

Divorced Christian Woman Podcast with Natalie Hoffman, Episode 3 - Who Am I Without Him?

Natalie: Welcome to episode three of the Divorced Christian Woman Podcast. In this episode, we're asking the question, who am I without him? And listen, that's not just a philosophical musing. That question shows up in the way we make decisions, decorate our homes, show up at work, or even just try to figure out what we like for dinner.

Together. Diana and I unpack how so many Christian women lose touch with their identity in marriage and how the journey of reclaiming it is both sacred and slow. We'll talk about trauma, people pleasing boundaries, and that sneaky programming that tells us we're only worthy if we're useful, quiet, or selfless to the point of erasure.

But don't worry, we're not gonna stay in the hard stuff without offering hope. This episode is full of real talk laughter. Practical tools and gentle truth telling to remind you that you matter, that your essence is still there, and that you deserve a life that reflects who you truly are. Hey, Diana. Hey, it's always great to be here with you.

We are gonna do episode three today. Who am I without him?

Diana: Good question.

Natalie: Yeah. So let's start with why this, let's talk about why this even feels hard. Like why? I mean, who am I without him? Is, aren't we the same person that we were when we were with him? I think sometimes we don't feel that way. We don't, we don't.

Uh, I think our identity does kind of change a little bit, so, yeah, totally. Um, I think many Christian women. Lose themselves in their marriage. We kind of touched on that in episode one. Yeah. And, um, but I think we wanna, I, we want to normalize this identity crisis because I think it's something that I don't know that everyone goes through it.

I mean, you can't say that everyone's gonna go through this, but I think a lot of us, I. Do. So why do, why do you think that so many Christian women lose

themselves in marriages? Why do you think you lost yourself in your marriage? Or maybe you didn't. I think you did, though. I think we talked about that. Oh, I

Diana: totally did.

I totally did. Yeah. I used to have this like, I guess it was a mantra in my own head if, if our marriage is okay. I'm okay. Yeah. If our marriage isn't okay, I'm not okay. And I, I think as Christians, this idea that like, now you're married, now you're one, you, you, when you're looking at it that way, you can totally lose your identity in that.

It's like, well, I, I'm not my own person now I'm a unit and it's like. If the units, you know, if half the units pulling you down under the water and drowning and you're, excuse me, tethered together, where are you gonna go? You're gonna go under the water and start drowning. Like you, you feel like you don't have this option, or if.

And it's ki it's kind of based on the other person. Then if they're doing great and now we're, you know, above the water and we're having fun up here and it's sunny day, then you're like, yay, this is great. We can totally do it. Which I think is why we get on a rollercoaster in a lot of these relationships.

But as Christians, I think it's, it can feel really, um, threatening to think outside of. The lines of been, of what you've been told. And there's so much in the church and Christian literature about the, you know, our roles, men and women are different and here's your role in, in marriage and here's their role in marriage and this is how it works.

And if that starts to fall apart, then it's kinda like, well then if, if that's not working, if I'm not rising up as an amazing wife, then. Who am I? What's my role? I had this experience when, uh, you know, here I am in my early thirties, maybe mid thirties, and my little sister. Was, uh, uh, 15 years younger than me, and she was in college and she was, I was raised in a Christian home.

My parents were divorced and, and then she was raised with my dad and stepmom, and that was not a Christian home. And she gave me, I can't remember the title of it, but it was a really popular book that was talking about feminism and she thought I'd be interested in it. And, uh, in hindsight, I think it's like she saw how I was in this structured.

System of who's a woman and who's a man, and, and I have to just guess, she never told me and we actually don't talk anymore unfortunately, but. That she

was picking up on what was going on back then. And, and I didn't see it. I was lost in it. And all I did is get every book I could, you know, the power of a praying wife, love and respect sacred marriage, all these things that like, oh, I just, I'm supposed to suffer in marriage and, and um, you know, and suck it up and God will reward me in heaven.

I just need to pray more and I just need to have sex more. I need to do all this stuff. We just get so lost and. I mean, that's, especially people who are in a dysfunctional marriage, you're gonna be diving into that and you get so lost in trying to fix that part of you in that role. Mm-hmm. And then what happens if you leave that?

Yeah. So I, yeah, I, I struggled in some ways with my identity and other ways not, but I, I really, and I thought I was never a people pleaser, but I, I was in my marriage. Yeah. In my marriage I was a people pleaser and in a way I was a people pleaser where I wanted everyone to look at me and be pleased at what they saw.

Yeah. Now that I had to say yes to every volunteering thing, you know, so, because, you know, but I was just trying to fit the role, and when that role was gone, then it's like, well, now what? How about you?

Natalie: I like what you said about like. The one unit, like your one unit. I definitely saw it that way too, and it was so confusing because in, because it meant that he represented me and I represented him and there were things about him that didn't, were nothing like me, and so it was like, I wasn't sure where did that leave me then?

