

The Divorced Christian Woman Podcast with Natalie Hoffman, Episode 10 - Sex, Dating, and Jesus: What Now?

Heads up, friend: What you're about to read is a raw, unedited transcript straight from the robots. That means you'll find some weird words, funky punctuation, and moments that make you go, "Huh?" If you want the real experience (and to actually know what's going on), I recommend reading the polished article, listening to the full episode, or watching it on 1.5x speed with captions on. Your brain will thank you.

Natalie: Today I have with me Diana, host of the Renew Your Mind podcast and Loretta. Lisa and Marie, who are all divorced Christian women, and we're gonna be talking today about sex and dating, sorting through purity, culture baggage, and your own desires post-divorce. So this is called this as Diana calls it the sex

Diana: episode.

Yeah, I call it the sex episode.

Natalie: And actually Diana has some caveats that she wants to share. Yeah,

Diana: so go ahead. Yeah, I was thinking about this and I just thought, let's just make sure we lay the foundation here and also make sure you know, so you don't hold us liable to your sex life. We're not telling you what to do.

No, we're, that's a joke, but this isn't prescriptive. Like we've got the answers about sex and Christianity post-divorce and, and, uh, so this isn't meant to encourage you to go in any direction. It's not meant to shame you. It's not meant for any of that. This is just to have an open dialogue because this is kind of one of those things we all think about, but we aren't really.

Talking about. So if anything, just let it be that you get to explore it in your own brain and what this might mean for you in your life, or recognize you don't have answers moving forward yet. And that's fine too.

Natalie: Exactly. Just an open conversation.

Diana: Yeah, be free, don't feel guilty or ashamed about anything.

Natalie: Yes. Okay. Thank you for sharing that. All right, we're gonna, we're gonna actually go back to the start and talk about messages that we were maybe raised with as small children or teenagers about sex, about men, about our bodies and how these messages in these teachings and these things that we were programmed with, shaped our expectations, uh, for marriage.

So, um, who would, who wants to start with that one?

Marie: Yeah, I'll go ahead. Um, I grew up in and out of the church, and what I mean by that is we were active sometimes and not, but, you know, it was still a Christian. Uh, household. I don't remember a time that I did not believe in Jesus. So of course that shaped, uh, my thinking.

But my parents never had the talk about the birds and the bees with me. So everything I learned was kind of, uh, watching them and what was around me. Um, but I did learn that through my experience, especially in middle school and beyond that the, the a woman's body. And this was implied, but it is for men's pleasure either to look at or to use, or.

You know, it was just objectified and nobody had to tell me that. And I could have never named that back then, but I kind of took that in. So through all of that, it became very important for me to, I thought it was my duty to be fit for that reason. And my, my mom never told me that, but I just kind of took that on.

Um, you know, this was, I grew up in the eighties when it was all about, you know, what was that? Uh, Olivia Newton John. I can just see her in that, the leotard, let's get physical, you know? Yes. Skip physical. That, that had a big, uh, impression on me, uh, for some reason. And so I went into my marriage thinking that was very important.

And actually purity culture did not come into my life. Until I became all in for Jesus, then that culture started seeping in. So I didn't grow up with purity culture, um, per se, but I definitely, because I started reading folks on the family and listening to everything they put out, of course I was gonna raise my kids this way because maybe, maybe I did this all wrong.

And that's why my marriage now is so hard. So yeah, that was my experience.

Natalie: Okay. Did you ever read, so when, when, how old were you when you got, got kind of introduced to the idea of purity culture when you started reading books like that? Just curiously.

Marie: Oh, it was in my late twenties, so I was already married.

Okay. And then, so by that time though, yes, sex was a duty.

Natalie: Yeah, it was

Marie: just a, yeah, a duty, a thing that I had to do. Yeah.

Natalie: Did any of you guys read the book *Passion and Purity* when you were a teenager?

Marie: Is that the one by Elizabeth? Elliot?

Natalie: Yeah. Yeah,

Marie: yeah. I didn't read it, but I've heard a lot about it.

Natalie: Yeah.

That was the book that shaped my whole, and it was very much a purity culture book. Um, probably one of the first ones that ever came out. I am, I think. Um, but yeah, I, mine was dogeared and I was going to, I wrote in my book *All the Scary Little Gods*. I was going to marry a man like Jim, you know, like Jim Elliot, and we were gonna have this so much passion and all this purity.

I didn't even know what that meant, you know? I, I still look back on, on that. I'm just like, I didn't even, yeah. There were no conversations. It was just, here's a book to read and, you know, go with, go with whatever this book says.

Marie: Well, I wanna add this too, Natalie. I did because I wasn't raised in that. I did have premarital sex, so.

Okay. That. So that led into me thinking, oh my God, I did it all wrong. And so, you know, now in my marriage, I want to try to do it all right. Yeah. You know? So, um, it was still all a very warped sense of sex and shame and all of that. Yeah.

Natalie: Yeah. Well, and I kind of wish that I had, I'm, I'm glad that I didn't have sex before I got married.

In some ways, I think it saved me from a lot of like, just extra baggage probably. I, I probably would've had sex with, I had crushes on everybody. So, um, but, but at the same time, I wish I would, my motivations would've been different than what they were. I didn't have sex 'cause I was scared that God wouldn't love me or that I'd be rejected or that, you know, it was like fear based reasons for not doing it rather than.

Just my personal empowerment reasons for not doing it. Does that make sense? So that's what I just wish the, this, the story would've been a little bit different in my brain about why I was choosing not to anyway. Lisa, do you have any thoughts on this?

Lisa: Yeah, um, I don't think I would've said that growing up that was an impact.

