



**EPISODE 1 "THE PRIMARY
SENSATIONS OF LIFE" WITH PROF
CHRISTO LOMBAARD**

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Chris Jordan: [00:00:00] Welcome to the second season of Who's Out There, a podcast series on the individualistic quest in spiritual warfare. Theological paradigms are amongst the most progressive and most justifiably volatile sects of progressive growth within our global civilization. In season two, aptly named A New Testament, I sit down with academics, leaders, influencers, and well, a new era of religious journalists that share intrinsic complexities of how they are currently interpreting a shifting spiritual worldview.

In this episode, I sit down with a theologian in practical theology and historical mission studies, Professor Christo Lombard, as we chat about building religious constructs on what might be interpreted as sometimes somewhat So far, we've been in your house for like three minutes, four or five minutes.

There's, there's rituals from the, from the get go, from the entry.

Christo Lombard: Yes, I didn't think you'd know. You're [00:01:00] right.

Chris Jordan: And it's great. I mean, I love that. I love that. The shield is out. Yes. For,

Christo Lombard: uh, reasons of hygiene. Oh, is it that? It wasn't like So, did you step in the dogs business on the way here? Not you personally, I mean, people in general.

How are you? So, then, uh I said we're not the types of shit we are. You said you're quite

Chris Jordan: Okay, well, that's, I mean, that's great. I mean, that's a So, why, uh So obviously this has, I mean, we can kind of think of an esoteric reason why your house and your space is like this, uh, particularly why the passion specifically in the purpose of sound.

For example, like you said, yeah, it's a hung drum, right?

Christo Lombard: The first time I heard it, um, was in a market in Sweden. Um, and I didn't see anything, but I could hear the strange sound. And as the people who make this drum say, the instrument calls you, it speaks to you.

Chris Jordan: Yeah.

Christo Lombaard: So, uh, I went out [00:02:00] walking through the crowds and found the A lady sitting there playing this, uh, instrument and she had a little brochure which she indicated I could take, which I did.

And I, uh, and it explained a little bit about the drum and where it comes from namely Switzerland. And I knew that I would be in Switzerland a few months later.

Yeah.

Christo Lombaard: So, uh, then I, you have to order the drum beforehand. You cannot simply, uh, pitch up and buy it. You also have to explain why you want the drum.

So there's a kind of an evaluation of maybe worthiness is too strong a word, but if you want it simply to make money, then they won't sell it to you. If you want to create atmosphere and create meaning in lives, then they become interested in you and then they invite you to visit the factory. And, uh, after a conversation with the two engineers who designed it, then they [00:03:00] point you to a little hut next to the river.

It sounds very romantic. Yeah. And you walk down the pathway and there's a hut. Um, very modern on the inside, rustic on the outside. and the sound of the river passing by, so you already hear mother nature and all those things and then on small little stools there's 12 or 15 of these drums and you play with each of them and then in their language the one that speaks to you that's the one that you then

Chris Jordan: In, in what, so while we're there, how did that, well this one here, I suppose, or what is the process of it speaking to you?

Christo Lombaard: It's strange to say, because I mean, I played on maybe a dozen of them, and somehow I like this sound, this one's sound the most. I think because it was deeper than the others.

Okay.

Christo Lombaard: Um, but it is in, in the moment of a sense of, uh, I don't know, this is, The right thing to [00:04:00] do. Right. And uh, and then I walked up and I took the drum along.

I said, this is the one, and I wanted to pay with my credit card. And they said, no cash only. Wow. Well, I mean, you know, this kind of like stereotypical thinking of that and I was on quite a budget. I didn't expect immediately to be able to buy one. to be allowed to buy one. But, uh, so, and I was on a strict budget.

So I worked out that if I bought this, I had enough money for one night's accommodation and the bus fare to the airport the next morning returning to South Africa.

Chris Jordan: Yeah.

Christo Lombaard: So I had to walk all the way back to town to take a taxi.

Chris Jordan: Yeah.

Christo Lombaard: I would be over the credit card limit and, uh, walk back with the cash.

