

## 248: Christmas began with a promise with Amanda Bible Williams

*At Christmastime, the spirit of generosity shines brightest. But we know giving isn't just about what we give. It's about how we give. And that's why we're calling this series: Give With Joy.*

Christmas isn't only about the manger in Bethlehem. It's about the bigger story—one that stretches from Genesis to Revelation. The story of creation, fall, redemption and restoration. And at its center, the good news, as we read in John 1:14, is *the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us*.



At Christmas, we celebrate that truth—the Word became flesh. In the middle of all the gift-giving and celebrations, Scripture reminds us that the greatest gift has already been given. And that gift—the Bible tells us—is for you.

That's also the conviction behind She Reads Truth, a worldwide movement of women committed to opening their Bibles every day. Today, I'm joined by its co-founder, Amanda Bible Williams, who alongside Raechel Myers just released their newest devotional book, "The Bible Is for You." In it, they take readers on a journey through every book of the Bible, connecting the dots in God's story of redemption.

So whether you're new to Scripture, or you've spent years in its pages, this conversation will encourage you to see Christmas—and the whole Bible—with fresh eyes. Because the story of Jesus isn't just ancient history. It's alive, it's unfolding—and it's for you.

Find "The Bible Is for You" wherever books are sold, or shop [She Reads Truth](#) and save 15% with code *AmandaW15*.

### Show highlights include:

- How Christmas fits into the whole story of the Bible; from Genesis 3 forward, God has been making good on his plan to dwell with his people.
- Advent matters because daily, bite-size attention helps us resist the December rush and remember who we're waiting for—and why he came.

- The Scriptures for the season go beyond Luke 2, pointing to Isaiah's promises of light and comfort and John 1's declaration that "the Word became flesh."
- The kindness of the Incarnation shows that God came near—not as a warrior, but as a baby—so we could know him.
- We can "give" Scripture by gifting a Bible or reading guide, or simply by texting a verse when a friend comes to mind, normalizing Scripture in everyday life.
- If you feel intimidated to start reading the Bible, find a buddy, find a plan, be patient, and remember that the goal of Bible reading is to know God.
- Beauty serves the Word when thoughtful design lowers barriers and invites people to open Scripture.
- There is hope even in "Dark December," because light breaks into the darkness—and the darkness cannot overcome it.

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**Christin Thieme:** Christmas joy didn't begin in Bethlehem, of course. It was foretold centuries before. How does the story of Christmas fit into the bigger story of the Bible?

**Amanda Bible Williams:** Oh, this is such a good question and I think a rich question. What comes to mind as you say that, Christin, is that, we have a Kids Read Truth story and Scripture book called "This is the Christmas Story." And the first line of the book is that, "Christmas didn't begin with a baby, it began with a promise." And so, it really is. From the opening chapters of Scripture we see, well, God's desire to dwell with his people, in his place and in his presence. And of course, we see how that is disrupted by sin and a separation is caused, but we see the promise. We see the promise that God's plan A, is still his plan A, He still intends to dwell with his people. And so right there from the start, in Genesis three, we get that promise that he will send a Messiah.

And so then, with that framework, I love reading Scripture for many reasons, but one of the reasons is that, I feel like you can put on... When you start to pick up on some of the themes in Scripture, one of them being, Jesus is the biggest one, right? That you can put that lens on and you can see it all through the story of the Old Testament as God's people are waiting and desperate for this rescue. And as we are seeing him continue to double down on his promise that, there will be a rescue, that he will be their God, we will be his people.

And so, you have the whole Old Testament is really this build up of God's pursuit of his people, and his pursuit of this promise that He is making good on, in the person of Jesus. And so, by the time we get to the other side of that time between the testaments, by the time we get to the genealogy of Jesus and the nativity story and all of that, there's been so much waiting and so much anticipation. And so, Christmas, when we get to the manger, it is on the foreground of this rich tapestry of relationship and promise and all of this relational equity between God and his people. Because, while

we as his people, as people have been all over the map, he has always remained God and always remained good, and just, and loving, and merciful, and kind, and then it culminates in that moment in the manger. And so, it's just so beautiful.