And also the roles in my first marriage. My husband was very much a behind the scenes kind of a person, a fall, more of a follower, more of a, like, he'll, he would do anything for anyone, um, if they asked him. But he wasn't necessarily, he wasn't a visionary person. He wasn't a leader to, that just wasn't who he was made to be by God.

But we were all, but we were taught in our religious community that that's what he was supposed to be. Right. And then I was a natural leader. I was a, I love to organize things. I love to initiate things. I was very visionary, had lots and lots of ideas, but I was told, no, no, no. That's not what you can do.

'cause you are the wife now. So now you need to just get under your husband. And, and let him lead. The only problem is that he couldn't lead 'cause he didn't, you know, know how, and he didn't like to do it. He didn't want to do it. And so

both of us, honestly, sometimes when I look back on that, I'm like, I wonder if our marriage would've gone different if we had been in a completely different environment that would've celebrated who we were and allowed us to be who we were.

And then we could have felt comfortable being who we were, but instead. We put pressure, pressure upon each other to be what we were told that we had to be, and neither one of us was able to do that. Well, I mean, we tried. We, I think we both gave it our best shot, but neither one of us was able to do that well, and it really screwed with our minds and it screwed with our.

Uh, and there were other issues too, obviously, but I, I think this was a big one. So I just think we, we were programmed even we were programmed and, and so I had to do a lot of deprogramming just to get myself to the place where I could actually file for divorce. And, and then I still feel like I'm deprogramming.

And I talk about my whole deprogramming process in all the scary little gods, which we talked about in the first episode. So that, that was my journey. But, um, let's talk about what identity is and what it isn't. Because it's not your relationship status, it's not the roles that you're playing, it's not your reputation, which we all, we tend to think that that's what it is.

It is our, the essence of who we are. It's who God created us to be, just all by ourselves, apart from anybody else, and apart from what other people tell us that we're supposed to be.

Diana: I. Yeah. You know what? One, this is hard to describe. I'll do my best. One way that I started to understand this for me, because it, I still get tripped up by this question, you know, like, oh, it's your essence.

You know, like, which is actually the word I used to describe it. When I saw this question, I was like, well, it's kind of the essence of who you are. And then you said it. I'm like, okay, but what does that mean? And so when I started doing. Work with, um, like cognitive behavioral therapy tools, which I use in my mind renewal work that I do to talk about all the time in my podcast.

Um, I, I heard someone else describe it, like, to examine what you're thinking is almost like to pull yourself out of your brain and then there's this part of you that's like looking in and can. Examine what you're thinking and think about what you're thinking. And in some ways meta, I think it was meta that that higher version of myself, this sounds so crazy, all the Christian women listening, Hey, we're, we're the Christian women too.

We're with you. But it's like, but God made us this way. Yeah. If he tells us to renew our minds, how are we supposed to do that? If we can't have a piece of us that can come out and examine our minds.

Natalie: That's right. Animals can't do this. Yeah. But we can. So there's this,

Diana: uh, extra other, uh, essence part of us that this is our, maybe we wanna call it our soul.

This is the part I think that runs deep. This is the where our passions live. Even if we can't totally articulate or understand our own passions, this is where, uh, some dreams live. Even if we haven't totally fleshed out our dreams or aren't totally sure what they are, they're, you know, they're in there.

This. Being the way God, who God created us to be and all the fire he put in us and all the goodness he put in us. Yeah. That's who we are. And I think it's our journey to uncover that and figure it out And you know, for the people listening, Hey, we're all, all divorced women of divorced Christian women.

Most of us probably really struggle to figure that out while we were married. 'cause we were working so hard and trying to. Hold the system together, keep the institution together, and we lose ourself in that, at least a lot of us do. So I, I'm still figuring it out at, but yeah, it's meta, that's the answer.

Natalie: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. I think, uh, my identity used to be. Uh, because, because I wasn't necessarily, well, I think I was a little bit coming out and looking at what I was thinking, but I was so wanting to be whoever I needed to be, depending on who I was around at the time. A little bit like a chameleon, and I think it was because I wanted people to be emotionally comfortable.

I'm an INFJ. I think that's where that comes from. But because that made me emotionally comfortable, if they were comfortable, then I was comfortable. So then I would try to be whatever they wanted me to be mostly. But I did also have a streak of like why, and sometimes I would try to get others to back off a little bit and give me some breathing room in the very nicest INFJ way.

But when they didn't. Then I would feel re very resentful, but I al so I'd feel resentful of them, but I'd also feel very guilty that I felt resentful. I just had no bo I had no boundaries. Right. It was my own lack of boundaries. I, and, and at the end of the day, the bottom line is I just really didn't know who I was.

And if I. There, there might have been a part of me that sort of knew who I was or who I wanted to be, but I just didn't think it was possible to be that and also be loved, and I really just wanted to be loved. I didn't know that I could actually learn how to provide that love and acceptance inside of myself with the Holy Spirit.

