and there were virtually no props, no scenery on the stage so it was a spoken word, art form.

Bill Walton: Well, I'm going to veer into something I wanted to talk about later but let's do it now. The Globe Theater was organized almost like a tall donut. Then they had a circular stage or most of the people around, and there were no props to speak of. And up above they had a decorative roof above the stage and then they had a trap door on the stage itself that actors could drop down into or come up from when maybe the Ghost of Hamlet came up through the floor. I'm not sure which play they used it in that, but they called the piece above heaven and the trap door was hell.

Bob Hostetler: Right. It was all just part of their language. And as far as staging went the sun provided the lighting during the day and they used candles at night, which is one of the reasons The Globe burned down when it did in the early 1600s. But yeah, and that the O that formed The Globe actually entered into one of Shakespeare's plays.

Bill Walton: Well, that was at the Henry V where the O for a cask of...

Bob Hostetler: No.

Bill Walton: Is that the chorus?

Bob Hostetler: He speaks about, and I can't recall which play it but he talks about... It slips my mind, but there is a phrasing where he refers to the O. Is it the golden O? The Globe.

Bill Walton: Yeah. Well, I think Hamlet also had that in there. As you can see you've seduced me into reading a lot of Shakespeare a lot more than...

Bob Hostetler: There's so much there.

Bill Walton: But how do you translate... Oh, I'm noticing your looks. You're watching The Bill Walton Show and I'm here with Bob Hostetler, who has written a tremendous book, The Bard and the Bible, and we're talking about The Globe Theater and Shakespeare's world and the experience of hearing the play not not seeing the

play as we would think about it today. I think I cut you off in the middle of something very interesting. He quotes from the Bible over a thousand times or alludes to it.

Bob Hostetler: Right. More than any other Elizabethan and far more than any other Elizabethan writer, poet, or playwright.

Bill Walton: What other, if any other playwrights come down to us from that day 1600, over 400 years ago?

Bob Hostetler: Well, we have some of Marlowe's plays, and Ben Johnson's plays, and Sonya.

Bill Walton: Well, let me clear up something that people would throw up in the last 100 years was, did Shakespeare write these plays?

Bob Hostetler: Oh yeah. Well, the authorship question was a hot scholarly debate 20 or 30 years ago, but it's been largely and partly because of some new manuscript discoveries, some things that have been learned over the last 20 or 30 years. It's less of a hot debate now than it was back in the day. These days the bulk of scholarly opinion at least as I understand it, and I'm no scholar I'm just a fan, but the bulk of scholarly opinion is that that's a question now that's been solved. Shakespeare did write the plays. Despite the various suggestions that Bacon or the Earl wrote some or all of his plays, those have been largely abandoned. These days most scholars agree Shakespeare was the author, though he did especially late in his life co-author some of his plays with John Fletcher and others.

Bill Walton: Well, he was highly successful. He was not a starving artist writing in obscurity, he financially successfully owned a piece of the Theater Company and I think he was the biggest state landowner at the time. And I worked in the theater and in my '20s, I still sort of miss it but I guess I'm happier I went on to finance, starving actors is not that great. But he worked in the theater as a working writer. And if you worked in the theater, if you get a playwright, everybody knows who's writing the play and you've got to fix the scene, you got to get somebody to rewrite this or that. And the theater community in Shakespeare's time was pretty small, there was a half a dozen theater companies or more, so everybody knew everybody and everybody knew who he was. So we had this genius to mix them. And you remember the play Amadeus?

Bob Hostetler: Uh-huh (affirmative). I sure do.

Bill Walton: And I'm interested in your idea about this because I do want to get into the theological piece of our conversation. There's a great scene in Amadeus where Mozart's writing his music, actually it's after he's written the music. Salieri comes in and looks at Mozart's music that he's written and he says, "There's no ratio. There's no typo, there's no changes here. This is just written out. And Salieri then said he thought that this may have been written through the hand

of God. And the story about Shakespeare at this time when he's, "Hey, we need a new Act 2, that isn't working." He would sit down and he would just jot out this without much correction and just hand them the the language. It's extraordinary.