**Christin Thieme:** As someone with the name of Bible, how-

**Amanda Bible Williams:** It is true.

**Christin Thieme:** I have to know. How has reading the Bible shaped the way that you personally experienced Christmas?

**Amanda Bible Williams:** Oh, this is a great question. I think, as time has gone on, of course it shaped, even when I was a kid and it didn't occur to me that it was odd to have the last name Bible. I did have the privilege of growing up in a home where I knew the name of Jesus and so I knew the Christmas story. But as my relationship with God and his Word has developed over the years, especially I would say, over the last 15 years of my life, it really has become everything to me for Christmas. Christmas I feel like can so easily become this day that sneaks up on us and it can get overwhelmed with the stuff of Christmas. And the stuff of Christmas is not bad. It is good and we are celebrating for a reason. But at the same time, it is really easy for it to become overwhelming and we can forget, just with so many other parts of life. It's like the meme on every social media platform. I almost forgot this was the point.

And that's how I feel about Christmas and Scripture, that, if... It's one of the reasons that I'm so passionate about, and have become over the years, passionate about observing Advent. Because, if we don't slow our hearts down a little bit and just take a moment to focus each day as we walk toward Christmas Day, to recognize what we're waiting for and why, and who we're waiting for, and why Jesus came, then the day can come and go and we can forget the point. Just like with so many other parts of life. And so, the more I read the Bible, the more I want to read the Bible. And the more I really try to put my feet on the ground of the story of scripture, I can better see God in the kingdom in my own life. And it really does give me a lens through which to see, not just the Christmas season but, all of life.

**Christin Thieme:** I know you're just kicking off the Advent series with She Reads Truth. Outside of Luke two, what Scriptures do you find especially meaningful during the Christmas season? You can pull from your Advent series or not, but what Scriptures-

**Amanda Bible Williams:** Oh, how much time do we have? Isaiah, there's so much Isaiah that is just... You read the New Testament and then you can go back and look and read Isaiah and you can see just all of these prophecies that are fulfilled in Jesus. And so, the people walking in darkness have seen a great light. And then in Isaiah 40, "The Lord's comfort, comfort my people." All of these refrains of light and darkness and comfort and redemption, when we are mindful of it, they're all Christmas Scriptures.

And then, of course also my mind goes to John one, that, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." As we had our friend, Sally Lloyd Jones on our podcast for Advent, I don't think that one has yet. But she said, she was reading from a book, she writes these beautiful children's books that are paraphrases of Scripture. And just really saturated in a lot of hard work that she then hides in this beautiful simple story. And it's lovely. But I think the way she worded it, and I'm not going to get it exactly right, but she read it to us the other day that, "The word became flesh and dwelt among us," was that, God said everything he wanted to say in a person, and that person was Jesus. And that is the kindness of the incarnation, I think is the thing that is bowling me over this time around in reading the Christmas story.

Just that, the kindness that God would choose to condescend, to come to us, to put on flesh and be among us, and not just be among us, but be one of us. And ultimately to suffer and die for us. But even just to come down to leave the riches of heaven and to walk in our shoes is... he came as a baby. He didn't come as a warrior on a white horse, his will, but his came as a baby. And it's just, the most unexpected and beautiful true story. I think that there is, of course.

**Christin Thieme:** It's almost hard to even grasp really. It's a story we all know-

**Amanda Bible Williams:** It really is.

**Christin Thieme:** ... so well but, it's one of those things that you have to stop and say wow to. And so much of-

**Amanda Bible Williams:** I agree.

**Christin Thieme:** ... this story and this time of year, like you said, is fun and festive and there's so much going on. And at the same time, there are people who maybe feel disconnected from the story. Maybe they are going through their own grief or busyness or even doubt. What encouragement would you share with them about turning to the Bible, especially at this time of year?

**Amanda Bible Williams:** Yeah. I think we all are in that place in some way, in our life. I just think there are probably very few people listening to our conversation right now, who are not carrying something heavy into December and into Christmas.

**Christin Thieme:** It's true.

**Amanda Bible Williams:** And I think, what encourages me, because I have those things too, and I'm sure you do as well, Christin, and what encourages me is that, God really did come to us. The story of Scripture is the story of God coming near to his people, despite the obstacles that we created and then the obstacles of a fallen world and an enemy who really is a true enemy of our souls, that God comes near and his draws us near. And so, my encouragement to those who feel far from God in the Christmas season, is that Christmas itself, on its face the story is that you don't have to go to God, his came to you. And when you open the Christmas story and you read from Luke two, that that is not just a story of a faraway place in Bethlehem, but it is a story that it is for all people. It is good news of great joy for all people, and that includes me, and that includes you, and that includes all of our friends who

are listening.