And of course, Switzerland, safer than here, so maybe easier to do the, uh, and that's how I came to have the, uh, the hub.

Chris Jordan: Okay. So here's my [00:05:00] thing. Um, because. I did kind of like precursor this just in case I was on the right track or wrong track. So this is about the frequency of sounds. I've really genuinely and by accident come across a couple of videos that explain, I suppose the most common one to bring up is the 1 10- 1 11 frequency.

I don't know whether it's kilohertz, whatever it is. It was actually something that my cousin said. Have a listen to it. Uh, there's, there's a little bit of document, I love documentaries. So had listened to that. And, you know, uh, I say ancient cultures would use this particular frequency within acoustics of a certain, uh, uh, structure that they would build, whatever it is.

And it would give them, or it would place them in a particular Not a state of mind. That's, that sounds a bit weird again because I don't really fully understand the semantics. But it was interesting to note that, that, that [00:06:00] 1 frequency again was something that they would, they would accomplish or they would, you know, that would be the outcome of this or their process.

Is it, is it about that? Is it about that same type of, you know, output? What is it about?

Christo Lombaard: Frequencies, acoustics, and all such things I know nothing about.

Chris Jordan: Okay.

Christo Lombaard: For me, the humdrum I use is the same as my car or my laptop. What goes on the inside, I have no idea. Okay. What goes on the inside, I have no idea. But it simply works.

The state of mind expression that you used is not far off the mark, because if I play with it, and I think maybe for five minutes, I will just for relaxation, fool around on the drum a little bit. And then after a while, I realized I'd been at it for half an hour. You don't even realize, you know, the old saying, how time flies with you.

Chris Jordan: True, true. What is the purpose today for you to I know showcase a little bit of it? So, perhaps is there something else?

Christo Lombaard: Let me play the [00:07:00] drum, and then you hear the sounds, and after playing for a few moments, I will do so more softly. And then say a few words about sound and the meaning of sound.

Sure.

Christo Lombaard: Because, uh, we don't realize it, that sound is one of the primary sensations that we have.

Chris Jordan: Yeah.

Christo Lombaard: And if we speak about sound, or touch, or taste, or feeling, so all the physical senses, but also feeling, also spirituality, also the sense of experience and meaning, I call these the primary sensations of life.

Chris Jordan: And also very complex, layered, in terms of The understanding of why people enjoy music

Christo Lombaard: is very complex. Precisely. And in that respect. Music and spirituality are much the same, but everybody has it in their lives. The moment you try to put into words what it is, you try to describe a [00:08:00] tune.

Chris Jordan: Yeah.

Christo Lombaard: People who study music have, have the vocabulary to do so.

Sure. Even then, if you capture the vocabulary,

Chris Jordan: Yeah.

Christo Lombaard: The quality of the sound or, or the aesthetics of the tune, even then, doesn't capture it. It's just a vague description. Here's an example. If you look at the ballet and you can say it was a beautiful pirouette. All of us in our minds have this picture of a ballerina turning in quite a symmetric way, with lots of grace.

And even in describing this, even in using the word pirouette, you have to conjure up the image in your own mind.

And it's not the same as mine. It's not the same as the dance that I saw.

Chris Jordan: Yeah.

Christo Lombaard: So all these primary sensations of life are like that. It doesn't mean it's unrelated. to reality. In fact, it's directly related to reality.

Indeed, yeah. You cannot touch something, which is not real. Yet to describe that touch, the same with spirituality, the same with music, all these primary sensations, to describe these things, [00:09:00] immediately you put it in a form which is derivative. The primary experience. is beyond what language can capture.

That is why I have problems with, for instance, post modernism. Because post-modernism reduces everything to a language game. Everything is a metaphor with icons of meaning. And it's a nice way to describe these things. It doesn't capture these things. So the moment you sell out the experience to the

language about the experience, then the primary aspect, namely the experience of sound, spirituality, taste, etc.,

movement, that primary experience, you lose. That doesn't mean we shouldn't describe these things, because how else do we communicate?