Bob Hostetler: Yeah, it is. And part of that I think we can ascribe to to the conditions in which people wrote in those days, paper especially. But paper and ink were expensive commodities and so you didn't waste any of them. And so when not only him but Marlowe and others were writing by the time the ink hit the page the thought was there, it was developed/. Though they were, for example there have been recent manuscript discoveries in which it's believed that Shakespeare contributed to a an earlier play that he actually penned a page in, I think it was Richard II, if I remember correctly. That is a fairly new discovery among Shakespearian scholars and it shows his hand and it shows the confidence and the boldness of his hand and his thought.

Bill Walton: You founded the Cobblestone Community Church. Are you still actively preaching?

Bob Hostetler: Well, I do preach every once in a while but as a guest preacher. My wife and I moved out of Ohio a few years ago. I led that church for 11 years and it's still a thriving church in Oxford, Ohio, but I have not active as a pastor since the beginning of 2011.

Bill Walton: Do you bring Shakespeare into your sermons?

Bob Hostetler: Oh, whenever I can. I try not to be insufferable about it. But, I mean, it applies to so much as the Devotional shows, as the book. Anything that you can find 365 correspondences to things in the Bible to verses or passages in the Bible, it's just woven throughout who I am and what I say.

Bill Walton: When you created the idea for the Devotional was the spark to use the Bible as the source for each devotional or the Shakespeare for each source? How did those two... When you get into the language they're similar but obviously the Bible has got a different source and Shakespeare was written by Shakespeare. How do you think about that?

Bob Hostetler: Well, actually it wasn't so much that one was the beginning and the other came second, it's that it all came together. Because though as I said earlier there are not only correspondences between Shakespeare's phrasing in the King James Version and the points that they make, the things that they prescribe and urge upon people, but there's also contrasts, interestingly. And the Bible even played a part in Shakespeare's sense of humor because several times he has in separate plays, his most used passage of the Bible is from I believe 1 Corinthians. It's where, "Eye have not seen nor ear heard, nor entered into the heart of man what God plans for His people," basically is the thought.

But he has in two separate plays, he not only repeats that phrase three times, I think in two plays, but has one of his clowns, I forget which one, mangle it. So he's saying it may have been false stuff but I could be wrong about, that ear have not seen nor eye heard, and then he goes on to mangle it further. Shakespeare even used verses from the Bible to elucidate a character or to have fun with the audience because the audience would have recognized right away they were also, even if they were illiterate, they were biblically literate, the audience would have recognized the mistake.

Bill Walton: When Shakespeare wrote 38 plays and you noticed I didn't count all of them but I think you used about six quotes from one of the early plays King John, I believe, or maybe three, but you've used 41 from Hamlet.

Bob Hostetler: Right. Well, Hamlet-

Bill Walton: If you're in the wisdom literature business what are Shakespeare's greatest hits in your mind?

Bob Hostetler: Yeah. Well, Hamlet is just... And even for modern American audiences who are not generally not as biblically literate, not as Shakespeare literate as past generations have been, even for modern audience virtually every other line in Hamlet is a quote that we know not just to be or not to be, but so many that it just reads it... You can read Hamlet and even if it's your first time reading you recognize two thirds or three quarters of the play because it's so familiar.

Bill Walton: Well, it is. So my favorites would be Hamlet, I love Macbeth. I love Lear, I love the plays about the kings. Maybe it's that time I spent being a CEO. Because one of the things that when Shakespeare was writing about the kings is he doesn't think they had a very good time.

Bob Hostetler: That's right.

Bill Walton: Or as uneasy as the head that wears the crown was a real theme for Shakespeare.

Bob Hostetler: Right. And you must understand that especially later in his life he was a servant of the court. He was King James' playwright after 1603, and favored as well by Queen Elizabeth. But so he had to play things down the middle, at least. He had to please the groundlings that came to his place but he also had to be careful to please the ruler of that time.

And interestingly one thing that's easy to miss is that in his plays, and this reflects the temperature of the time, when a royal person, a king, or queen speaks, their lines are in verse. When the common people such as false staff speak, ordinarily their lines are in prose, a blank verse, actually. So there was also an exalted language given to the royals that wasn't given to the commoners.

Bill Walton: Well, they got to speak in \$5 word coming, "I am big pentameter."

Bob Hostetler: Right. Exactly.

