

Innovative ‘Studio 3:16’ uses comedy, music to bring the Scriptures to life for kids

In January 2018, successful real estate professional Rob Reynolds had a profound spiritual encounter during Eucharistic adoration that resulted in his creation of an innovative new streaming entertainment opportunity for Catholic families. Reynolds and his wife, Marya, parents of seven children, had witnessed the negative impacts of traditional media on their family.

“After months of discernment, seeking and observing the harmful media directed at – or, should I say, attacking – my six young daughters and one son and our Christian family values,” Reynolds said, “it became clear that I should follow the impactful paths of the likes of Mister Rogers and start an alternate version of entertainment, which educates kids in faith, virtues and the truth of Christianity through humor, music, Hollywood-level production quality and world-class storytelling.”

Moved to action, Reynolds combined his skills as a successful entrepreneur and his faith convictions to fill what he witnessed as an opportunity.

“I know there’s a huge need and demand for great entertainment for pre-teens, or who we refer to as ‘middle graders’ (ages 7-12), that’s Christian,” he said. “My greatest challenge has been coming to terms with God picking correctly in choosing me. Our success has been a direct correlation with our confidence that we’ve been chosen to do this and, therefore, we’re going to deliver with excellence.”

Surrounding the project with top-notch talent in film production, music production, writing, marketing, accounting

and operations, Reynolds and his team at Cross Boss Media created the episodic show "Studio 3:16." With 18 episodes already produced and an additional 54 planned, the show employs original music, comedy and other creative tactics to engage young viewers and their families on a journey to discover Christ and better understand the Bible. Concerned with both positive programming and scriptural accuracy, Reynolds turned to John Bergsma, a professor of theology at Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio, who serves as an adviser on the writing of each episode to ensure that "Studio 3:16" captures the historical and canonical context of each Gospel passage being shared and their relevance to families' daily living.

Joining Reynolds as the show's executive writer and lead actor, Shevin McCullough – a convert to Catholicism – left his career to help build the show he describes as "Christian, comical, musical, cool and a little crazy." With the show's emphasis on making Scripture relevant to the lives of its young audience, McCullough sees the opportunity to take on topics that matter most to middle graders.

"If it's in the Gospels, then most likely it will get covered," he said. "Our focus, at least for the near future, is showing the relevance and the truth of the Gospels. In Season 1, we've covered topics such as divorce, the end of the world and the realities and challenges of dealing with anxiety."

To ensure top-notch production values as well as the show's financial solvency, "Studio 3:16" invites viewers to "pay it forward" with a voluntary subscription, in a model recently popularized by the creators of "The Chosen."

"The 'pay it forward' model is essentially a hybrid of traditional paid subscription and trusting in God," Reynolds said. "We're essentially asking viewers to consider paying for entertaining content that they'll continue to get for free

even if they don't pay for it. We need people to pay for Studio 3:16 to continue. However, if mandatory payment increased our revenue a lot, yet prevented many kids from viewing and being inspired by our content in a way that deepens their relationship with God and Scripture, then it wouldn't be worth the trade-off. So, we're trusting that people will pay for the content for themselves or as a contribution to continue making this available for other families both now and in the future."

Learn more about "Studio 3:16" and watch episodes with your family at studio316.com.

Lisa Hendey writes from California.