Chris Jordan: As an academic, is that counterintuitive for you to be able to think in that one way and have to practice in another? I don't know.

Christo Lombaard: Quite a bit of my academic writing is on the difficulty of putting into words what, uh, [00:10:00] we study, and that's the same in any field, um, in, uh, theology, in religious studies, in spirituality, of course, in a different way, but let's use it as an example.

Concrete example, if you open, if you use the opening words of the Bible, the first three words, um, of the Old Testament, Bereshit, Berah Elohim, usually translated as in the beginning, God created. Yeah. The moment you are able to read Hebrew, you realize that translation, it works, it doesn't capture all the possibilities.

Yeah. Uh, namely that the first word, Bereshit, um, its core three letters refer to Rosh, so beginning or head. Even you speak of your Rosh, the head on top of your body.

Chris Jordan: Right.

Christo Lombaard: Um, there's some kind of relationship. to that. And many academics have played with that, but it

doesn't

Christo Lombaard: help. Uh, for instance, the one translation was, in God's head, everything [00:11:00] was created, which of course doesn't work.

It makes too much of the head concept, which is simply the basic concept of beginning. Uh, and then bara, create, what does that mean? Ex nihilo, from nothing, is what People in our cultural stream often think, in the ancient East, certainly not. It was not created from nothing. It was already something that God created.

And then the third word, Elohim, um, it's a plural, referring to God, but it's only one of the names of God, along with the other names of God in the Old Testament. Uh, so on each of these aspects, you can analyze, analyze, analyze. Yeah, for sure. In language. Yes. It doesn't replace the primary experience of reading those words, of gaining some kind of meaning from it.

So, uh, as an example of even when you work with something concrete in theology, such as exegesis, that means explanation of the Bible, even if you work with something so concrete, the words You cannot [00:12:00] do without them, but we shouldn't, shouldn't sell out the primary experience to the words, there's something more basic to it.

And that realization is something that is dawning across the world. Um, in, in all cultures touched by the ideas of, you know, Secularism, modernism, rationality, post modernism, relationality, none of these things are bad. I'm not saying that at all. In fact, we cannot do without the benefits of these things.

It would be immoral to do without the benefits of these insights. But we shouldn't sell out the primary experience to the

language

Christo Lombaard: about it, the concepts about it, because the primary experience is simply it. Here's another example. You kiss somebody, a romanticist.

Chris Jordan: Okay.

Christo Lombaard: And you can describe it in physiological terms.

It is the nerve endings that are more sensitive on the top of, the tips of the lip. And then the endorphins flowing through your body and the other [00:13:00] aspects of your body, of the two bodies touching. So you get a sense of closeness of warmth and of acceptance. And you can describe all of that yet in the kiss.

Chris Jordan: Yeah.

Christo Lombaard: None of those descriptions work.

Chris Jordan: The clinical versus the, uh,

Christo Lombaard: Precisely that. Yeah. The kiss, the experience of the kiss is so overwhelming. Yeah. That even if you have in the back of your mind these thoughts, they do not raise in your mind at that moment other things happen. Usually called the chemistry, but of course that is simply a metaphor.

Yeah. Trying to describe what is the magic of the kiss. So the kiss is a nice example of explaining the experience of music, spirituality, touch, uh, feeling, all of these primary sensations. Okay.

Chris Jordan: Shall we, you said, how long would you like to just play this for 15 seconds? Why 15 seconds? Just for time-wise or?

Christo Lombaard: Time-wise, just to save your podcast listeners [00:14:00] from my half an hour of losing myself

Chris Jordan: to the sound of the house. Okay, let's, let's, let's, let's not do half an hour, but let's, uh, give me enough of and give the listener enough of What, I don't wanna interrupt the process because this is the beauty of a podcast.

So I, uh, you know, go for a, a spin, spin is

Christo Lombaard: a good term. Okay. Okay, good. So it is round for, for those, yeah. For those podcast listeners who do not see us looks a little bit like a SCO scar, but I, yeah. Or a UFO.