Bill Walton: Which is a big word for just it's 10 beats (singing). And it's also, some people think it's the sound that your heart makes. And the other thing I've heard and interested in whether you've heard this too is that when he did it, and I content it was easier for his actors to memorize.

Bob Hostetler: Right? It's an aid to the memory, absolutely. As we're like for example in typical theatrical plays, the end of a scene or the end of an act was a couplet so that the actors waiting in the wings would know even if they hadn't memorized the lines of the people out there on the stage they would know, okay, we're about to go on.

Bill Walton: Well, it's just stunning how many thousands of lines are in a Shakespeare play and having been an actor briefly, the Royal Shakespeare Company by comparison today when they put in a play they take eight to 12 weeks to mount the play which means they've got that time to memorize their lines. Shakespeare, they were mounting plays once a week, sometimes twice a week, and you had to remember thousands and thousands of lines.

Bob Hostetler: Right. And it's even more amazing. It was a verbal and oral culture and so the actors had a propensity and ability to memorize things probably more than most moderns do. But still it's amazing to see how quickly these plays were produced. So the author writing a play in a week, in a few days is just mind-boggling to us, but then the actors having to put it on very quickly after they got the first copy, the foul pages as the drafts were called, and then the fair pages came later.

Bill Walton: Well, they didn't get... You're watching The Bill Walton Show. I'm talking with Bob Hostetler, and we're talking about the difficulty that Shakespeare and actors had working for Will and that he handed them thousands of lines. And the other thing he didn't do was he didn't give them the whole play. He said, "Here are your lines." as I understand it if you've got just one page of your lines that meant you did not have a very big part.

Bob Hostetler: Right. Exactly. And it also there are very few cues in Shakespeare. So the actors of that day didn't have the kind of cues that screenplays and so on have today. In fact, that's why one of the most famous lines in Shakespeare is that rare cue, exit chased by a bear.

Bill Walton: Oh, that's a great one. He also has one, enter two murderers. Okay. But you're right there's almost none of the trappings that go with a modern play that explained kind of what everybody is supposed to do. Do you have any more plans to write any more on Shakespeare? Where can we go from this endeavor?

Bob Hostetler: Well, I don't have any immediate plans to write more on Shakespeare but it's always turning in me. So as a working writer and literary agent and speaker I basically follow the money. If I can find somebody that's willing to pay me I'll write it. But no plans at the moment.

Bill Walton: One of the terrible things I think about what's going on in education is there's so many teachers or schools taking Shakespeare out of the curriculum because there they do it basically based on identity politics, white, European, patriarchal, all the things that are supposed to be terrible. Now they're taking them out of the curriculum. And the irony in that is that Shakespeare didn't care much about politics, whether he was worried about King James shutting down his company or not, he cared about people. He cared about character and he didn't write politically at all.

He didn't much care about ideas, he cared about humans and how they reacted and all the characters even a villain like Macbeth, Macbeth was an incredibly attractive human being. And so he cared for that in his people and I think we suck that out of our teaching and learning at great peril.

Bob Hostetler: Right. And I agree with you. He was all about the person. He was such a wise and informed student of human nature and he had to be as a playwright as any playwright did, had to know what would please not only the Crown but also the groundlings as I said before. But Shakespeare was also, he was not only a man of his time but he was a man ahead of his time and this is another reason why I think it's such a mistake to remove him from curricula because he had to very carefully, but he changed minds as he wrote.

So you take a play like The Merchant of Venice which was similar to other plays of his time by leading playwrights The Jew of Malta, and one that's just called The Jew, I believe. But those really demonized the Jewish character in the play. Shakespeare gave to Shylock a humanity and identification that other playwrights didn't and he presented the conflict, the central conflict of the play so compellingly that he turned what had been traditionally an unsympathetic easily booed character into someone you sympathized for, and empathized with. And he had to do it very carefully because he was a man of his time but he did change minds and change norms as he wrote.

Bill Walton: Well, and just to further emphasize that, he didn't come up with his own stories. The playwrights of that era-

Bob Hostetler: Borrowed-

Bill Walton: But the original story wasn't as you're saying wasn't how you handled the material, how he did the language and how you created interesting characters.

Bob Hostetler: Exactly.

Bill Walton: He had the choices wit Shylock. Shylock had always been written as the unrepentant demon throughout all the other stories and he turned that around 180 degrees.