Um, I just felt like I needed everyone else to be emotionally comfortable so that I could be comfortable so that they would love me, and so that also they would be easy for me to love. Yeah, it totally makes sense. Yeah. What a mess. Right? Yeah. But

Diana: so much, so many people, we, we deal with that. I mean, it's either, it's in all our relationships, it's in some of our relationships.

I think everybody listening can relate to that in some way.

Natalie: Yeah. Yeah. Okay, so how could a woman know that she's really disconnected from her identity? And maybe, and maybe we could talk too, about some of those traps to watch out for, even after we're divorced.

Diana: I think the biggest thing I hear, if we just wanna like what's a clue?

Or you said, what's a small sign that someone's disconnected from their identity? Listen to yourself. If you wanna know. This is you in conversation, when you're planning, when you are thinking about your future, when you're asking yourself something, when someone else is asking you something. You know, like a deeper thing about life.

If you're frequently saying, I don't know. I think that's a huge sign that you're disconnected from your identity and you know it. What do you do when you don't know? Where do you want to eat? I don't know. Where do you think you'll be next year? I don't know. How do you make decisions? How do you move forward?

How do you, um, like, I like the phrase step into who God created you to be. Yeah. If, if you're filled with thoughts of, I don't know. You might not even be saying it out loud. You might just be thinking it, or you might be spinning and not landing on something.

Natalie: Yep, yep. It can be as simple too as, um, I, I know people in the forum in Flying higher have been like, well, now I'm in this new apartment or this new home after my divorce and I don't know how to decorate it.

Now, some people they know right away, they're like, oh my gosh, I can't wait to decorate my apartment. I was never able to do that the way I liked to before. And they're just, you know, ready to go at it. But others are thinking, I don't even know what I like. I don't even know what colors I like, and they're so paralyzed by making those decisions.

And also we, we'll see people come in the forum and ask, you know, what should I do? They'll ask coaches or other people, what do you think I should do? Instead of, instead of looking inside of them themselves and saying, do I know what I wanna do? And if I don't know what I wanna do, how can I, what do I need to address inside of myself so that I can get to the place where I have confidence in making my own decision?

Being okay if I make a mistake, you know, if I, I like to, even with my business, I like to say, you know, I throw a lot of spaghetti against the wall to see what sticks. And a lot of it doesn't stick. A lot of it just slides right down the wall and it doesn't stick. But, you know, once in a while I'll throw some on against the wall and it'll work, and then, and then I run with that.

But you gotta throw, I, I'm gonna keep throwing the spaghetti. Yeah. Until I figure it out. But, um, I also think, um, just giving credibility to the, to other people's opinions, giving more credibility to the opinions of others than to your own opinion is a huge sign that you're disconnected from your identity.

Mm-hmm. So, um, and I, we see this a lot. I definitely struggled with this. But it is something that you can work on and, and, and I notice it now as soon as I am, as soon as I realize, oh, I really respect that person's opinion to the point where I'd probably do what they wanted me to do more than what I would wanna do.

Actually, you helped me this with this, even in my last divorce. You would ask me sometimes you'd say, well, Natalie, what do you want?

Diana: What do

Natalie: you want? And it always stopped me in my tracks and I would go, oh gosh, I didn't think about that. What do I want? And then when I asked myself I would have an answer,

Diana: then I would.

Yeah, because you're like, what about the house? What about the kids? What about my work? And what about all? You know? It's like, well what? What if

we didn't think about what the business needs, what the kids need, or what your soon to be ex-husband needs? And we just thought about, what do you want? Yeah. That.

Yeah. And, and that's even, so, I mean, this is a, a process. I, again, I, I, I talk like this all the time, but I think this is all my, uh, another friend of mine uses the word becoming. I think this is a part of us becoming, becoming more of ourselves, becoming, um, closer spiritually to God, you know? And, and.

Solidifying that and you know, I don't know, becoming more like Christ. But that's our journey, right? Is, is um, understanding his character and, and all that kind of stuff. But the word becoming kind of describes us. And if we're, we're always working on it, and that's okay. That's my point. We're always working on it and that's okay.

So if there's some still some things you're like, I don't know, or what do I want? Maybe you don't know today, but figure it out.

Natalie: Yeah. Um, I think one I, and maybe you see this too a lot in your coaching, in our group coaching, in Flying hire, there will be a lot of times someone will come with, um, they'll have a career, they'll wanna make a career move, or they'll want to like, make a, a move within the career, within the job that they have, the current job that they have, they wanna make a position move and they don't know they're paralyzed by doing that too, because they're not.

They don't know if they sh have the right to ask. Right. They don't. They are, they're plain small. They're, they don't know if they're worth having that job, even though when they'll tell everything that they've done and what they've contributed to the company and it's like, oh my gosh, girl, you totally need to, you know?

Yes. The company needs you to move into the next. To move up to the next level and you just need to let them know that you're ready and willing to do that or, or even realizing I am in a career that I don't enjoy. I don't like this, and I do I, but I do. I deserve to go back to school. And, and invest in myself in getting a d in getting a different education so I can go down a different pathway in my career.

