

# LOVE PERIOD.

WITH REV. DR.  
JACQUI LEWIS

**God is a Black Woman  
with Dr. Christena Cleveland**

- Jacqui: Hey, everyone. I'm Jacqui Lewis. Welcome to the third season of Love Period. In this season, we are exploring what fierce love looks like at a time of trauma, when all around the globe folks are trying to figure out how to be the best version of human they can be in these difficult and traumatic times. Today on Love Period I'm honored to welcome my friend, Christena Cleveland. Her book, *God Is a Black Woman*, rocked my soul. How brave and bold is she to claim her own theological vision for who God is and how God works in the world. No matter what you think about God, you, I hope, will enjoy this episode. How are you, friend? How are you doing in this crazy behind world?
- Christena: Right? I woke up this morning grateful that I get to have this conversation with you. So, thanks for being someone who I was a little excited to meet with. I had a lot of white lady drama yesterday in my work world, and so I just remember ending the day and thinking, "But tomorrow I actually get to have a conversation about my book with someone who's not afraid of it. How great is that?"
- Jacqui: Oh my gosh. Listen. I was so happy to blurb your book. I am not afraid of that book. That book is all the good things. Christena, it is so good. It's such an excellent book. Excellent is the right word for your book. And sometimes you get asked to a blurb a book and you're like, "Okay, I'm going to scan this chapter and I'm going to scan that chapter." But I read your book cover to cover thinking, "Wow." So, let's talk about, if you feel comfortable and you don't have to name names and stuff, but let's talk about white lady drama. Because we're going to really try to focus today on what's love got to do with this trauma we're in, what happens if God is a Black woman, what would that do to heal us. But can you tell a story of the drama? Is it too personal or can you do it?
- Christena: Sure. No, it's okay. And the pattern is consistent enough. This was just the latest iteration of it. I've found that in general, Black women and other women of color who are empowered to be spiritually adventurous are just diving into the book and are just challenged and expanding things. And it's been really fun to feel like I'm invited on their journey, too. I think white women who've been fairly entrenched and transformed by anti-racism spaces are leaning into the book. I've found that a lot of the white women who have been formed by white-led divine feminine spaces are pretty violently responding to the book with, "It's the patriarchy that divides us. The Black Madonna's for all women. Don't say she's just for Black women or specifically for Black women," and just really taking issue with there being any boundaries around the Black Madonna or any invitation for them to approach the Black Madonna with anti-racist integrity.
- Christena: And so that their actions and their spirituality and their formation lines up with their so-called belief in a Black female God. And so I was invited to speak at a conference that is a divine feminine-based conference. The other two speakers who I was going to speak with are well-known in the divine feminine worlds. And I put together a talk that was going to be on an invitation to consider how the Mammy stereotype still influences our perceptions of the Black Madonna and how she invites us to be free from that. And the conference organizer called me up and said, "You can't talk about the Mammy. We're beyond that."
- Jacqui: Wait a minute. "You cannot?" Black woman that you are-
- Christena: So, she completely rewrote the description of my talk. She said, "Our women don't need

to hear that. They're beyond that. They've all visited the Black Madonna. They've gone on pilgrimage in France and we did healing circles in response to the," name one tragedy, "and therefore we don't need to hear this. And we want you to talk about how the Black Madonna heals us all." I'm like, "Oh, so basically you want me to talk about how the Black Madonna's your Mammy. Interesting."

Jacqui: Oh my goodness, Christena.

Christena: "Oh, you're also Mammy-fying me in this moment.

Jacqui: Oh my gosh. Exactly.

Christena: Because you want to reconfigure me as some sort of safe space for you.

Christena: And so it's just been so interesting to notice how much anti-blackness there is, and how even in the midst of me bringing up this book into the world, I'm encountering anti-blackness. Now, what feels really healing to me in this moment is that because I believe that God is a Black woman, I can now look clearly at situations like this and say, "I'm too sacred for this."

Jacqui: All right now, because I am created in Her image. Thank you, people.

Christena: I think old Christena would have placated and toned things down and bend the bridge. "Oh, you're not ready for that yet? Okay. Let me bend myself back over so you can walk all over me to get to where you want to go." And now I'm just like, "I'm not a good partner for you, so bye-bye."

Jacqui: Thank you.

Christena: I can wait for the sacred Black feminine to connect me with communities that are able to partner with me. Because I'm too sacred. And so I think that's what's maybe scary about this book to some people is that I'm more likely to respond that way than I used to.