And so, I would just say, even if that doesn't feel true to you, to dare to believe, what if it is? And just read, and allow yourself to be comforted by the God who created you, and who Has loved you from before the foundation of time, And always intended to bring you home to be with Him. He's a good shepherd. He gathers his flock. And so, I would just say, just imagine like, what if it is? And then read it like a child. Like our friend Sally writing to children, but really she's writing to all of us, right? The child in all of us needs to know that we're loved. And I think, the Christmas story is proof of that, that we're loved.

**Christin Thieme:** I think the title of your newest devotional book is, I mean, directed at that, right? The Bible Is for You.

**Amanda Bible Williams:** It is. It's pretty direct. The Bible Is for You.

**Christin Thieme:** That's such a strong conviction, really, right there on the cover, which I love. This devotional book walks through all 66 books of the Bible, but in a really approachable way, which I loved.

**Amanda Bible Williams:** Well, thank you.

**Christin Thieme:** What was the vision in creating a resource like this?

**Amanda Bible Williams:** Thank you for saying that it is approachable, because that is our desire. And the vision, She Reads Truth, we are a community of women who are in the Word of God every day. And not in a legalistic sense of, "This is on our to-do list," it is on my to-do list, but, that is the invitation. The invitation is that we are welcome to be in God's Word. We are invited into God's Word every day. It's also our need. We need truth every day. We need to be reminded, we need to know the story.

And this devotional project, as we are always reading through a book of the Bible as a community at She Reads Truth or we're reading in a church calendar season like Advent or Lent, or maybe we're looking at a topic in Scripture, but we are always in Scripture. And our community, we read Scripture first, and then very often there's a devotional response that really is to kick off the community conversation. And so, this devotional, it's the first devotional book that we've published. And we have done, I would say we're in about 200 reading guides in, if we were just counting how many Bible reading guides we have created over the last 13 years, but we've never printed a devotional book.

We wanted this book to be representative of the She Reads Truth experience, that we read Scripture first. So you're going to get, not just like a verse or a reference, you're going to actually read, starting with Genesis, we're going to have some passages from the Book of Genesis, and then, some curated selections from other parts of the Bible that speak to what we just read from Genesis, and then a devotional response. And so we do that for every book of the Bible.

And we do that because, we want for someone who maybe is new to Scripture and says like... The American Bible Society does a really interesting, helpful, informative survey every year, called The Survey of the Bible. No, the State of the Bible, sorry. And they do it every year. And recently the study has shown that, upwards of 75% of Americans have a Bible in their home.

**Christin Thieme:** Wow.

**Amanda Bible Williams:** And half of Americans want to read the Bible more, whatever that means for them. Whether they don't read it all or they do some, they want to read it more. And so, the question is why? If we desire that, then what's keeping us from it? And I think for a lot of people, especially women, for a variety of reasons, we can feel some invisible barriers to that, right? A lot of them are tangible barriers. Maybe it's hard to find time. Maybe the phrase quiet-time in your home makes you laugh, because you've got small kids and whatever, loud teenagers, whatever the situation may be. Or just a busy full life. But also there are barriers like intimidation.

The Bible's a large book, it's 66 books in one, and it's written to, the first audience lived far from us, both in time and space, they lived far from us. And so, it can be hard to know how to start that. And so what we wanted to do was to create a devotional book that helped an individual get an introduction to each Book of the Bible, and also how they fit together in a really accessible way. And then our hope is that this would be a doorway that then you can walk through to opening your Bible and continuing to read. And so, that's really what our desire was.

And I think it is a helpful tool for just, increasing in Biblical literacy, whether it's the first time you've opened Scripture or you have been reading Scripture here and there all your life, but you're like, "Okay, I really want to start to see how this fits together." And for Christmas, it's very giftable. It is so beautiful and I was not the designer of this book, so I'm not patting myself on the back here, but it's just really lovely. Look at the painting on the cover and it's got this exposed spine. And so, it feels like a fun way to say to someone that you know is interested in reading Scripture, like, "The Bible is for you and we think this book will help you see that and help you open it."