Do I deserve that? I mean, my ex-husband did. I worked, I, I worked to put him through school, but I don't know, am I really worth it? Do I have anything to contribute? Those are more just signs, I guess, to look for. Um, if you're asking

yourself questions like that or feeling hesitant to ask for what you want or to take up space in the world, then you might, that might be some.

Some signs that you have a little work to do on your own identity and knowing, knowing and really feeling comfortable in your own skin and who you are and what you deserve.

Diana: Yeah. I think that's speaking to that identity trap that, um, where you're always trying to rise up and take care of everyone else.

Yeah. And not putting yourself last. Yeah. So it's like the, you always use the phrase, throwing yourself under the bus. So it's like the kids need something. Well, you know, okay. I guess I'll cancel my plans. Um, my, oh yeah, totally. My parents need something. The boss needs something. Okay. I guess I'll do my stuff later.

And, um, yeah, it's like, how does that relate to identity? Is that people pleasing? Yeah, but the, your identity gets lost in that because you're telling yourself in a way, I, I never matter, my stuff doesn't matter. You're not. Um, nurturing your identity, you're dismissing it.

Natalie: Yeah. Even when I said the word deserve, like what you need, understanding what you deserve, that immediately brings up one of my old programmings that says.

What you, how audacious for you to say that you, that someone deserves something or that you deserve something. The only thing you deserve is to burn in hell forever and ever, and it's only by the grace of God that you're even alive and taking a breath in. You don't deserve anything more than that. That is my programming.

Yeah. So I can't even use the word deserve without that coming up for me Now, I don't believe that in my adult. Uh, you know, core self. I don't believe that anymore, but there is always going to be a part of me that's going to bring that thought up and go, I don't know, should you really talk about women deserving anything?

Because that seems pretty self-centered. Right? And un-Christian. But I think that's, I. Kind of sad actually.

Diana: Yeah. And I think we miss out on becoming fully, who God created us to be, so that all the gifts he's given us, all the things that we're supposed to be

going out and helping other people and, and bestowing wisdom upon them and giving encouragement.

We, we think we do it by saying yes to everything, but then we just end up depleted in all this like. You know, the idea you have to start a nonprofit or that thing that's gonna change the world, or, um, you know, the work, kind of work you and I are doing, Natalie, where we're helping thousands of women every year to like get out of a painful way of living into an empowered way of living.

And we can't do that if we don't care about who we are, who God created us to be. What, um. What we value, what matters, and then nurture it.

Natalie: Yeah.

Diana: Yeah,

Natalie: that makes me think of, it's not that we deserve based on like, well, I've done enough good things, so I deserve something. It's, um, even in that song from Wicked, uh, defined gravity, she says, everyone deserves a chance to fly.

Everyone. We all deserve a chance to fly because we are made in the image of God, because God endowed us with that, with that, uh, destiny and with that inheritance, we deserve it because. We believe as Christians, we deserve that because of God, that God has given that to us as our, as part of our being His children.

Diana: And you saying those, everyone lyrics gave

Natalie: me

Diana: that, that gave me chills. You just saying those lyrics gave me chills. Yeah. It's incredible. Yeah. I hope that that deserve trigger goes away for you because you do deserve. All of the good stuff, you know? Yeah. And I know you know that.

Natalie: Um, yeah. But like I said, it's the, it's the thought that, well, no, you have to do things to deserve something.

And maybe I haven't done enough. That's always gonna be something within me. May I haven't done enough to deserve it. But again, it's not based on what you've done, I just want everyone to hear this. Mm-hmm. It is, you don't

deserve things because of everything you've done. You deserve it because you are a child of the the living creator God.

That's why, and we are all God's children now, whether or not we recognize that and live into that and is gonna be the degree that we experience, the good feelings that that can give us, some of us aren't ready to believe that or to accept that yet, and so then we won't get to experience that until we do believe, but, but that's what you deserve.

Everyone deserves that. Yeah. And no matter how horrible you've been, maybe you were the one that you know ended your marriage and maybe you didn't. Maybe you were the one that were, was abusive. Who knows? I mean, I'm not, I'm just saying you could have been, and you still deserve a chance to fly because you are, because you belong to God.

Because God created you and he created you to do good things in this world with your life to be who, and that all is wrapped up in who you were created uniquely created to be. The time in history that you were uniquely placed in your unique upbringing could have been abusive, but whatever it was that that's been handed to you in your life, your set of your hand of cards, so to speak.

Play it. I remember, um, someone once told me, you can get a really bad hand of cards in poker and you can still win. You can still win at poker with a bad hand of cards. And I don't play poker, so I don't know how that works, but I. Sounded good to me. Alright. Okay. We're gonna talk about how trauma actually can rewire I our identity because when you've been in survival mode, which many of our listeners have.