Bob Hostetler: Exactly, exactly. And I think it was intentional, not only with that but also with the strong women such as Beatrice that he characterized in his plays. Those kinds of influences that Shakespeare had changed there. He wrote the first stage musical. I don't know if people are generally aware but as masks became more popular during the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean periods, he incorporated masked elements and song into his plays in a way that others had never done.

Bill Walton: Well, there were a lot of musical instruments in Shakespeare which unfortunately because there's no recording or they didn't write the music down, we don't really know, but there was a lot of music in it. But coming back to the cultural identity piece of this, he wrote terrific parts for women.

Bob Hostetler: He did.

Bill Walton: Look at Romeo and Juliet. I mean, once you get through Romeo and Juliet you say, "Why is Juliet marrying this foolish little boy?"

Bob Hostetler: Exactly. Exactly right. Yeah.

Bill Walton: Juliet has got all the wisdom. She is the most important and interesting character in the play by far.

Bob Hostetler: By far, yeah.

Bill Walton: And so if you're a young woman you would definitely want to read Romeo and Juliet because of who she is and how he portrayed her.

Bob Hostetler: And Lady Macbeth. And he just goes on and on, the strong women and the women who are articulate speak beautiful poetry that he put in their mouth. That's one of the accomplishments of Shakespeare.

Bill Walton: One of my favorite characters is Macbeth because he is the villain but there is the Lady Macbeth who arguably was the brains of the bunch.

Bob Hostetler: That's right.

Bill Walton: And my favorite scene where she's telling him you got to go kill Duncan, and he walks into the room and there's nobody there and he says, "If it were done when it is done," to profess it were done quickly.

Bob Hostetler: Just stop talking and do it.

Bill Walton: He doesn't want to have anything to do with that. Well, as a man... Coming back to the Devotional, was Shakespeare particularly a believer, was he Christian, was he Catholic? There are all sorts of stuff, things written about him. He was an atheist. Secular romantics in the 19th century like the fact that they thought Shakespeare was secular and not religious, whereas you look at it really and he was quite religious. Where was he as a man?

Bob Hostetler: My opinion, and it's just an opinion is that he was a generally irreligious man caught between two sides of the Catholic/Protestant issue in Elizabeth and times. And in fact it's thought by many that his father was a secret Catholic and that Shakespeare had to, because of the Queen and her policies, had to be very careful. In fact he was also fined. One of the recent discoveries is that he was among those fined for not attending church in London.

Bill Walton: His father John was, yeah.

Bob Hostetler: So is Shakespeare, actually.

Bill Walton: Oh, I didn't know that.

Bob Hostetler: Yeah, very recently. So he had to walk that thin line. But it's clear to me that he had a Christian world view informed by the Bible. He breathed it in and he breathed it out. And one of the things that led to the writing of The Bard and the Bible for me is that it just strikes me as a unique event in human history that the works of Shakespeare and the King James Version of the Bible, these two towering accomplishments in the English language were created not only the same era in the same country, in the same city, by men who knew each other well, basically working just across the river from each other. It just speaks of how unique that moment in history was and what a debt we owe to those who created both.

Bill Walton: Well, there's some dates. Shakespeare was born in 1564, King James, 1566. He commanded the writing of the King James Bible in 1604 which was when Shakespeare was still alive, he didn't die till 1616, and it took almost eight years, nine years to write it. And they had a whole group of men across the 10 writing scholars.

Bob Hostetler: Correct.

Bill Walton: Now, was he involved in that at all? I mean, is there any evidence that his gift for language infused their work?

Bob Hostetler: Well, there is a hint and that's in Psalm 48 where people talk about it often where some people think that he was involved at least in that translation because he kind of used a cryptic way of embedding his name in the translation of Psalm 48. My opinion is that he wasn't directly involved. As I said, he knew these men, they were all servants of the Crown and so they had a special status,

Shakespeare and Lancelot Andrews and the others who were involved in the translation of the King James Version. But my suspicion is that as a playwright, as someone who worked in the theater, Shakespeare would not have been involved in the translation.

Bill Walton: That's unlikely.

Bob Hostetler: Yeah. Since he knew these men and they rubbed shoulders with each other in court it's quite possible he had some influence.