And so, that really is our hope is that, it would be a resource that those who are Bible readers can give to a friend. Because, if half of America is wanting to read the Bible more, then we need to be inviting our friends and our family to read the Bible with us. And I think we need to be less shy about that.

**Christin Thieme:** It's funny you mentioned the design because, I came across She Reads Truth years ago now, I don't remember exactly when, but I remember it was because of the design. That's what first caught my eye it's, your resources are so beautiful. And this book, I love the exposed spine, it's so beautiful.

**Amanda Bible Williams:** Thank you.

**Christin Thieme:** You're really known for pairing Scripture with thoughtful design. Why does beauty, the obviously very intentional design matter, when it comes to God's Word? We say looks aren't

everything, but, they matter.

**Amanda Bible Williams:** Yeah. Well, God created beauty and beauty matters to God. You can read in the Old Testament as God is giving instructions for the design of the tabernacle, and it is intense, the colors of yarn and the measurements and the designs. And God created design, good design. He is a designer. I saw a friend of mine had on a hat the other day that said, "God is a designer," and he is. He created us. He designed us. And I think, Scripture is the most beautiful story that we could enter into. And God's Word is full of beauty, goodness, and truth. And so, we have had a conviction from early on in She Reads Truth that, if we are presenting these words, we believe they deserve to be... They don't lack beauty. We're not lending God's Word any beauty that it doesn't already possess, but we want to honor it by presenting it beautifully and with good design. And things like letting and kerning and white space and all of the things, it matters.

And I also think it goes a long way to your point, I mean, it did for you, it goes a long way to helping people feel like they can take the Scriptures. It is less daunting, I think, to take... I'm grabbing our Advent book here. It's less daunting to pick this book up and read Scripture from this beautiful coffee table designed book than it is if someone handed you a full Bible and said, "Here you go." I believe Scripture is for all of life. And so, I think that there is something to engaging it with our whole selves. And so, I think it delights God when we take his Word and we use creativity and skill and wisdom in putting books together for others to encounter the truth of his Word.

And I think, it's so fun to do and it has continued to resonate, especially with demographics of young people who are bored that just, it's going to draw them in a little more. And I think that's wonderful. I love that.

**Christin Thieme:** For sure. It's eye-catching. We've been talking a lot this season about joyful giving. And in this conversation, we've covered one of the greatest gifts God has given us is his Word, the Bible itself. I'm wondering, how do you see, or what does it look like to give Scripture to others at Christmastime? And we talked about this book being a perfect gift, but I'm wondering within your own friends and family, what does that look like? How do you go about that in your life?

**Amanda Bible Williams:** A lot of different ways. I do have the luxury of having resources at my fingertips at any given moment, which is such a fun thing to do. If I have a friend who is curious about Scripture, I will try to respect and wait for the right time, but just say, "What can I give you? What are you interested in reading? Let's get you started." But I think, practically, sure, it can look like gifting a reading guide or gifting a devotional book or gifting a Bible. Gifting a Bible is a beautiful way to do that. But I also think, that there is so much power in the same way that the Holy Spirit uses Scripture to speak to us, I think that we are invited to share that with others in very informal ways. I don't think we have to over complicate it.

In my life, that very often looks like, if I am reading a passage or a verse and a friend comes to mind, I'll text it to them. You don't even have to say anything. You just, copy-paste, text it and just say, "I just thought of you." We don't know how the Holy Spirit is working in the lives of all the people around us. But when we feel that nudge, we can follow it. And it can look like, sometimes I'll write a passage

down on a note card for myself or for someone else or stick it in as a bookmark. It can be on Christmas packages. I think that, to normalize Scripture just being part of life, I read it, I will copy verses down, I will listen to verses on audio. And I just think that the more we allow our lives to be steeped in God's word, it is going to naturally also come into our conversations. It's going to come into our prayers, into our thoughts.

And I think that we can give the gift of Scripture in ways that don't involve a book at all. Paul says, somewhere that I can't remember at the moment, but, "Speak to one another in Psalms, spiritual songs." And we see that all through the Old Testament. They are rehearsing the story of God to each other. And they didn't have it written down. Everybody didn't have a scroll of Isaiah. They were rehearsing it audibly. And so, I really do think that is one of the ways that we miss sharing Scripture with each other is just, with our mouths and our hearts.