You build your identity around coping strategies, and then once you're safe, those strategies aren't gonna help help you out anymore. They actually start to work against you. And so, so that's when you wanna actually do this identity work. Um, so do you wanna talk about that a little bit? Is anything come to your mind?

When, when I,

Diana: I mean the, the only first thing that came to my mind is, wow, what a, what a big question. And, uh. Who are we to answer this? Um, you know, and I know you, what you do as work, you're totally equipped to answer this 'cause you've helped thousands, probably over 10,000 women or. 20,000 women by now who've gone through trauma.

For me, it's a lot less, and I don't have specific training in this, but I have the hundreds of women I've coached through trauma and my own experience and it just really messes with your brain. That's the best way I'd say it. Yeah. It's like I, if you, you've got a car and the engine's running and you know.

It should be going smoothly. And then someone decides, uh, what if we just pour a little grape juice in with the antifreeze? Not a lot, just a little. What will that do? Well, it just starts to mess with the coolant system a little bit. It's still working, but it's kind of mess messed up a little bit. What if we just drop, you know, some yogurt into the gas tank?

What would that do? What if we, uh, put pinch off this tube a little bit here? Stuff can still get through, but I don't know. So my brain thinks in these weird analogies, but I feel like. Our brain's trying to function well, think through things, understand who we are, what's our place in this life, and we've got all these little sabotaging things happening.

Uh, and that's when we're. Going through the situations that are creating trauma, but then when you get outta the situations creating trauma, it's not like all of those things are just good as new again. Yeah. Oh, everything's now that we took the car to somewhere else, all that stuff stopped. No, this hose was still pinched off for a long time.

It's still not functioning properly. Maybe with time, maybe if we massage it or oil it or I don't know what you do to tubes that are getting all dry and crusty in a car, you probably should replace it. Replace, but maybe replace some stuff. Right. And you clean out the antifreeze and put in new stuff. But there's things that have to be done in, in, uh, this is where like you always say the analogy breaks down 'cause that's not how our bodies work.

But you know, there's the book, the body keeps the score. And so even if we put ourself in a good place and we're work trying to work on our identity, the stuff that happened to us is still messing with us. It's messing with our thoughts. It's giving us, uh, physical, you know, sometimes I'm like, my thoughts are fine, but I will see someone and I go into a trauma response just because I see them and nothing bad is happening and it messes with my mind and, and.

I can think, well, I'm never gonna be better. And, um, something, you know, if I can't heal, something's wrong with me and what's the point in trying, I'm just gonna always be broken like this. Mm-hmm. And it can, can continue to mess with our identity. Yeah. So, I mean, what do you think about my,

Natalie: well, no, that's, that's absolutely true and I, I, I know everyone.

Everyone is dealing with some kind of trauma in their lives. I like to boil things down to, you know, what is that word in cooking? When you boil it down to a, not, it's not essence, it's like, oh,

Diana: um, distill.

Natalie: No, it's, there's like a word for what it is that's left after you've boiled it all down. Yeah. But anyway, you guys know what I'm, if you, if you're a cooker, you know what I'm doing?

Reduction. You can picture it. A reduction. There you go. You've got this reduction. Okay. So I think that I, for me, I had to be whatever someone else wanted because that's how you got love and that's the reduction. We are all, the bottom line is we are all looking for love. That means someone who will mirror back to us.

We are beloved, that we are okay. And, and many of us grew up. You know, we had to be a good girl. To get love from our family. We had to be cool and say funny things to be loved by our peers. We had to be submissive to be loved by our spiritual leaders. We had to be pretty, to be loved by a man. We had to be cheerful and hardworking to be loved by our husbands.

We had to be happy and giving and generous to be loved by our friends. We had to be the best mother in the world to be loved by our kids. And the thing that I have learned is that I had to start loving myself and until I could start loving, giving myself the love that I needed in partnership with the Holy Spirit.

I couldn't be myself until I could actually love myself. I know that sounds so cliché. I mean, you hear there's like songs like that that, and it sounds so cliché, but that is literally the bo that is the reduction of everything that this human race needs. Once I started loving myself, I could finally be myself.

And to the degree that I'm not able to be myself is where I start seeing, oh, there's some areas that I'm really shaming myself. Like I've got these voices in my head. You know, you know the voices that are telling you that you're, you screwed that up and you're not good at this, and oh my gosh, you're a terrible mother and you're a terrible grandmother because you're not, you know, doing this, that, and the other thing, and all the things.

That's not loving ourselves. That's not giving, we would never do that to, well, maybe we wouldn't do that to other people, but we would definitely try not to do that to our beloved children or to our, you know, beloved friend or whatever. But we do that to ourselves all the time. So I, I think that's trauma, but I think part of healing trauma is definitely going to be addressing.

How you're, how are you taking care of yourself? And that's where I love, I, uh, internal family systems. That's been the one thing that's helped me to actually get to know my inner system. And I don't, I'm not a IFS trained person, but, um, and I don't even like to think in terms of, uh. In terms of like, I've got all these millions of parts and I know who they all are.