The purity culture wasn't. Um, but when I became a, a Christian, um, when I was a junior in high school, and, and I knew like, I don't know from the beginning that I wanted to save my, my sex, my first time was sex for my husband. And so that was probably a personal, um, just standard that I had for, for myself and I, and I did.

That. Um, and, and, but, but my husband at the time was like eight and a half years older. And so like, it was as if I was looking to him because he had been married before. He had had sex before. Obviously he had a kid, kid and all the things. So, so like subconsciously I came in as the sub party to our sex life.

Like I was, I was, he was the teacher, I was the student. And, and it had that kind of a dynamic, um. Be, and then, and then I went hardcore into the purity culture in the church that we were in. And so then it was, um, the book created to be as help meet. Mm-hmm. And, you know, I had that all dog dogeared and that's no longer in my possession, but, um, but just be wanting to be that good Christian wife was so, so much a driving force for me and knowing that my role was to make sure that, you know, he was happy and that meant sex.

Yeah. And so I think that, you know, that influence and then take it a a, a leap further, like I, I wanted, you know, that purity culture and then throw in, you know, the, the homeschool. Culture that said, you know, well, we're doing what God wants. And you know, I, I bought all of those things thinking I was doing the right thing for my kids.

And so we, you know, it was all fear based. It was so fear based. Yeah.

Natalie: Yeah. That's what I remember growing up with. I wanted to have sex. I was looking forward to being married and having sex. But there, there, there was so much, um, fear around, around the whole thing. And no education, just no education around it.

I didn't really even know what an orgasm was until I was 50. We'll talk about that later.

Diana: I just wanna add, and this is Diana in a nutshell, I think, you know, this will give away my age, but let's talk about the eighties where it was, um, stay a virgin big in the church youth groups. You know, you never give that away.

Stay a virgin. And then also my friends would be like, check out my dad's, uh, Playboy collection. Or I'd walk by someone's house. I lived in this, uh, city, you know, right by the outskirts of Milwaukee and houses are close together and just people everywhere. And this one garage I would pass every time I was walking.

This guy had plastered centerfold pictures up all in his garage. And then HBO was getting big with, uh, and then they were putting on s muddy movies at night and everybody suddenly had cable in the eighties. So there was this weird both. You get both like men just love naked women and can't get enough of it and be as modest as you absolutely can.

And then like this dichotomy in our brains to try to figure it out and then just go into life that way. And I, I, we could unpack this one, um, kind of topic we've jumped into probably for the entire episode, but I think that just sets up how it's confusing. And now even as we've gone through marriage and we're on the other side of it, if we haven't figured out what we think about all that stuff that has influenced us, we might still have confusion today.

Natalie: Yeah. Oh, I, I'm wondering if any of you guys experienced this in, in one of the churches I went to after I was married, one of the pastors was love to talk about sex all the time. And he basically taught us, when I was single, he worked with the single people and then, and he was married, but he talked a lot about how, you know, men just wanna have sex all the time.

And so if you're, when you get married, you need to be giving your man sex as much as possible. Like they need this. And it was that whole story I. And then, but then I married someone. Actually, both of my husbands were like this. Um,

I, I married two people and plus I talked to friends who were married to people where the men weren't like that at all.

They were actually, it was like, it was the, the story was actually flipped. Now, I didn't really care if we had sex or not, but a lot of the women that I've talked to, they actually wanted more sex. And the men weren't that interested in sex. So I just, um, I'm wondering if any of you guys ended up, like, ha had that idea that men want sex all the time, but then you got in your marriage and realized they, that they don't,

Diana: that wasn't me.

Natalie: Oh, okay.

Diana: Me, me neither. Nobody. Okay. But I had a friend who was in that situation. She wanted it way more than her husband. It was very frustrating for her. Okay. And then still trying to unpack the messages of what it's supposed to be in your marriage. Which at the least our churches are, are like, don't have sex outside of marriage.

In marriage. Have it all the time. That's kind of what, yeah. The, in a nutshell message. Yeah.

Natalie: Yes. Well, I'm glad I said that 'cause I know there's people listening who probably can relate to that also. Um, there, but I, I just, I, I wanted at least put that out there to just say that all men are not the same.

They're all not horn dogs, you know, and so, and not all women are, are like cold bitches. Like something. Right.

Marie: Well, exactly. And Natalie, what that, what the, that did, um, for both, um, male and female husband and wives is if it didn't look like the church told us it was supposed to be, which is men want sex all the time, wives give it to 'em.

Uh, you know, if the man didn't want as much sex, they thought something was wrong with them.

Natalie: Yeah.

Marie: And if the, you know, and if. If, if your husband didn't want a lot of sex, I've heard this, that the women thought something was wrong with them. Why

am I not desirable? You know? And then if, if your man does want a lot of sex and you don't want it as much as he does, you think, oh my God, something's wrong with me.

I mean, it just sets up, you know, instead of encouraging couples to find their own way and rhythm. Yeah. And beauty, the church says, no, it's supposed to be, be this way.

Natalie: Yep. Yep. Okay. How has your perspective on sex changed since you have gotten, since you've been divorced, either in what you want or what you even don't want anymore?

Marie: Well, mine has definitely changed. Uh, I know what I don't want right now more than what I want. Um, I don't want it to be a duty, I. And I don't mean to imply that I never enjoyed it when I was married. Of course I did, but y'all know what I mean. Like it, when it's duty, it just, you get it is another check mark on your to-do list.

Diana: Yeah.

Marie: Literally. Yeah. Um, but so I know that I want it to be, um, a beautiful shared experience where I am, um, enthusiastically consenting. Oh my gosh. And for those of you who have experienced coercion or guilt or whatever, you know what I'm talking about.