**Christin Thieme:** How has opening the Bible daily... I know that's a big part of the She Reads Truth Community is opening your Bible daily. How has that transformed your own family?

**Amanda Bible Williams:** It's been an interesting journey with She Reads Truth where it intersects with my own personal Bible reading. Because, anyone and anyone in ministry can probably relate to this, that, when Bible reading becomes part of your job, it is an interesting thing to navigate. Especially early on with She Reads Truth and my kids were little, and I was very aware of the fact that they were very aware of how my work, which, they wouldn't have necessarily been able to articulate what I was doing, but they knew when my laptop was open. They knew. And so, for a little while I probably drew a little more of a boundary around that, than I maybe should have. I've over-corrected in terms of that.

But I would say now, as I'm much further down the road from that, I feel freedom to have my relationship with Scripture in front of my family and around my family. We have a relationship with Scripture as a family, but also to allow room for my kids, who are now teenagers, most all but one is a teenager, they're starting to have their own relationship with God's Word, and with God. And so, it really is interesting because in a lot of ways, daily Bible reading has shaped everything about... In my mind and in my view, it has shaped, I hope, as much as possible, about our family life.

And also, I am one person of a six-person unit, and so, it has been beautiful and also really challenging to me, to recognize and see that, from my husband through all four of my kids, that my relationship with God's Word is not theirs and theirs is not... We have individual relationships with God. And his faithfulness to me is also, he's faithful to them. And so, it is such an interesting thing, and I don't even know if that's exactly what you were asking, but that specific question has been one that has been really loaded over the years and has just changed over the years to say, "How do we have... When I have a "professional," relationship with God's Word and a personal relationship with God's Word.

But I guess what I'd say is, like a final word, is that God is not limited to my categories of, if I'm reading this for work or if I'm reading this in my personal devotional time, or if I'm reading this with my family, He is always at work. He is at work when my Bible is closed. He is among us and he is faithful. I have felt a lot of, I think, false expectation maybe there or that I've put on myself around that

question of, I find the She Reads Truth girl, then our family should look a certain way. In terms of how we relate to Scripture. And realizing that, "Wait a minute, it's not actually about me at all. It's always about Him." And so, there's a lot of freedom in that.

**Christin Thieme:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Amanda Bible Williams:** And you can edit out that full answer if it was completely confusing.

**Christin Thieme:** No, not at all.

**Amanda Bible Williams:** That's like a peek into my brain of like, "Oh yeah, that's a big one." It's a big question.

**Christin Thieme:** I think it's a valid response. It's something that everybody thinks about who has kids, I would imagine.

**Amanda Bible Williams:** How do you let them have their own journey? And also, we guide them and it's important. It's a crucial role as a parent, but, yeah.

**Christin Thieme:** It's a hard one.

**Amanda Bible Williams:** It is. It hasn't gotten easier for me yet. I don't know.

**Christin Thieme:** Great.

**Amanda Bible Williams:** If it gets easier, somebody let me know.

**Christin Thieme:** Oh, man. You've given us these incredible resources to help us open our Bibles more often and approach them in different ways. For somebody listening who maybe feels unqualified or uninspired or even intimidated to even open their Bible, what's the first step that you recommend?

**Amanda Bible Williams:** Oh, well, I would first want to say to them, you are in very good company. And we hear that sentiment all the time, and it's one of the reasons we exist as a community. For She Reads Truth, is to be a place for people to go. And so, that would be what I would say. But I would say the first thing to do is, find a buddy. Ideally you have a community of faith, a local community of faith, people that you can sit at a table with and talk about Scripture. One of my favorite parts of my job is the She Reads Truth Podcast, because, it is a time where for one hour, our only agenda is to open Scripture and talk about what we've been reading and ask questions about it, and delight in it, and learn from each other, and the connections that we're seeing. And we don't come into those conversations with specific things we want to teach each other or set. We just are really coming into learn and delight in Scripture. And so, I think that is the invitation.