Jacqui: Well first of all, yay, and thank you, and that's right, I'm sure. But, isn't it also true... I mean, I really want to dig into what you're saying in the story of trauma. This is a story of trauma, Christena, where you're being asked not to be you and it goes in the space of all the ways we've been asked not to be asked, right? It isn't just this moment, you said. It's all the moments where being Black and female is not enough, not good enough, or you are Mammy-fied or you are objectified or you are mean or pick all the things. So, can we, you and I, think deeper about why it insults whiteness for us to claim our beauty and power and image of God and all the sacredness that is us? Why? Why? Why, Christena? Is there some kind of zero-sum game, like you can't be fully you? It derides them, take something away. Think with me about that.

Christena: I think all of the above. I know one of the things that I've reflected on a lot is just how much both Blackness and femaleness are degraded in our society and seen as untrustworthy, as stupid, as lazy, as dirty, as mischievous, cunning. And so I think we're still dealing with those, I want to call them brands. Branding. It's branding. And in the case of white women, there really hasn't been a reckoning around how much white women participate in white supremacy. It remains elusive, this real grappling with. And so I think there are so many

women who've been connected to the divine feminine because they have felt branded by patriarchy and they're not able to apply any sort of expansive or intersectional lens to that.

Christena: And so I think trauma's at the heart of it in just naming their humanity and naming why it's hard for them to show up as both wounded and the wounders. That's very difficult for me to understand. As a Black woman, I've had to be intersectional. And so it's easy for me to acknowledge, I benefit from systemic oppression and I also am hurt by systemic oppression. And I think the complexity of the way that I move through the world has helped me to see that.

Jacqui: Everyone doesn't have that gift, right? You hear me calling that a gift. I'm thinking about Du Bois. W.E.B. Du Bois is double consciousness right there. Got big great-great-great-granddaddy writing about Blackness as a gift of double sidedness or double consciousness, both that we have a kind of Black consciousness in the world, but we also have to navigate the world with a white consciousness or at least consciousness of the white consciousness, right? And I think in that book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, it's complex. So, y'all are listening and be like, "Jacqui, that's not exactly right." It's complex because it's also a burden. So, it's not just a gift. But I do think you and I, as Black women in this nation, have had to learn to code switch, have had to learn to navigate different points of view. Barbara Christian is a beautiful writer that wrote an article called *Speaking in Tongues* or something like that, saying Black women are always multi-vocal. Christena, you are that in your book. And I think people might be mad at your complexity, perhaps. But feel-

Christena: Yeah. My brother-

Jacqui: Right?

Christena: ... said it really well.

Jacqui: Same. Same, same. More. So, what did he say?

Christena: Yeah. A couple weeks ago, my brother... Well, my brother's this, he's just one of the most beautiful people I know. And we're also just really different theologically. And so we have really rich conversations. But he was telling me just two weeks ago, because he's making his way through my book slowly, and he said, "Christena, I've been listening to you talking about this for the last five years and I still find your book to be very intense." He said, "I think people can barely grapple with a Black God and can barely grapple with a female God, but then you're putting it together and it's just like, 'Whoa.'"

Jacqui: Whoa.

Christena: And I appreciate his honesty. And I know he's someone who cherishes me, so it's not threatening to me at all to hear that feedback. But I think it's true. I think this world has been run by a patriarchy. And so it's inherently siloed. Patriarchy doesn't do weaving. Patriarchy doesn't do integration. And so I think when you talk about this double consciousness as a gift, I think that Black women in particular are really, really,

really effective at integration. That's why our scholarship is so interesting and mind-bending and forward-thinking. It's why our inventions and our art-

Jacqui: And our hair products and our-

Christena: ... are just category-busting.

Jacqui: ... everything.

Christena: Exactly.

Jacqui: Yeah.

Christena: I mean-

Jacqui: Everything.

Christena: ... everything we do is just bursting with creativity that says, "Do not stop me from going where I'm going to go." And the innovation. And it's because we have so many different consciousnesses and we have so many different vantage points that we move through. And yes, it's a burden sometimes. But I mean, I don't know very many Black female scholars. My background's in academia. I don't know very many Black female scholars who are not inherently interdisciplinary. They might be in the physics department, but they're doing physics and gender studies and Black studies and urban studies, and throw in some poetry, you know?

Jacqui: Yeah.

Christena: And there are people now who are trying to do that. They're now creating interdisciplinary departments because they're trying to create that from the silos, and we just do it effortlessly.