Diana: Yeah. Yeah. That's actually a good measure, you know, for, for going forward.

If it was a problem in the marriage, you came from enthusiastically consenting, like Marie said. I love that phrase. If I'm not enthusiastically consenting. It's a no, doesn't matter what kind of, what, what relationship we're talking about here. That intimate experience should always be, uh, it, I'm all in and I'm choosing it.

And if it's not, and or if you're not sure, if you're like, am I, I think I am or maybe I'm not, that means you're not. You'll know if you're Totally, yeah. Feeling great about having the experience. Yeah. I, I also think my thoughts on this are, my thoughts about sex have changed a lot over the years through my marriage, before my marriage, and then it was in the beginning of the marriage and the middle of the marriage with kids and then after, and you know, all this and.

I gave my, towards the end of my marriage, I gave myself permission to only, uh, only do it when I decided, even when I wasn't enthusiastically consenting, I might've been doing it to manage the situation that I was in. And that's my choice to do that for me. And my survival. And my wellbeing. But if it wasn't my choice, I wasn't gonna do it.

And now, I don't know. We're probably gonna get into this. I. I, you know, I'm not dating, so I'm not having sex. It's not even, you know, I don't have to think about it. But when I do go there in, um, or for some of you if that freaked you out, I'm not married, so I'm not having sex. Sorry. Um, that might give you an idea of where my mind might be about what it would look like for me if I was dating my, because I'm reconsidering, you know, if we have a faith deconstruction episode, some of our views about sex might fall into that space too.

Yeah. But the place I'm at, where I'm trying to land here is my views have changed over time and I'm give myself permission to have the views that I do today. Whatever my perspective is about sex today, it's okay if I'm repulsed by it, it's okay if I'm intrigued by it. It's okay if I think I never want it.

It's okay if I think I might want it, it's okay. And however my views evolve on when is it okay to have sex? When is it not? I am permission to go through the journey. Permission to change my mind, and it's very personal and it should always be up to me and I wanna honor where I'm at with my perspective today.

Yeah. And tomorrow I can worry about that then.

Natalie: Yeah. I think a lot of us that are on this panel, and this may not be the case for people, everyone who's listening to this podcast, but the world, the, the world that we all have been involved in. As far as like the advocacy world or whatever is, and our experiences in our marriages were that we were in marriages that were emotionally, spiritually, uh, sometimes physically, financially di abusive.

So when you're in a relationship that's dysfunctional in those extra special ways, sex is gonna be impacted by that because it it, you, you can't, well, I mean actually I have talked you, it is possible to have like great sex. That can be the only thing that's good about your relationship. But for the most part, most women that I talk to that have been in abusive relationships, that part is impacted drastically by everything that's going on in their relationship.

And so then they don't experience what it means to have sex that's vulnerable and real and amazing and whatever. And I was talking to a divorced woman who grew up, uh, who was very conservative and she got divorced and she had a terrible sex life, her whole marriage. And she ended up meeting a, a, getting into a new relationship with a man.

And she was like, I have had, she's not married to him. They, in fact, they, they went on a trip together, um, before, you know, like really pretty early in their relationship. And she said, I did not know that sex could be so wonderful. I had no idea. And so I was happy for her. I was happy that she got to realize that because many women I think never, ever get to realize that.

And sex is, as I've, my, as my view is I've realized, you know, sex is a gift from God. God created our bodies, not just men's bodies, but he actually created women's bodies to experience pleasure. That's what I discovered when I was 50. And there must be a reason for that. There must be a reason for that.

That's beyond procreation. Otherwise it would just be a thing that you do to procreate and it wouldn't have so much awesomeness attached to it. So, um, I was happy for her. I, again, I, I'm kind of like, I don't really know where I land on all the morality of it and, and everything right now, and I'm not interested in that 'cause I, so I just let you know, that's why you guys are all here to talk about your ideas.

But, um, I'm glad we're having this conversation and um, and I think it's important. So some of us, like myself, for example, are content without a man or without sex in our lives right now. And others really miss it a lot. And I know there's people in the, in Flying Higher, which is mostly made up of divorced Christian women who really, really miss it.

And they're, they are, they want to experience that. And I feel for them. There is a little part of me that's like, should I want to, you know, maybe that part of me does kind of want to, but the rest of too much of me, too many other parts of me don't care. But. I wanna acknowledge that some of us really want to experience that, but I'm wondering with you ladies, where do you land today and how did you come to that place?

Loretta: I can speak to that. This is Loretta. Um, so, but I do have to talk, you actually triggered something when you said something about being a cold bitch. I spent years feeling so guilty because I felt like I didn't love him as much as he loved me or that I was supposed to. I mean, I just, I felt so guilty about that and,

and he would say I was cold and I, he would read books trying to figure us out and he would say, oh, you fit into more like the man thing.

You don't really have emotions. And um, and, and I was like. I used to. Right. And what I've realized since then, and a lot through all the education, through Flying Free and Sheila Gregor and things is what it was, is I didn't have that emotional connection because of the pain and him shutting me down and censoring me, just all the control.

It doesn't bring out, out wanting somebody. Right, right. And so then you're left with guilt that you don't want somebody probably from, you know, marriage counseling and all the things that happened before, or the premarital counseling, but how so? Um, but since then I kind of, oh, that's why it wasn't that I was a cold person, it's just that I didn't have a, an emotional connection.

And that's what I do want. And I know that when I, I can't even imagine having someone in my bedroom right now. Like I really can't. But I think it's because I. The idea of meeting someone that's really my teammate and, and that I feel close enough to, seems like, um, you know, a unicorn

Natalie: right now.