And so, I think if you can find someone, whether it's someone who is alongside you or someone who's maybe not as new to Scripture, that can be a resource and just someone to say to you, "Yeah, keep going." But here's also what I would remind you of is that, there are people who have given their entire

life to studying, not just the Bible, but even specific parts of the Bible. And they will tell you, I think, if they're honest, down to a person, that they could be the very end of their life having done that for decades, and they're not going to exhaust the fullness and richness of Scripture. Because ultimately, it's not a book, this is a relationship with God. We read the Bible every day, not because reading the Bible is our end goal, our goal is to know God. And that's why we read our Bible.

And so, I would say that, this invitation is open to you, whoever you are, wherever you are, how familiar or unfamiliar you are. We also hear from people who sometimes feel some level of shame, which I would quickly say, shame off of you, that have been in the church, maybe grew up in the church and say they believe the Bible but don't really know what it says. They realize that and they're like, "I don't actually know what the Bible says." And I think that is such an exciting place to be, because, guess what? You can. And you can open it, you can read it. I would say, find a friend, find a plan. Whether you come to She Reads truth or He Reads Truth, or your local church would be my first, I would say, go to your local church, someone who's in the faith.

There are Bible reading resources. They're pretty easy to find if you look around. And so, I would just say, dare to start and know that it is a beautiful journey that lasts a lifetime if you let it, and the reward is so rich. And I would also say to be patient. That it is one of those things where, you may start reading Scripture and think, "I have no idea what I just read." Because it is written in a different culture or it was written in a different time. And just remember, as with anything else that is important to us in life, we have to give ourselves time to develop the skill, to develop the comfort level of... Even just the act of opening the pages every day may feel strange. And that's okay.

I've struggled to have an exercise routine, but I know that even when I struggle, it is not that I don't just toss it aside, because I believe that it's important. And I would say that this is one of the best gifts you can give yourself as a child of God, as an image bearer, is to open the Word and learn about the God who made you and wants a relationship with you. Who wants to be known by you. It's a lot. I have a lot to say on that topic, Christin.

**Christin Thieme:** I love it. Well, Amanda, this has been so fun. It's been so great to talk to you. As a final question, I'm wondering, as we are looking toward Christmas getting closer, what is giving you hope right now?

**Amanda Bible Williams:** Oh, what is giving me hope? I think, this might sound like a strange answer, light is giving me hope right now. In Tennessee, we do have daylight savings time, which I love, but then it ends. And then we have what we at the She Reads Truth office headquarters call, Dark December, where, it really gets dark early.

And I've been in Advent readings recently and just the promise of the light and the light breaking into the darkness and that the darkness cannot overcome it. And so, twinkle lights, the dawn in the morning, all of it, light gives me hope because I know that even when we feel like there isn't any, that there is light and the darkness can't overcome it. And when we have Jesus, that light lives in us and we get to share it. And so, I love a candle, I love a twinkle light, all of it, especially this time of year. The metaphor just goes on and on and it ministers to my heart.

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That's the message of Christmas—and the message of Scripture: God with us.

Amanda, thank you for reminding us that the Bible truly is for each one of us. And for you listening today—this Christmas, may you open God's Word and find the hope and joy he has given in Jesus.

You can find "The Bible Is for You" wherever books are sold, or shop [She Reads Truth](#) and save 15% with code AmandaW15.

Thanks for joining me for this episode of *Give With Joy*. Remember—God loves a cheerful giver, and even the smallest act of generosity can spark joy that multiplies.

To learn more ways to give with joy this season, visit [caringmagazine.org/give](http://caringmagazine.org/give).

Until next time, may you experience the joy of God's greatest gift.

**Additional resources:**

- Find "The Bible Is for You" wherever books are sold, or shop [She Reads Truth](#) and save 15% with code AmandaW15.
- [Join us in giving joy](#) to families who are experiencing poverty, hunger, job loss and more. Your generosity offers joyful reassurance that even during our most challenging times, we are not alone.
- [Say "yes" to a simple, meaningful Advent](#). A daily Scripture, short reflection or activity (kid-friendly!) and prayer prompt—no pressure, just a joyful rhythm your whole family can share in the free Caring Advent Paper Chain.
- If you are enjoying this show and want to support it, [leave a rating and review wherever you listen](#) to help new listeners hit play for the first time with more confidence.

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