Jacqui: And in order to survive, I would say, right? In order to thrive. I have a PhD in psychology and religion from Drew, religion and society, psychology and religion. And my program was interdisciplinary. I'm so glad I went there. I was thinking about homiletics at Princeton, but I did this whole narrative thing. So, I want to go back to a thread about the Mammy, the Mammy-fication of you, right? Is like a trope or it's a stereotype, but it's also a story, a narrative, a short narrative sometimes that shows up, pops up. What I wanted to do in my studies was, how do these stories shape us, create us and how do we bend them? What did you call it? How are we spiritually adventurous? How are we academically adventurous? So, girl, I had a PsyD. I had a therapist on my committee. I had Tracy West, the ethicist on my committee. I had a literary scholar on my committee. It was so juicy.

Christena: Exactly.

Jacqui: It was so juicy, right?

Christena: Exactly.

Jacqui: To be encouraged to think in code, to think in multiple tongues, right? And to therefore write. But look, a lot of people haven't read your book and they're going to pick it up or they're not going to pick it up, but let me just make sure we say, why did you want to write this book?

Christena: It was the book that I needed to read. I was longing for a way to connect with God that made sense to my Black and female embodied soul. I had to go out and find that God, because the religious communities, spiritual communities that I had been a part of, a quite diverse range of them, were not able to support a spirituality that affirmed my sacred Blackness and my sacred femaleness at the same time. And so as I went on my journey to discover the Black Madonna and encounter an image of the divine that affirmed my sacred Black femininity, I felt like I wanted to chronicle it. I really wrote the book for me and for Black women because I wanted to show myself and the world that we can heal ourselves and that we are sacred, too.

Jacqui: We can heal ourselves and we are sacred, too. Whew. Yeah.

Christena: I think on my initial pilgrimage to visit the Black Madonnas, I got to walk all over France and visit 18 different Black Madonnas, the youngest of which several hundred years old, many of them over a thousand years old. And really, their roots go back beyond that to Isis. And just to finally encounter in a religious institutional space, which felt important to me as a good Pentecostal Black kid, it felt important to me to encounter this in an institutional religious space, these sacred images of a God who looks like me. And the stories about them, they clearly relate to my experience as being stolen and homeless and hopeless at times and beat down at times and also standing strong and still here and creative. And I wanted to share that with the world. It changed my life. Someone wrote that they think my book will save lives. And I thought, "Well, it certainly saved mine." I can't speak for anyone else, but it saved my life.

Jacqui: Saved your life. Can I ask from what or for what?

Christena: Yeah. Yeah. When I first started going on this journey, I was in my mid-thirties. I was a professor at Duke. I was the first female director of the Duke Center for Reconciliation. I was a widely-known speaker. I had written an award-winning book already. And on the outside I looked really confident and successful. But on the inside, the white male God had really done a number on me in this cunning and subversive way. And I really questioned my beauty, my inner and outer beauty. I really questioned the legitimacy of my perspective and my story. I really questioned whether it was okay to say no. I didn't have any connection to the holiness of no. And I had basically been taught in my family and spiritual communities that there was no conversation about leaving the plantation. The conversation was about becoming the most powerful Negro on the plantation.

Jacqui: Whew. Wow.

Christena: And that's what I had done. And that was the holy thing to do.

Jacqui: Yeah. Oh my goodness. That is so-

Christena: Conform to what the white patriarchal standard is looking for. Get the degrees. Get the

academic positions. Get the book contracts. And I realized, "I'm getting played. There's no life for me here." And I think a lot about Harriet Tubman and I want to know what happened when just one morning she woke up on the plantation and was like, "I'm too sacred for this."

Jacqui: Oh, yes.

Christena: I mean, after growing, being born there, being raised there being taught, "This is your life. This is all that there is for you. Nothing even exists outside of this space. Nothing good exists outside of this space. The best thing you can do is stay in your lane, be a good enslaved person, do what you need to do and try to stay alive just like what's been modeled for you by all these other people, black and white," and then somehow she woke up and was like, "I'm too sacred for this."

Jacqui: Yeah. I want to tell you some things that are resonating so closely with me, which is why I was so glad to have you today. And I feel like I want to be your new best friend. Your book really rocked my soul. It's so beautiful. I feel teary. And I think we've been on a similar journey. I mean anecdotes, short, quick things. I was a girl who survived a sexual molestation and the sacredness of my close end people. And I wasn't supposed to talk about it, and so I didn't for a long time. And when I did nothing happened, so that was lovely. And I'm that Black girl who grew up, though not Pentecostal, like the good girl thing of the church. I didn't know I was evangelical, but girl, everything in the world was about how you're not going to have sex.