Yeah.

Christo Lombaard: So, uh, to use the word spin works because it is, right?

Chris Jordan: So again, just to contextualize. Even though this is at the beginning of the introduction.

So we're sitting at the house of Christo Lombard in Muckleneuk. He is a professor at the University of Pretoria in practical theology and mission studies. Just to get the semantics out of the way. We want to start just so that you can kind of maybe not, I mean, it's not [00:15:00] your way through sound, but we did start with this nice, nice segue into a cool discussion around sound as As a what, as a, as a what, uh, for being?

Christo Lombaard: Um, as an introduction to being, as a part of being.

Chris Jordan: Yeah.

Christo Lombaard: Uh, which we always think we understand clearly, and the moment you say we don't understand it clearly, people think you are into airy-fairy territory. Yeah. Esoteric. It is not.

Chris Jordan: Okay.

Christo Lombaard: It is completely concrete.

Chris Jordan: Okay.

Christo Lombaard: Um, there's no way that we can say sound doesn't exist.

We know, I mean, you're listening to me. But now, describe the sound. So, it's completely concrete, yet in a way lies beyond the grasp of language, and then perhaps beyond the grasp of understanding. Interpretation? Interpretation is certainly always involved, but the interpretation doesn't capture the

Chris Jordan: sound.

Christo Lombaard: the sense of being. And as you said earlier, if you describe the [00:16:00] tonality of the hung drum, you can use all kinds of numbers describing all kinds of physical aspects of the sound. Sure. None of that is inaccurate, but it's completely real. Right. It doesn't replace the reality, which is fuller, namely the reality of hearing the sound of experiencing what the sound does to you.

Okay. It also doesn't mean that this experience makes those numbers' description or the description language invalid. It doesn't mean that. Yeah. It is just that the one shouldn't replace the other.

Chris Jordan: This is, this is what I imagined in a theological conversation as, as, I mean, as a quick sidebar, is it, is it, uh, is it chaotic to be like a, an expert professional in this field with yours .

co- workers and your, your co professionals because it is, it changes so incredibly vastly all the time. There are so many different paradigms,

perspectives like you say, research, et cetera, for you as an [00:17:00] individual first, like how does it fuel you, you know, to be this, this person?

Christo Lombaard: Two answers. Uh, theology is not unique to this.

This isn't any discipline. That if you, if you are a specialist in the discipline, you're never a specialist on everything. You're a specialist in two or maybe three aspects of the discipline. That it becomes difficult to communicate. Uh, difficult, at least it is different. different to communicate outside the circle of other specialists.

I mean, if I speak to deuteronomy scholars, I can easily use the expression pre-deuteronomistic deuteronomy, and

Chris Jordan: they

Christo Lombaard: understand exactly what it means. 200 years of history, researchers in their mind, it conveys nothing. If you stand on a pulpit and you use that, you lose your audience immediately.

Chris Jordan: But, but here's, but here's one more, and sorry to just like kind of interrupt just because I'm trying to thought because it is.

interpersonal as well. So if [00:18:00] you are studying biochemistry or you're studying something a little bit more clinical, whatever it is, because this does. kind of segue into your, your belief system. Is that agnostic? Is agnostic the word that some theologians move towards? Is that the right terminology?

Christo Lombaard: Agnostic usually means that people do not know whether God exists or not, and they do not want to make the decision. Yeah.

Chris Jordan: So

Christo Lombaard: that's what I'm saying to you. So it's something related to atheism, where people firmly believe God does not exist.

Chris Jordan: Yeah.

Christo Lombaard: And related to theism, where people firmly believe God does exist.

Chris Jordan: Yeah.

Christo Lombaard: And each of these three, atheism, agnosticism, theism, all of them have shades of possibility as well. There's not only one of them.

Chris Jordan: But that's what I'm saying is you as a person, and again, you don't have to, I mean, tell me about where your spiritual standing is, but. If you are a man of Christianity or whatever it is, some sect or whatever it is, how does that...

