

As you may know, there is a weekly Podcast connected with the blog, called, cleverly enough, The Bart Ehrman Blog Podcast. The idea was hatched two years ago by blog member John Mueller, who has put a tremendous amount of effort into the whole affair every week since, producing and managing the podcast all himself, simply out of the goodness of his heart. The podcasts appear in a variety of venues, most anywhere you typically go for such things (e.g., iTunes, Stitcher, iHeartRadio, Spotify). You can find it simply enough: just search for “Bart Ehrman” or look on the episode webpage: <http://ehrmanpodcast.libsyn.com/> John releases a new episode every Sunday and now, I am happy to say, we have reached a milestone. Episode 100 is to be released this weekend.

The goal of the podcast is to help raise blog awareness. The theory was and is that this in turn would increase membership in the blog, which would then raise more money for charity. The best part of John’s offer to start the project is that he would shoulder the entire burden himself. I had nothing to do beyond giving it my blessing, and I eventually did so. We agreed to the following format.

Each week on the podcast, John reads two posts from the blog. The first reading is of one of the posts that is available to anybody who visits the blog, not just members (I make about a post a week free to anyone who is interested, as a way to lure more people in and join up). The second reading comes from a post deep in the archives from the first several years of the blog. In choosing archived posts, John tries to pick one that is part of a thread, so, like any good teaser, it may hook a listener and generate an interest in joining to read the follow up posts. Each podcast lasts roughly 20 minutes.

My initial concern when considering John’s suggestion of a podcast was whether it would be counterproductive. Would it have the unintended result of decreasing membership? Why would folks pay for something that they could get for free? As it turns out, my concerns appear to have been misfounded: blog membership has increased since the podcast was created. And so the effort is paying good dividends: many of the thoughtful and generous folks who listen to the podcast end up wanting more and join the blog; it helps, of course, that they know that doing so is also doing a good deed, since every penny of their membership fee goes directly to charities helping the needy. I don’t have any hard data that proves the podcast has driven membership up, but it’s certainly not driving it down and it is doing a world of good on its own.

I know that some who listen to the podcast would prefer that I read the posts myself. I’d love to do so, but the reality is that it ain’t gonna happen. We all need more hours in the day and more days in the week, and until we can convince the Authorities to make that happen, with all my other commitments, I just can’t do it. So for now, listeners will have to be content with my recently recorded introduction to the podcast which is being incorporated into each episode. But that’s just as well. A number of listeners have told me how much they enjoy it as is.

And the podcast itself, as a result, continues to grow. More than 200,000 episodes have been downloaded since the podcast began less than two years ago. This entails between 3,000 and 4,000 downloads every week. Of these some 1,500 to 2,000 are downloads of just that week’s episode, with the numbers growing. And all that for a a podcast that has had no direct marketing apart from a couple of posts on the blog and a link to the podcast on the member content page.

So, now that the podcast has reached that 100<sup>th</sup> episode milestone, it may be a good time for

both John and me to hear your feedback. Have you ever listened to the podcast? What are your thoughts about it? Is there anything we can improve? Or consider changing? Did you join the blog after hearing the podcast? Or know anyone who decided not to join because of it? Or who has left membership of the blog because of it? Let us know - simply make a comment on this post. John will be reading all comments and can respond to any questions as well.

Finally, if you are a listener of the podcast, it is my understanding that rating it and/or leaving a review wherever you get it also helps for its promotion. And the more people who discover the podcast, the more who will also, as a result, discover the blog. That in turn should lead to membership growth, which will increase the amount we raise for charity, which means the world will be a happier place. Ain't life good?

Many, many thanks to John for his selfless and virtually thankless devotion to the work. I very much appreciate it, as I know do that thousands of people who weekly hear his voice.



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