Jacqui: That's it. Whatever you're doing, don't have sex. Don't have it. Don't think about it. Don't dream about it. Don't touch. None of that. And so by the time I'm 22 and I had a car accident in which I should have died... I flipped my car around in the QEW in Canada. And when I did that, when I had this car accident and I'm 22 years old, I was absolutely convinced that the reason that I had the car accident is because I had sex with my fiance two weeks before our wedding. What in the world? So, where was my sacred self and the God that I was dealing with? Toni Morrison says, "Write the book you need." I'm like, "I wrote that book."

Christena: That's wonderful. Yeah.

Jacqui: I just wrote *Fierce Love*. That's that book. But to get past that, who is this God that's been constructed for us to keep us in our place and to keep everybody out who needs to be in the space of grace and love and peace? So, I problematized God for years by thinking about getting a grown-up God. And I realized actually, and I would love for you to tell me what you think about this, I actually decided that the word I wanted for God was love, as in 1 John: 4, "God is love." So, I'm like, "Let's talk about *Fierce Love*. This could be called *Fierce God*," you know?

Christena: Mm-hmm.

Jacqui: But we got to get a new God is what I'm trying to say. If the images of God that trap you and me in a patriarchal, racist world in which the best we can hope for is to be the best top dog on the plantation, that's just not good enough, right?



Christena: Yeah. And it's not only not good enough, it's violent. I mean, imagine a God who would try to kill you in response to you supposedly breaking a rule.

Jacqui: Exactly. And I was trying to pay homage to that God with my whole life, that God was-

Christena: Same here.

Jacqui: Right?

Christena: Same here.

Jacqui: Right?

Christena: I was taught, "God actually hates you, but if you contort yourself into some sort of standard then he'll hate you less."

Jacqui: Right. And it-

Christena: And that's the best-

Jacqui: And that's the best-

Christena: ... you get.

Jacqui: ... you can hope for, maybe, right? Maybe you'll parachute out of here to Heaven.

Christena: Except for the rules are so confusing about how to contort yourself. And they never explained to me that at the end of the day, as both Black and female, I could never contort enough. Because my Blackness and my femaleness at their core are hated by this God. And my Black female body is hated by this God. It's almost like going back to the experience I had yesterday with this white lady and her organization. Imagine a God who does not want to hear my truth, that does not think that I have access to divine wisdom. Imagine a God who's afraid of me.

Jacqui: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Threatened by you also, right?

Christena: Mm-hmm.

Jacqui: In this place where the kind of God is all-knowing, all-powerful, all the things, but also stingy and punitive and nefarious and a bully, it just doesn't go together anymore. It's just stupid town for me.

Christena: Right.

Jacqui: It's like-

Christena: Totally. Yeah. I call Him petulant.

Jacqui: I know.

Christena: I call Him petulant in my book.

Jacqui: I know you do. He's petulant, and my-

Christena: So, this is so petulant. It's so weak.



Jacqui: You're such a child. Exactly. Exactly.

Christena: Totally. It kind of reminds me of recently, I don't think he'll be listening to this, but recently my landlord wanted to raise my rent because everyone's raising rents right now, right?

Jacqui: Right.

Christena: And so yeah, I emailed them back and I said, "Here are all the reasons why I actually am going to push back on this." And I was explaining some of the things that are going on in the house that I've had to take care of and whatever. And his response was, "It really hurt my self-esteem that you told me that there were things in the house that were broken." And on the one hand, I guess I'm glad that he's aware that his self... He didn't just... I guess there's some self-awareness there. But I was also like, "It hurt your self-esteem?" Of course he's a white man, right? Petulant!

Jacqui: I know.

Christena: As a Black woman, I could not even show up in the world that touchy.

Jacqui: No, you can't.

Christena: If I did, I would never be able to leave my house.

Jacqui: You also wouldn't have a job.

Christena: Just that touchy, right? I know. So, it's just the mediocrity of this God, the white male mediocrity of this God, where we can't even just have a conversation about what's happening.