Loretta: Yeah.

Natalie: Yeah.

Loretta: And so, but I have to say, I have been all over the map, back to your official question, um, with just where I'm at with it and dating and getting out there, but, um, at first when I first filed and I'm like, you know, going through that about six months in, I thought, great. Need to hurry and meet someone because I'm getting more wrinkles and if I wait later, nobody's gonna want me.

So I hurry. So my girlfriend encouraged me to get any eHarmony, and about a week in I felt like sick to my stomach. Like, this is what's out here. And it just brought all this stuff up inside of me. Right. I. And, um, and Patrick Doyle, uh, I had listened to him and he encouraged people just get on the apps just to, you don't have to go on a date just to, just to kind of, to learn things about yourself.

Right? And um, and then I went to, um, I'm never gonna meet anyone. Everyone's complimentarian. I can't do this anymore. I mean, I just felt sick, so I had to shut it all down, which by the way, my ex found out about it 'cause my

son spi off spied on me about that. Um. And then, uh, I thought, no one's ever gonna want me.

I went through that because I have four geriatric pregnancies and like when my youngest graduates, they're gonna think like, oh, your grandma came to your graduation, because I'm just a little older, right? So all people I meet are in, um, just a different season of life. They have the grandkids and they're wanting to retire, and I'll see, you know, profiles that say, um, I want someone to travel with.

Now that I'm retired and I'm, I'm the soccer mom still. Literally, I, you know, if I could be, so the, my ideal person, honestly, would be somebody who travels for a living and I meet them, you know, if they have their hotel, I'll, I'll meet 'em once a month, right? And, and then we just do our own lives and talk on the phone once in a while, right?

While I'm driving to take my kid to carpool. So. It's a tall order. But, um, anyway, and then the other thought I had was I've kind of come to. Pause. This is just not the right season for me. I went through that. I'm just, I'm really busy. I have four teenage boys and it's just not the right season. But now I've kind of come into kind of a little curious, again, I went and visited one of my butterfly friends and she says, I said, I'm not paying for anything.

She says, oh, this one's free. You get 10 free. So she hooked me up on an app and we laughed so hard, swiping left and right. I mean, it was, it was hysterical. But what I learned about myself and all of that was that it doesn't have to look a certain way. I was scarcity mindset. If I meet someone, great. If I don't find, and it's just really, now I'm coming to it.

A place of healthier place. I think just curiosity. I wonder if we would jive. I wonder it's not about whether they're gonna like me or I like them, it's just, are we a match in our area of our life, in our wants? I mean, if somebody can't laugh with me or left themselves, it's a hard no for me. I mean, I went through that for years, but, um, yeah, so it brings up a lot inside of you to step out into that.

And, um, I haven't gotten the courage to really like, dig into dating consistently or anything like that. And that's probably another layer of the onion I need to peel. So,

Natalie: or not, you know, I mean, like, you, you can, yeah, like I, it can be like just one week you can feel like doing it and the next minute you can not feel

like doing it and you can just like, go with whatever you're thinking in the, in the moment.

Kind of like how you start tried one and then got out and then tried another one and laughed and. Like it's a Right, right. I,

Loretta: yeah. And it's, and it's great. Yeah. It's, yeah, giving myself permission to just be wherever I'm at on whatever it is. Right, exactly. So

Lisa: yeah, just give yourself permission. Be right. I mean, that's the chapter that I am in right now.

And I, you know, a, a look back, um, you know, I was 25 when I got married and I had this mentality that, you know, I was gonna be an old maid. I was the oldest, I had two younger sisters, they were both married and I was still not even dating. And, you know, like that, like was in my subconscious going nonstop that, you know, boy oh boy, like, who are you gonna find?

And so when I, when I found my husband in church, I thought, oh my gosh, this is perfect. You know, this, this is good. But, but I think the belief that I had going into marriage was that. That completed me.

Natalie: Mm-hmm.

Lisa: Like, that completed me. Right. The half became a whole, and, and, and in my marriage, like I always felt like, you know, it was my job to make sure everybody was happy to, to just keep all the pieces just looking so perfect.

My box was like meticulously, you know, perfect. And the bow was like all the kids sitting in the row, you know, at church and all of it,

like box and bow, um, and, and still be living because I was slowly dying on the inside. Now that I'm on the outside and my box is shattered, right? That perfect box that I thought was so important to me, um, now it's a matter of what do I need someone to completely like, no, I am whole as I am. And do I do, I long for companionship and friendship, um, with a man, but my mind still has to, um, grapple with Lisa.

You're okay. You're completely whole as a single woman. And, and the more I've embraced that, the more like, ha, this is really good. This is like really good. Like I get to decide, you know. If I'm gonna ride my bike this afternoon or read a book, or, you know, I get to decide and I don't have the subconscious, which,

and I'm not even necessarily blaming him or marriage, I'm, I'm saying this is the way I was wired and this is, was going on in me, that it was always this subconscious tape that was like, um, is, is this gonna be okay?

Maybe I should check with him. Like, I don't know. Is this gonna be all right? And so it wasn't like, I couldn't ever make a decision just to make a decision without ha it going through that filter of how is this going to impact all these, you know, beings in my marriage and his moods and all of that. So for me, this, this chapter and I'm just a little over a year.

Out, um, of the marriage of the divorce being final. Um, I'm just learning how to be my own best friend, and that is, it can be scary, right? I, I'm here by myself. My, my kid, my, my youngest girl still lives with me, and so she's gone for the weekend with her boyfriend, and so I'm like, okay, Lisa, this is just you.