I do talk about that in my book, all the Scary Little Gods. And I did kind of break down some of my parts. You get to meet some of 'em and they're pretty funny. But, um, now I kind of just think I simplify it and I'm just like, there's a little girl inside of me, a little Natalie. And how am I parenting her?

How am I loving her? How am I helping her to be safe when she feels safe? I actually do pretty well in this world, and when she's feeling terrified and scared and like no one cares about her, that's when I start falling apart. But it is actually my number one job. To make sure she feels loved and safe.

It's not anyone else's job. It's not my kids' job. It's not my grandkid's job. It's not any, it's not anyone in my program's job. It's my job.

Diana: So can I compare that to, in the beginning, I, we were, we were talking about how, like I was saying, if my husband's fine, I'm fine. If, or my, if my marriage is fine, I'm sorry.

If my marriage is fine, I'm fine. If my marriage is not fine, I'm not fine. And you were kind of talking about your little Natalie and. Side of you. If she's good and feels safe, I feel good and safe. If she's not fine, you know I'm not fine. But wait a second, that's totally in your control. That is the place that you can nurture yourself and grow and get yourself more regularly to that place of safety.

So I think it's really good news. That's that you, it's can recognize that and have that, oh, we were talking about really good news recently. That is really good news. Yes. It's 'cause we can do something about that. Which here you, I know your next question. Let me throw this one to you, instead of you throwing it to me that says, introduce the idea of self reclamation, reclamation, self reclaim, reclaiming yourself.

Yeah. Self reclamation at a as a slow and sacred practice.

Natalie: Yeah, I think, um, for me this is, this is the idea of coming back to yourself. So not, it's not necessarily like becoming a new person. Sometimes we talk about that we're, we're be evolving into the next best version of ourself. I like to talk in terms of that.

I think that's, there's some truth to that, but also it's coming back to who God already, who you already are in your core that maybe you just haven't discovered or gotten to know yet. So, and I think. That's gonna take some time. But again, it kind of goes back to the whole internal family systems, getting to know yourself inside, learning to love those different parts of you, and, and they're, they're messy.

They're not all, they're not all amazing. You know, there is a, there's a part in me that wants to kill me. That's suicidal and that's not, you know, do. So what do I do? Do I shame that part and say, you're, I can't believe that you, I can't believe that you just wanna murder yourself, murderer. No. You, if you, you come across like that to your inner parts, all you're gonna do, what's that gonna bring up in, in your body?

Just a whole lot of shame and, and frustration. So we want to connect with those parts with curiosity. Like, I wonder why I have this part that want, that thinks that I should just be dead. And this part doesn't come up a lot anymore, but it used to come up all the time. And, but I, it's, it, it's been curious to me that I have this part and how can I show this part compassion, like this part is trying to protect me.

This part truly does believe that if I am annihilated. That, that I will finally be safe and protected. And in some ways it's true. You know, if I leave all of the messiness of my life, maybe I will feel better. But, but also I won't be here to, you know, fulfill the destiny that whatever that is, that God has for me here.

So I need to settle this part down and also let this part know I've got, I've got this, it's gonna be okay. We, someday we will be gone from this life. But in the meantime. I've got this. I'm gonna be your mother. I'm gonna take care of you and love you and keep you safe. And then this part doesn't have that big feeling of wanting to end it anymore because it feels like, okay, I've got a, um, I've got a mommy, you know, that's gonna take care of me.

And I've needed that. Uh, honestly, I think we need to be a mother. First to our own. And the people that I've done this work in my program in Flying Free and

Flying higher, they have told me that their parenting of their own children has transformed when they, and I can totally say this for my own parenting too, when I've learned to mother myself and be a good mother to me, I have been a far better mother and understanding and more compassionate and more curious.

With my kids and more connected to my kids. And so I, this, this is not just important work just for us. This has a re it's reverberates into all of our relationships, I think.

Diana: Yeah, I, uh, I can't say I always think of it as mothering myself, but I have two questions that I regularly ask myself. And I, I think I started asking my kids this first and then these two things, and then I started asking myself this.

So al almost flip, but either way it helps, um. It helps explore that deeper part of me and also pay attention to me and acknowledge me and validate me just in these two questions I ask myself, um, what do you need right now? So it doesn't even mean anything has to be going wrong in a moment. If I just feel a moment of.

Where there's, so it could be a moment where I'm in emotional pain or I'm struggling, or I'm panicking, or it could be a moment of boredom or it could be all sorts of things. But I ask, what do you need right now? And then the follow-up question or a question at a completely separate time is, how can I help you?

And that did really, I mean, I, I think I had some good foundations as a mom, but I saw my relationships with my, with my kids all go to another level when. I started asking them, how can I help you? And I think when we ask ourselves that, that opens up a different space inside of us. You know, like thinking of a moment when you're judging yourself or, um, you know, that inner voice says something nasty like, oh, mine that does, if I make a mistake, I, I hear this every time, Diana, you're so stupid.