Jacqui: So, when people are listening to this podcast, I want you to hear, Christena and I are saying, "Let that God go," right? Do what Shug told Celie. Get that white male God off your eyeballs and have the spiritual adventuresomeness. I think God loves our wrestling with God and are creating a new language with God. I always think the aim of my congregational life, my life as a public theologian, is to make people feel, help them feel like they are theologians in residence in their own lives. What do you think? A really crazy book by a woman, a nun, *The Birth of the Living God*, Ana-Marie Rizzuto, we read in school, and this whole idea that God is absolutely made up. I mean, come on. I believe there's God, but we don't know. We are not smart enough to know God. So, we're always making something up. So, why not be joyful in it?

Christena: Totally.

Jacqui: Right? Why not have some fun? Why not? Right? Why not? Why not?

Christena: And be set free.

Jacqui: Exactly. I was just going to say, liberate yourself in your musings. Black Madonna. Guess who's going to Chartres this summer? Me. Do you want to come?

Christena: Oh, you're going to go?

Jacqui: Yeah. There's this-

Christena: Oh, are you going with Mirabai?

Jacqui: I am not going with Mirabai. Why am I not going with Mirabai?

Christena: Oh, okay.

Jacqui: By the way-

Christena: Because Mirabai Starr is leading-

Jacqui: A group of people there.

Christena: ... an event at Chartres.

Jacqui: I don't know why she's not on our trip. This is Ubiquity University. I'm actually talking to her today. So, we'll see if we can hook it up. They do this big Black Madonna pilgrimage, and I'll be there with V, Eve Ensler, talking about Fierce Love and apologies and stuff.

Christena: Oh, fun. Okay.

Jacqui: I'm excited. It's in August.

Christena: Wonderful.

Jacqui: I wanted to leapfrog to something else to just about, why is our conversation essential? I mean, we know why, but I want us to say out loud. Here's the story. This nation is traumatized. We are in a traumatized time being led by traumatized people. Some of them who are also our buttholes, is my theological word for them. So, the pressure cooker of, that's my theological word, the pressure cooker of life in this nation, particularly for women and particularly for people of color, but I think also white folks don't know how to act right now. My white people story of the week is, we had a fire in the church, and I hope somebody listens to this that needs to know, we had a fire in our church in December of 2020 and we've been wrestling with, how to rebuild, how to rebuild, how to rebuild? We're this place now where we've decided to rebuild, but also my rebuild affects three other parts of the collegiate church, three other congregations.

Jacqui: So, there's a panel of experts helping us figure out what we're going to do. I'm saying all this to say, I was in a conversation with the panel of experts and they were asking me about, "Can you rebuild, and what happens if you don't, and can you raise the money?" And one question in that, as a 63-almost-year-old Black woman, I'm like "Mm-hmm. Let me roll." But I just don't do it anymore. I don't do, "What am I supposed to say?" I don't do, "Let me help you feel better about my answer." So, at some point when someone said, "What happens if you can't rebuild?" I said, "Well, I'm going to either rebuild or I'll be looking for another job. That's my vocation, is rebuild or look for another job." And girl, it was just too much. It was too much. I was told that somebody's feelings were hurt by my...

Christena: My self-esteem was... Yeah.

Jacqui: What? Your feelings are hurt because I said that? Oh, help me, Lord. How are we going to deal with fragility in this time of trauma? How are we going to deal with white supremacy in this time of trauma?

Christena: Yeah. I mean, that's why I'm so grateful that God is a Black woman in my head because

there's a way that I can let go that I wasn't able to before. I now realize that I was essentially living a life as an agnostic before I encountered Her. Which is fine if you're agnostic, but I was calling myself a believer. So, it's not actually fine to live like an agnostic. But because I was afraid of this petulant God, petulant, violent God, and didn't actually think that he had my back, I would pray, sure, but then also rearrange my life so that I covered myself. I was always living from that traumatic space of, "What's going to happen next? Oh no. I have to make sure I'm taking care of myself. I need to be the strong Black woman. I need to double check. I need to triple check. I need to cross all my T's, do everything. Don't take risks. Don't actually be vulnerable." But now that God's a Black woman, even in the midst of all this, there's a pathway to serenity for me. I now have someone I can trust.

Jacqui: At the helm. Or partnering.

Christena: I now have someone that has my back.

Jacqui: Yep. Yep. Totally get that.

Christena: And if God's a Black woman, then it's handled. It's just handled.

Jacqui: Yeah. I love that.

Christena: I don't know how. I don't know when.

Jacqui: But you trust that it's handled.