Bill Walton: Well, and he was a man of the theater and the theater was not respectable.

Bob Hostetler: Absolutely not, no.

Bill Walton: So it's unlikely then. He married at 18. His wife at the time was 26 and she was pregnant. And the theater would get shut down all the time by the religious powers. And I think it's unlikely, and also he had a vocabulary. Didn't have something like 27,000 words in his plays and the Bible has only 7,000?

Bob Hostetler: Yeah. I don't know the numbers but there's something like that. But the-

Bill Walton: I may exaggerate his vocabulary but not by much, it was like three times the number of the words in the Bible.

Bob Hostetler: Well, and part of the reason for that would have been the subject matter that he had a much broader choice among history plays, comedies, and tragedies and Roman plays and so on that the Bible translators didn't have that broad subject matter.

Bill Walton: Well, and they were also careful scholars.

Bob Hostetler: Exactly.

Bill Walton: He just made up.

Bob Hostetler: He made up a bunch of words, a bunch of phrases.

Bill Walton: He made up about a thousand words at it. If you see me just looking at the list here, see change, sorry sight, all the corners of the world, all of a sudden, aye, there's the rub. I mean, I don't want to go through a thousand but it's-

Bob Hostetler: And all the insults that are in Shakespeare they're not in the Bible. You won't find codswallop in the King James Version.

Bill Walton: Well, I want to conclude. We're just about our time here, but I want to get your reaction to Harold Bloom on Shakespeare. He said this is about who he was. And he said, "By reading Shakespeare I can gather that he did not like lawyers,

preferred drinking to eating, and evidently lusted after both genders. But I certainly do not have a clue as to whether he favored Protestantism or Catholicism or neither, and I did not know whether he believed or disbelieved in God or in resurrection. His politics like his religion evades me but I think he was too wary to have any. He was sensibly afraid of mobs and of uprising, yet he was afraid of authority also.

Bob Hostetler: Right. I think that's pretty accurate, I think because he had to tow the line to please the Crown but also reflected the temperature of the age. I think that is why he's so evasive, so hard to pin down in terms of his politics, his religion, that sort of thing. And I think that one of the things that made him great is because even plays like Richard III which is obviously about the regicide, the killing of a king as several plays were. That's a very touchy subject when it's played in front of someone wearing a crown.

And yet he did it so artfully, not only that, but tackling the religious divide of Elizabethan times and so on that he was a true artist. And it may be an example that informs our age as well in that he understood that taking one extreme or the other was a way to get his head chopped off. And I wish that more of us could learn how to find that just middle that he did.

Bill Walton: Oh, I so agree, I just so agree. I mean, politics, identity, all the different categories of people intersectionality, it's become toxic. And the thing that I love about Shakespeare is there's this common humanity that's in all his characters and he didn't make the silly distinctions that we try to make today. One last question, how did writing this book change you?

Bob Hostetler: Oh. Well, it made me fall more in love with Shakespeare than I ever had because actually... Because not only the plays but when I do 41 readings from Hamlet, then before launching into quotes from the next play we do some things from the sonnets as well, from some of his epic poems and that sort of thing, so those are sprinkled in amongst them all.

But it also just as it still does today, as I open it and read through it, it drew me closer to God because it's my belief, and as a former pastor it's understandable. But it's my belief that as you encounter the truths that are in scripture from the very hand of God presented to humankind and elucidated in Shakespeare, that it changes you sometimes in surprising ways but it will always as is God's intention for all of us draw us closer to Him.

Bill Walton: Bob Hostetler, thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you for the book and thanks for your wisdom today and I hope to have you back so we can talk some more. We've covered as you know just a smidgen of what we can talk about with Shakespeare and the Bible, so to be continued, I hope. And thanks for joining.

Bob Hostetler: Thank you, Bill.

Bill Walton:

Okay. And thank you for listening and viewing and we'll be talking again next time. Thanks. I hope you enjoyed the conversation. Want more? Click the subscribe button or head over to thebillwaltonshow.com to choose from over 100 episodes. You can also learn more about our guests on our interesting people page. And send us your comments, we read everyone and your thoughts help us guide the show. If it's easier for you to listen check out our podcast page and subscribe there. In return, we'll keep you informed about what's true, what's right, and what's next. Thanks for joining.