Yeah. And, uh, it doesn't take hold of me like it used to. I used to sit with it, but now I'm just like, oh, there's that voice. Now that's not true, Diana. You're not stupid, but what, what's going on? What do you need right now? How can I help you? And that takes it to a completely different place.

Natalie: Oh yeah.

That's beautiful.

Diana: Yeah.

Natalie: Um, you know, those are great. Que I think. For people who are listening. Those are great questions to write down. Maybe we'll put this in the show notes some questions. There's some other questions that you can ask yourself to help yourself figure out who you are. And, um, maybe Diana, I'll just quick ask you and then we can, and then I'll give an answer.

We can just give it like a one-liner answer, but just to show people like what's, how you might wanna journal this. But, um, one of the questions is, so definitely write those two down. What do I need right now? How can I help you? You're asking this to yourself. What did you love as a little girl before anyone told you who to be?

Diana: Yeah. This one I'm still trying to rediscover. I loved being silly. Hmm. And I haven't quite, Ooh, I could feel the emotion come up. I haven't totally gotten back to that yet. Saturday Night Live. Yeah. No. Whose line is it Anyway, and then I went in person. It's the in-person show's called who's live. Anyway, it's improv.

Used to be a TV show with Joe Carey. Oh, okay. Oh my gosh. Yeah. But I just wanna go around being silly, like I would make funny faces and do silly dance moves, and I don't care what anybody thought and I haven't fully reclaimed that. But anyway. How about you? What did you love as a little girl? When

Natalie: I was a kid, I loved organizing groups of kids.

And now look at me. I'm organizing groups of people I know. Perfect. I've been doing that my whole life. Yeah. Okay. What are five? Adjectives that describe the woman you want to become. I know this is putting you on the spot, but maybe well, uh, what comes up for you immediately?

Diana: Yes. Um, at peace, strong, kind, compassionate, creative.

Those are the five that came up for me right away. Ooh, I

Natalie: like that.

Diana: Yeah. How about you?

Natalie: Um, the five that just immediately came up for me were loving, wise, compassionate, generous, and forgiving.

Diana: Mm. Yeah. Good. Somebody to choose from, but good too. I'm gonna, I know you're gonna take all of

Natalie: yours too. I'm like,

Diana: I wanna be forgiving too.

Natalie: I wanna be creative too. Someone, someone said to me recently, are you, was it you? Maybe it was you. Let me find out. They said, are you a creative person? I don't know if I remember if you're a creative person or not. No, I think it was someone else who said that. Me. Oh, that wasn't

Diana: me. I think

Natalie: you're

Diana: totally

Natalie: creative.

Yeah. And I was like, I'm pretty sure I'm a creative person. You're totally creative. I'm like, I don't think this person knows me very well. Yeah. I didn't think it was you. I think it was someone else. Anyway. Okay. Where do you feel most alive? Alive, huh

Diana: Uh, in the presence right now, in, in the presence of all four of my kids.

Okay. Which is interesting for that to be the first thing that pops in my mind because, um, I'm kind of like, you know, great, you're 18, goodbye. You know, I, oh, it's kindergarten, goodbye. I am always fine letting them go and when I'm away from them for long periods of time, I don't usually sweat it too much though.

When I did drop my son off in New York last year to move away out of state. That I felt sad for an hour. Oh no, I do. I do still feel sad, but I mean that sad where I was like, I have to cry. Yeah. Okay. And then I do miss them and I feel sad outside of that. That was a joke. But yeah, I feel almost alive when they're all together.

So that would've, last time would've been Christmas. And then a year ago for Mother's Day, we all went to a professional baseball game together, and that

was fabulous. I love those. How about you? When do you feel most alive? Oh gosh.

Natalie: I love that too. I love being with all my kids together too. It's been a couple of years now, but, um, I th when I'm po I think it's when I'm podcasting because I love helping women.

I, I, I love helping other people and I mean, I love it. Like, I love thinking. People are having epiphanies and light bulbs are going off and their whole lives are gonna change. It's, and I love that. That just makes me feel so, so happy. And then I also love communicating whether it's, you know, I used to love singing.

I used to sing. And you used to be a singer too. You, well, I think you still do sing a lot. Um, used to sing. I, I love writing. I love talking, and so podcasting is totally my jam. That's why I'm doing a second podcast and I feel so excited about it and not, you know, drained by it. If I could just podcast and do nothing else, I wish I didn't have to do really anything else.

Just podcast. Just podcast and hang out with my kids and grandkids, like I would just love that. But you know. I think two is probably enough. Okay. So if no one else had an opinion, what would you do differently this week and or would you do anything differently?

Diana: Yeah, actually I, this is a great, so this is, we're, you're giving us this journal prompt so everyone take that, do it in your journal.

It's a great question and some of you might be like me and I don't have anything. I, I feel even with the ups and downs, you know, some, some weeks are great, some weeks are hard. Some days are great, some days are hard 'cause I'm just a human being going through stuff. I just am embracing all of it. I'm like, I love my life.