Christena: But it's handled somehow. I trust that. And then I can just move into that flow space of, "Okay. So, how do I participate in Her handling it?" As opposed to, "It's on me. If I don't say it, it won't get said. If I don't go to the march, it won't get marched. If I don't stop this, it won't happen" That's just such a lonely and, at the end of the day, self-centered way of moving through the world.

Jacqui: Yeah, absolutely. I agree with that.

Christena: But that's what I had to do, because I was only moving from that place of trauma. And I didn't even have any sort of sense that anybody else was out there.

Jacqui: Christena, I totally get that. And I don't know, maybe four or five years ago, I'd say, we've been on the same journey. I wrote a piece for the Center for Action and Contemplation about, what if God is a curvy Black woman, talking about the Black feminine God that I love and worship. I think in some way I'm right there with you that I have a different kind of faith. That's what I would say, right? My faith is stronger and also more surrendered. I don't know. Does that... Is oxymoron? I believe there's a God. I believe God's name is love. I think She's Black and strong and curvy and multi-vocal and can handle our business. Yes. And I feel like I can rest in the bosom of that God. Maybe you're saying that, too. I feel like I am less of a control freak. I feel less manic. I feel less anxious.

Christena: I agree with all that. And I feel less controlling. I'm less interested in controlling myself and others than I used to be.

- Jacqui: And I want to translate what we're saying. There's a river, right? There's a river that is our lives and it's moving. It's in motion. And I think that river is God. I think that river is love. And I think that river is God. And I think it's going to move. I don't think it is going to insist on its own way. I don't think it's going to make us do anything. But I think we can get in the river and be in the river. And sometimes we can be in the middle of it and we are good swimmers. And sometimes we cling to the edge a little bit, stealing from Richard Bach right there, *Illusion*. But sometimes we were in the middle. "Can't go. Go, Christena. That's great. See you later." We're tagging out. We're sitting on the shore. The river is still going to move.
- Jacqui: And I wonder if there's a way that we could give a blessing, an invitation, an invocation, a blessing to the people who are listening about how our God, this Black woman, who's also a river, let's let her be a trinity, just for fun, a Black woman who's also a river who's also love, how could people find their way to some salve, Christena, some hope if they lean in? Let me let you give a blessing, a thought there, and I'll do the same and we'll wrap, okay? What do you think?
- Christena: Yeah. I love that metaphor of the river and I love a trinity. What resonates in what you just shared is that She's the God of consent. Unlike white male God, She's not going to bully her way into our lives. And She doesn't just show up and announce herself and be like, "Proclaim. I am who I am." And I know this because if you look across history, there are tens of thousands of known names for the sacred Black feminine. Tens of thousands of known names. She loves to be named. She loves to invite us into identifying who She is. As opposed to just showing up and being like, "This is who I am," She wants to invite us. And She's all about consent, which is just so different than what we've been taught. And so I think my invitation is, She's the God of consent and She wants you to jump into that river. But She also honors where you are if you're clinging to the sides. Because at the end of the day, She just wants connection. But more than anything, I think She wants to mother the hell out of us.
- Jacqui: Hmm. Oh, that's beautiful. I'm only going to add a phrase. Mother the hell out of us and love the shit out of us. I mean, just love us to pieces. My mother wasn't a curser, but every now and then she'd go, "I love the shit out of you." And we'd laugh. But she died five years ago. Because if mommy was going to say a swear, wow. She was either really mad or she was trying to make you laugh. So, this God who will mother us to wellness, but also just love our dirty drawers. I mean, think of all the ways we would say that in our communities. Like, "You can't do anything that's going to make me stop loving you." And if that's the nature of the relationship, wow, come close, right? And feel me. Yeah.
- Christena: They'll be transformed.
- Jacqui: Amen. So, we can transform the rest of this craziness. Christena Cleveland, author of *God Is a Black Woman*. Get it. Read it. Her brother says it's deep. It is. It is. And it's essential. So, get an audio book if you're that kind of person and buy her book and buy my book and put them on your table and imagine a God who can get us through this trauma. Because She can, and She's here. Christena Cleveland, thank you so much for this amazing book and for this stunning conversation. I appreciate you.
- Christena: Thank you for having me.

Jacqui: Thank you for listening today. I found my conversation with Christena Cleveland to be spellbinding. How about you? And if we're created in the image of God, is it possible that we also create God in our image? What do you see when you think of the holy? How much does the holy feel comforting to you? Enjoy your theological imagination.