Like, what are you gonna do? What would you like to do, Lisa, do you wanna take a bike ride this afternoon? Maybe, you know, clean this, do that. It's, it's realizing that that is enough. Just having God in me in conversation, um, and having that friendship with myself, respecting myself and thinking of what I need, um, taking care of me.

Like, oh, I think Lisa needs a massage. So guess what? She schedules a massage for Lisa because I'm my own best friend. Right? Yeah. So I think that piece for me has been, um, that's why I'm not, I'm not ready to date because I'm still figuring out this piece, and I don't know if it'll ever come to it, but for me, dating just muddies my waters and I'm not clear yet.

Natalie: Hmm. Yeah, that's well said. I think I kind of, with you, Marie, you have experience with dating, right? Can you share some of your. Where you're at with all of that?

Marie: Yes, uh, I have, um, I am very happy in my life right now. It sounds like, I mean, Loretta, Lisa, Diana, all, all of us are right. Like we love that freedom, autonomy without having to think about managing anything else or anyone else.

So I love that. And I'm, uh, but I do land in the middle where yes, I eventually want a companion. Um, and so yes, I have dated and, but when I say dated, I've only dated one man exclusively. And that was for, you know, a short time. And the beauty of it is we're still friends and, um, but I have been on the apps, I've been on eHarmony and Bumble, and, um, I have learned that.

Man, it, it's really been a great and beautiful experience. Loretta, I'm like you. There have been times that I'm like laughing my head off, you know, just at what's ever about what's out there. But, um, I have met some of the greatest people and, um, what has really surprised me about it all is, I don't know why I thought this, except that my ex did, he did say this a lot, but I, I knew it wasn't true.

But, um, he did not believe that men and women could be friends, like really friends. And because I grew up with three sisters and no brothers, I always wanted male friendships. But of course. I couldn't really have male friendships when I was married, um, because my husband did not appreciate that. But oh my gosh, I've made some really good friends from the dating apps, so we realized there's not a romantic connection and, but we're friends.

Oh, wow. That is so cool. I love that. Yes, it is so cool. And one of 'em, actually, he's a civil engineer and, um, there's some work going, uh, uh, on, uh, across the street. And so I was wondering about some things. Well, I called him, um, to ask him some questions. He, we, we texted and talked back and forth for three weeks.

'cause he was trying to help me figure out something, you know, I mean, it's just,

Natalie: yeah.

Marie: I love that.

Natalie: Yeah.

Marie: Yeah. So it's been a good experience for me. Now. I've paused. I, I'm, I've paused right now on the, on the dating thing, but, um, yeah,

Natalie: my, my daughter, she is, um. She just got her first job after outta beauty school, and one of the, one of her coworkers is a guy who she just adores, just adores him.

And she's like, I, one of the things I love most about him is that he's gay, so I don't worry. It's like we just have so much fun together and I don't have to worry about what he's thinking or that he's, you know, trying to get my pants or anything like that. I just, we just have so much fun together and, um, that, yeah, I, I, so I, I hear what you're saying, Marie.

I, I, I grew up too with just sisters and, and maybe a lot of my crushes as you were talking, I was, I had this epiphany, maybe a lot of my crushes weren't, 'cause I was a, I would ne when I had a crush on a guy, I wasn't thinking about having sex with them. I just, they were so fascinating to me. They were just so interesting.

They were just so different from my sisters and my girlfriends and I just wanted to, they were so much fun and I just wanted to hang out with them.

Marie: Right. It's that male energy. I was just talking to someone about that, like male energy is different. Yes. It just is. And so I always wanted that. You know, and, and so that's what dating more than anything is giving me that experience of having what your daughter's experiencing.

Though right now, Natalie is safe. Yes. She feels safe with that person. That's what I've experienced and it's been such a healing experience for me to experience men that are safe. Wow. You know, now I'm, there's been some unsafe ones. I mean, don't get me wrong, but. The beauty of it is that I'm learning the difference, safe and unsafe.

And, and so I have gained friendships with these safe men and it's just been so healing and beautiful.

Natalie: Yeah, I think, I think too, safety is number one when it comes to having sex. How can you be vulnerable with someone in that way and really let yourself go unless you're feeling 100% completely safe in that relationship.

And I think a lot of us, you know, we didn't really experience that before. Um, before we go to the next question, I'm, I'm just gonna, I, I need to bring up a great book 'cause I, it's, uh, someone mentioned Sheila Ray Greg War, but she has a book called The Great Sex Rescue. So if any of you guys have not, uh, any of you listeners, if any of you's guys have not ever heard of that book, that's a good book to check out on Amazon.

I'll put a link in the show notes. Um. They did a bunch of research on, you know, c they, they interviewed on thousands and thousands of Christian women and their, and where they got their ideas about sex and everything. And one of the things that struck me in that book that I could relate to is the pain of sex.

I had so much pain in both of my re marriages, um, that it was excruciating. And I didn't know, I thought that there was something wrong with me. Well, and

there was kind of something wrong with me, and that I didn't realize that that pain was actually from my view of sex, which is somewhere deep inside of me.

I saw sex as being bad. Like, like not a good thing. And so my body was literally rejecting it in both of my relationships. And because of that, and because I had no education, no idea what I was dealing with, and there was so much shame, um, I, I never really got to, you know, discover anything until when I was 50.

I promised that I would tell the story. But when I was 50 and I was newly married to my second husband and still experiencing pain and stuff, my, um, I had a Christian therapist tell me, Natalie, you need to get a vibrator. You, you, and this was, and I trusted her 'cause she was a Christian therapist. She was a Christian and she was also, she had extra training in, in sexuality, in sex.