Christo Lombaard: I'm completely taken up in the [00:19:00] Christian message, um, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, in, uh, once again, formulating a language which doesn't describe the experience, but simply to try to convey something. And in the Calvinist stream of that, so I'm a Reformed theologian, and at times it is frightening to see just how Reformed theologian I am, how Calvinist theologian I am.

If I speak about the Bible, for instance, I realize, my goodness, I'm certainly not Catholic. I'm certainly not, not even Presbyterian, which is quite, quite close to the Reformed tradition, or Anglican, or Orthodox, these things just, uh, resonate with me because you heard the sermons a thousand times growing up, the kind of books that I read, the kind of theology that has interested me, that I studied, um, so I find myself in that.

deeply committed in that entire, uh, tradition. Um, [00:20:00] perhaps different to other people because like any specialist in any field, you see these things differently. I mean, speak to statisticians and ask them to say something about the way that numbers are used in journalism. And immediately you get the sense of almost estrangement that is difficult to, to, uh, the numbers are used in the journalism.

In order to say something, but what it is, what those numbers are made to say is not what the research from which the statistics were produced, but what they indicated. So that happens all the time. I studied journalism before theology, so the journalism example is not one that is made up.

Chris Jordan: Okay.

Christo Lombaard: So that is the one aspect that all specialists have this thing of a sense of broader society, but it's precisely in order to serve society.

So it's not a negative estrangement. And then the other thing is that. even if you can say that I have 10 doctorates in theology, I don't, but even if you could say I have 10 doctorates in [00:21:00] theology, that does not mean that your faith is qualitatively any better or any different than somebody who cannot read or write.

Sure. And praise or doesn't pray but lives in this relationship with God, um, may even find themselves in the exact same church tradition as I am, so Christian, Judeo-Christian , Calvinist, um, Reformed, all of that. There's no qualitative difference, that kind of hubris that you find that people have the expectation.

Oh, the church minister, he or she should be somehow a super Christian Yes. Of no. Yeah. Doesn't work. Absolutely. We know that from the text as well. Yeah. Um, and, and we know that from experience you find people that, uh, perhaps in but istic terms can be described as simple people.

Yeah.

Christo Lombaard: Yet their faith. is something that becomes a model for many people.

In fact, some [00:22:00] such people have been canonized in the, uh, Roman Catholic tradition.

Yeah.

Christo Lombaard: So, uh, humility accompanies. In the study of theology, there's no other way to get around it.

Chris Jordan: So just, yeah, just as a, yeah, because it's an interesting point that I'm sure can also be spoken about for ages to come, yeah. But okay, uh, okay, let's get to this.

Let's get to the hung drumming. Yeah.

Christo Lombaard: As you can hear, I'm warming up the enamel outside of the job. Okay. And then the sounds become fuller.[00:23:00]

The oldest religion in the world, Hinduism says that the first thing that existed was a sound, and that sound was, oh, you still hear that in meditation. Hindu people, Hindu priests, that they would use this sound as the basic sound, the basis from which everything, departs. However, that is not altogether different, in some respects different, but not altogether different from what we find in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

The Old Testament opens with this. Of the words[00:24:00]

in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And how did God create in that chapter of Genesis, by means of words, and sounds,

create some offer a millennium later? In a completely different culture, the Gospel of John picks up that idea, not only from the Old Testament, but also from, uh, the existing Greek culture there, and applies this to Jesus. So the Gospel of John, the most theological of the four New Testament Gospels, picks up these strands of thoughts and opens with a kind of song in our hearts.

In the beginning was the word, so you [00:25:00] hear once again sound.

Of course, it could be, but people say, ah, we are modern people. We do not believe in these ancient conceptions of how things came into being, whether in Hinduism or Judaism or Christianity. But then when we want to describe evolution going back, back, back to the very beginnings, we end up with the metaphor, which is

Chris Jordan: the big bang.

Excellent, thank you. Look at you. No wonder you get hired. I love it. Thank you so much for that. Follow us on Instagram at [chrisjordanmedia](#) or go to my landing page [chrisjordanmedia.net](#)