Like she, she was a sex therapist as well as a other kinds of therapy. So, um, she said, you need to learn what your bo you need to figure out your own body and learn what your body is capable of. And you can do that on your own. Like, you don't need anybody else to help you with this. 'cause I was not getting any help with this from any, from anyone else.

So I did that and I discovered what a woman's body is capable of doing. And it was amazing. And I, that, that is something. So that was something I remember thinking, okay, when my girls are old, old are old enough and they're like, you know, gonna get married or moving into that, I'm definitely going to tell them.

To get a vibrator just in case they have similar problems that I do. I want them to at least go into their marriage knowing what their body can do. And, and sometimes they need help. Sometimes I, I started asking questions, right? 'cause I don't, my experience was so terrible, but I found out that a lot of women need help.

They can't just like go in and have sex and have, you know, have mutual orgasms, right? And that's what you see on the tv. That was my education, just what I saw on tv. So, um, that was good. So anyway, that's a great book. Um, but can I

Diana: just say too, what you did and what you're offering to your daughters to do and exploring our own bodies and learning them, I can't find anywhere in the Bible that describes that as a sin.

So I know there might be some theologians out there that try to take certain scriptures and then say that exploring your own bo uh, sexual capability of your body is a sin, but there, uh, adding extra meaning or meaning or contorting, the verses. In my view to try to paint it as a sin. I can't really find where it just says that's anything wrong.

And I think God made our bodies, uh, I mean, I, I, I'm not, don't worry, I'm, I'm gonna stop in just a moment here, but even kids explore their own bodies. It's just a natural thing that we do. Yeah. And I don't think it's a sin.

Natalie: Yeah. Yeah. I think, um, and even in Christian culture, we give a pass to boys and to men doing that.

Diana: That's true. They can't help themselves, Natalie.

Natalie: Yeah. But we don't really talk about it for girls and women. We don't. And I, I think that conversation needs to change. Mm-hmm. Uh, I do not wanna spearhead that though. But anyways, um, this is this episode. No, ask Sheila

Diana: Ray Gregoire about that. Exactly. Her, her expertise is all sex all the time.

Pretty much.

Natalie: Exactly. Go to her website. It's, what is it called? Bear marriage.com. Go to her website. Yeah. I refer people to her all the time because I'm not, that's not my thing.

Diana: Yeah. She has a great podcast too. Hundreds of episodes you can listen to, to, uh, reframe your story in your head around sex so you can be more free and compassionate to yourself and grow in that area and have better experiences whether you're married or not.

Natalie: Yeah. Yeah. The last thing I just wanted to say, just from my perspective and to normalize this, is that I. I don't have any desire to have to have sex right now, and I don't have any desire to have desire. So I'm not even like thinking, I'm not thinking, Ooh, it's abnormal to not have desire. I'm also not thinking maybe I'm a eunuch.

You know how the Bible talks about some people. I'm also not thinking that. I'm just thinking, I don't want sex. I have no desire to have sex. Um, I don't, and I'm just normalizing that for myself. And I think we all need to do that. We need to

normalize wherever we're at. That's normal for us. One thing I do wanna say though is I love what Lisa brought out about how I used to think that you had to be connected with another person in order to be whole.

That that, and now I'm real. I, I don't believe that at all anymore. And it's amazing to be a single mom with my four teenage kids in the home, and we have a beautiful family. We have a, a gorgeous family. I love our family and there's no man in our family right now. I mean, they have their dad and they have a relationship with him that's separate.

But the family that we have in my home, I love and I embrace it completely as it is, and I have no desire to add to it, or nor do I think that our family is missing something. So I'm, I don't believe anymore that I will not have lived a full life if I never experienced like, great sex on this planet. I don't believe that anymore.

I believe that I can live a completely full, wholesome, beautiful life without any of that. That said, if you are someone who wants to have that in your life, there's also nothing wrong with that either. And I hope that I, I hope that, I wish I had, I wish I was, um, you know, a fairy godmother and I could just go Bibb, bty boo.

Just give everyone what you all want in this area, but I can't do that. But I'm just, I guess I'm just trying to, I hope that this episode just helps to normalize wherever you guys are at. Okay. Let's go to the next question though. If you have started dating again, what has surprised you and maybe Marie, maybe you're the only one that's really dipped your toes in.

Has anyone else actually done this? Marie's the only one. Okay. We did have another person that was gonna come on, and she has dated as well, and then she backed out at the last minute. So unfortunately, um, we are missing her perspective. But Marie, so Marie, you are a representative for those who date, but what has surprised you about, what have you learned about yourself in, in the stadium?

Marie: Yeah. Uh, I spoke to that a little bit already about the surprise of what I've learned about myself through that, and then the friendships that I've made. Yeah. Through dating and that feeling of. I now better know what I want, what I, how I can trust myself, who is safe and who is not. Yeah.

Natalie: Okay. So how do you hold, I know this is another question that you were gonna talk about.

How do you hold space for both your faith? And maybe give a little bit of your background too about some of your recent training and what your, you know, what your passion is, what you love to do as a, as a career, and as you know, what you've dipped your toes in. Yeah. And talk about how you, how about bringing faith and desire together, especially when, you know, church culture taught you that those things couldn't exist or coexist.

Marie: Yeah. Um, and that is, um, you know, specifically for. Women. Women, I think we believe that we need to suppress our emotions. Anyway, first before I get into that, um, a little background. I just finished my training, um, as a spiritual director and, um, uh, in 2023, I graduated my master's in, um, Christian Spiritual Formation and Leadership from Friends University because I'm passionate about helping women navigate the stages of faith.

Not just women, but I've mostly worked with women. Um, the stages of faith, kind of untangling their faith from manmade traditions and knowing themselves better. Uh, and so part of that is realizing that no, we do not have to suppress our emotions and our desires, in fact, desires point us to the good things that God has for us.

Now, do they get. Disordered, of course, but that's just part of working it out. But we don't, if, if we suppress those, um, we all know this, it usually comes out sideways, um, as we squish those down because we are people of desire. Um, and there's a, I don't know if y'all have heard of Becky Castle Miller, but she is a, um, professor at Wheaton College and she's actually working on her, uh, PhD, um, about emotions and the dis and discipleship, uh, specifically the emotions of Jesus.

So she's talking about the importance, uh, of emotions and how important they are to a healthy Christian life. And so our emotions, um, point to desire whenever, uh, you know, or desire is a very important emotion. Those things that we long for point us to. Good things. If you think about all of us right now and how we're growing, your desire is driving that.

Your, your, your, you have connected more, um, with your desire in these past few years to point you to the life that God has for you. Mm-hmm. Um, and so really that's what's happened. So, um, faith and desire coexist. They can't help but coexist. They're, it's a, uh, both and, and it's a beautiful, um, dynamic in the way that God created us.

And so, uh, it is just, you know, we just have to trust that when we have a longing, um, we can, uh, learn to trust that inner knowing in ourselves and say,

where where is this pointing to? You know, my longing for a companion. Okay, what is that? And I've realized that through dating, it doesn't necessarily have to come from dating.

I've realized that when I do a meetup event, which we just get together and we do different things, my heart is very, very full. So what I crave is connection. Connection with somebody else that does not necessarily have to come through, uh, you know, companionship or partnership. So it's just really paying attention to those things and, uh, reclaiming, I think we're all in that, that phase of reclaiming our desire.

Natalie: Yeah.

Marie: Instead of it because it is a beautiful God-given gift that points us to the life that he has for us.

Natalie: That's beautiful. I

Marie: hope that answers that.

Natalie: Yeah. I think we're gonna, um, we're gonna smush two questions together that kind of actually piggyback off of that. And let's talk about our boundaries or values, because I'm sure there are some people listening going, well, what now?

Are you just like floating in an ocean with no values or boundaries where you just, you know, whatever wave takes you, then you're just gonna go with it. And so let's talk about that a little bit. And also let's talk about, um, like, I don't know if any of you guys still have contact, maybe with people who would tell you, you know, you, you're divorced, you can't ever get remarried again.

First of all, let alone have sex with another man again, because, you know, once married, you're always spiritually married to that person. What, what, how do you respond to that if you have had to, or how would you if, if you did. Um, maybe just people who might say that your dating, your dating life is wrong or you're in danger of, you know, spiritually exploding your life or whatever.

So boundaries and values and then how to respond to people who might criticize or judge you for wherever you're at in this journey.

Loretta: Yeah. Loretta, I'd to speak to that. This is Loretta again. Um, okay. So I actually have a counselor who I love and has been great for me, but he is a

Mennonite pastor. He is a clinical counselor, but he told me straight up, like getting remarried.

He didn't agree with that. And I'm like, I was, you know, steeped in Flying Free, Flying higher, all that. And so I was learning all this stuff and I'm like, I don't need him to agree with me. In order to get great counseling from him. Right. I'm not planning on get married next week anyway. But, um, I also, because of the model, because of being trained in coach certification with Diana, with the mind shift tool, you know, this cognitive behavioral therapy, it's, I'm like, oh, when someone kind of presents that to me, I have a lot of, you know, very religious family members or somebody says something.

I think that's interesting. That's just their belief, that's their thought. And oh, of course they think that. I thought that for years. That's how I ended up in the marriage I was in because I had these strong beliefs, and it's okay that they do, it doesn't, it doesn't shame me anymore. I'm like, ah, that I see, I see.

That's how they think. So being able to kind of run a model on how someone else is thinking has freed me up a lot. Um, I used to worry that people would think like that I'm, uh. Like I'm the Scarlet Letter divorced and all of that. I don't think about that anymore. It doesn't even cross my mind when I'm having conversations with people where two years ago it's like stumbling over my words.

What do I say? Um, yeah, so, and also I think they have more trust. Going forward and not any rigid boundaries. I've, I know several people in my life who got married because they were afraid they were gonna get pregnant or because they couldn't live outta wedlock and live with someone and, you know, be shackled up, so to speak.

Um, and it was a disaster. Had they just lived with the guy for like a week, they wouldn't have cut married. And I'm not advocating for that. But what I'm saying is that I trust myself to know when I get there. I have boundaries. Um, you should have had my friend on that. I met through Butterfly Bootcamp online, Kelly.

'cause she has, and she told me I could talk about her, but she has gone on so many dates and what she said was, she's got friends. Like, she, she's just gotten really bold, like calling people out on like their um, kind of being controlling. She had so, you know, different dates. But she also has made friends, guy friends and she's taught me, I, I did go on one date I wasn't gonna share 'cause I was kind of embarrassed, but I did go on one.

And what I learned was you really need to talk to him on the phone first. Two minutes in, I was wishing I was back at my hotel with a movie. It was awful. And I had to consult with my friends on how to say no to a second date because I, I don't, I'm a people pleaser and I felt so bad. And I think doing the dating and learning, it teaches you about yourself, where you don't, they're like, Loretta, you don't owe anybody anything.

Right. And that I thought, oh, doing this has taught me where I need to grow, where I want to grow. Not that I need to, but that I really wanna grow. And being able to just turn loose and not have expectations, but also not managing other people's emotions. I've done that my whole life, really. So yeah, the, the boundaries of being able to say when and where and say, no, and I don't wanna have dinner.

We just had coffee. No, I don't wanna have dinner. I am, I aspire to that. And yeah.

Natalie: So yeah, I.

Marie: Yeah. Um, Loretta, that's, that's what I do as well. You are letting yourself guide you and what you know on the inside and what you feel, and you're learning that, that's my guide. Like, you know, and some people listen and say, oh, you mean God's not guiding you?

Yes. Because we are Christians. We, that is always part of our, you know, what is guiding us. So when we say we're trusting ourself, what I mean, and I, I believe this is what all of you mean. Um, that yes, it's the spirit, the Holy Spirit within us, our inner knowing, all of that, we are listening to that because we are more in tune to it than ever.

Yeah. And that is the boundaries that guide me. I had, I went on a date one time, I'm the guy. You know, we'd had lunch. Literally, we had talked on the, the phone twice, very short. Went to lunch and then he said, can I hold your hand? And I said, that seems a little fast. And, but I held it anyway. Okay. That was like two years ago.

I would not do that now. Like there's no, I mean, like, and of course we didn't go on the second date, but I'm, but anyway, I'm learning how to, that's what I'm saying. Like, I'm learning myself and I'm the guy, I'm the boundary setter. So that's the boundaries and values, you know? Right. And it's, it's knowing my values and then being, getting stronger in my, in my boundaries.

And that's what Loretta's saying too.

Loretta: And, and to clarify that as far, when I say I trust myself, that's because I've done all of the education through the kaleidoscope, through Sheila. She Right, right. As far as the, the podcast episode about hanging out with fools, oh my goodness. Changed my life. So I become black belt level manipulation detector.

So, and that is a gift from God, that is education that I got. Yeah. I feel, because it talks about it in the Bible, right. But also, so when I say I trust myself, I'm thinking, and I've actually witnessed my child do this with a coach, two coaches trying to decide between teams. And he, he recognized the one that would be the best, that wasn't kind of using a little coercive control.

Or, you know, kind of coercing him. And I was like, wow, you know, this is seeping into my home and my kids being able to make wise decisions. And that is from God. God gives that to us, but we shut it down to be people pleasers to follow some warped, you know, blasphemy idea of what a Christian is. And, um, I mean, don't even get me going on that.

That's a whole other

Natalie: podcast. We'll do a whole season on that. Right? Exactly.

Loretta: Exactly. Steve in spiritual abuse and, and oh, and being able to, I have to say, if you have sunglasses and you, you're starting to date, they're.

Diana: Oh my gosh.

Natalie: That's funny. Say that last part again. I lost my internet. You

Loretta: can, you can. So like, what I noticed is you, you have to check if someone has wearing a wedding ring, right? Like, you know, like if you're kind of interested or you might think you wanna flirt or something. Right? And if you have glass sunglasses on, um, then people don't notice where you're staring.

Natalie: That is hilarious. Hilarious. If you're hilarious if you're checking that they're wearing a ring. That's funny. But yeah. Tricks and tricks from Loretta, you guys. Thank you so much. This, we're gonna wrap this conversation up now. I just want to say at the very end, um, that some of the tools that Loretta mentioned, you know, the cognitive behavioral therapy, the model, the mind shift tool that Diana teaches, um.

All the things that we've done, these women are all part of Flying Higher, which is a program for divorced Christian women where we do book studies, we've, we do bible studies, we, I teach classes, um, we do coaching, and all of these things help us in our self-development work and, and in our relationships.

And they do, like Loretta even mentioned at the very end, they help us in our parenting with our kids. When we get healthy and we start learning things and growing, we, uh, we get to pass that on to the next generation as well, which I think is important. When I look back at kind of mom that I was with, with my first set, I had nine kids with my first, you know, four or five kids is very different from how I've showed up with my, the last few of my kids.

And, um, I just, I, I feel like my last kids have gotten the better mom, really. The, the mom that. Is happier and healthier emotionally and spiritually. And, um, but also, you know, is the mom that got kicked out of church and got kicked out of her family of origin. And it's that mom too. And sometimes that happens.

Sometimes we end up, our lives end up feeling like they got destroyed. But then we rise like a phoenix out of the ashes and we find out, we discover who we really are. And I, I, I love the analogy that the Bible gives too, about the dross being burned away. You know, the gold comes to the surf, or No, it's the dross that comes to the surface, but it's a fire, it's a cauldron, it's a, what do they call it?

What am I? It's like, I can't remember. The Bible has a specific name for this burning place, but all the dross comes up to the service and then gets skimmed off. And then what you have left is the essence of who God created you to be in the first place. And that's really, if I was to boil down the work that we are doing together as a group and Flying higher, that's the work I want everyone to, to discover who God created you to be.

All of your beauty, all of the good things about about you, the gifts and the skills that God has bestowed upon you. Those need to shine. You were made to shine. You were not made to hide under a bushel. You were made to shine and be who you are. So if you're interested in doing this work with us. You can learn more by going to join FlyingHire.com.

And of course, I wanna plug Diana's, um, podcast as well, the Renew Your Mind podcast on your favorite podcast app. And if you are still married or if you're not and you're trying to work through emotional abuse, the Flying Free Podcast focuses on emotional abuse and getting unstuck from all of all of that, and healing from that.

So those are some things that you can, and then these lovely ladies have their own, some of them have coaching, uh, practices and other businesses and careers, and we'll make sure to put those links in the show notes if you wanna check those out. Alright, you guys, that's all we have for today. Thank you so much for joining us and fly higher.