This is the journey. This is what God had in mind for us. Yeah. This is, this is living and, yep. Um, I mean, I have all sorts of ideas about, oh, what I could do better in my business or what could I. Oh, whatever. But I've, you know, here's one thing I can, I'm doing differently this week. If no one has an opinion, I'm gonna talk on the Divorce Women's Podcast because that is one thing, you know, 'cause you said, Hey, I'm gonna start this podcast.

You wanna come on with me and be my sidekick sometimes? And I'm like, wait, what are you calling it? I, I'm gonna be announcing to the world. I'm

divorced every time I'm on this podcast. So if, if nobody else had an opinion. I would embrace this even more fully. That's what I would do differently.

Natalie: Wow. Yeah, so I'm working on it.

Diana: I am embracing this.

Natalie: Oh, good. Good. I'm glad. Yeah, and I'm just like, everyone's opinion has always been so contrary to mine. I was called a, uh, well I won't even say it. I was called names by someone on Facebook, or No, it was on YouTube recently. Uh, yesterday. I won't say the names that they called me. It was a Christian, you know, Christians are so.

Hateful kind and loving. Not all. Some

Diana: are, some Christians are hateful and many are wonderful.

Natalie: Yes, yes. So I call him the, there's some Christians who actually believe in Jesus and follow him. And then there's other Christians who don't. That that's, that's all I can say about that. But anyway, um, yeah, I just feel like, you know what, if people don't like the divorce, people don't, you know, they call us pariahs and they, they don't like divorced Christian women.

Heck, I'm gonna do a podcast then called Divorced Christian Woman. Like why not just put it, put it right there in their face. Yeah. Nanny, nanny, boo boo. Call me all the names you want to. All right, we're gonna do one more question. Um, 'cause I do wanna talk about boundaries as an identity building tool because boundaries are so important and they do that is really, um.

If we don't have boundaries we don't have, you know, then that's a huge red flag that we're struggling with our identity. 'cause boundaries are basically the where we end and someone else begins, and we have to know who we are to know where those boundaries are. So, um, every time you say no to somebody that vi or to something that's violating your values, you are reinforcing who you are.

Boundaries aren't mean like Christians. I mean, I've, I think there's, well, I know this 'cause women have told me this, that their husband said, well, you can't have boundaries. Boundaries are not appropriate in a marriage. There are no boundaries in a marriage. What? That is completely a lie. Boundaries are sacred scaffolding.

And honestly if we, we, if you have a well boundary, two individuals who are well boundaried in a marriage, you've got a great marriage. If you don't, you've got a dysfunctional marriage. That's my opinion. I.

Diana: That's where the, the Christian stuff we grew up with, I think kinda, um, sets us up to lose ourselves and lose our identity.

Like, yeah, you shall become one. Um, you know, he, he's the head and you're the body and you work together and you do what he says. And, and, and, um, and then it's like, well, but I don't. He's doing something that I don't think is right, but I guess I can't decide that. And we just let go of more and more of ourselves.

And then that is, I, I had boundaries in life, but I, for many years, I had zero boundaries in my marriage. And, um. The where I started to regain my identity, it, this had to be a huge turning point. And we were trying different marriage counselors, you know, as we always did. And we didn't stick with this one very long, like we always did.

And, but he said, and he, I thought we would, 'cause he used to be a friend of my ex-husbands, they were in groups together at church and stuff. But he said to me in a, in a single session, he's like, well, you know, when he does that, is that really. How you wanna respond, you know, does that align with what you believe in stuff?

And I was like, huh. And then he said, I ha I would like you to read a book. It's called Boundaries by Cloud and Townsend.

Natalie: Mm.

Diana: And I was like, all right, I'll read that. And when I started reading that, I was like, what? What in the world?

Natalie: Yeah.

Diana: And they give an example of like, you have your house in your yard and then the other person in your life has their house in your yard and you set up the sprinklers to water your lawn and then just, they just take the sprinklers and set 'em up in their lawn and you're like, use your water.

And they're like, no, use yours. You know? And we're like, I don't know what to do about that. So, okay. And then we just suffer and suffer and suffer. Our lawn

dies and theirs is looking great 'cause we don't have any boundaries. And E, everything started changing. Baby steps. I couldn't do it all at once.

Natalie: Yeah.

Diana: And I'm like, what if I set one little boundary here? What if I set one little boundary here? And that is how I thought of it for a long time. And I do think of it differently now. Um, as I grew in that, and as I was rediscovering my own identity, I was like, I. Someone was talking to me about values and I was like, values?

What do I value? That is a good question. And I started making a list of the things I valued and when I knew what I valued. And it could be character traits or it could be like ideas. Like I value hard work, I value sobriety. I value honesty, I value cleanliness. I value kindness. You know, so it the, the way people act or character.

Pieces, whatever for me and for other people. So if I'm like, I value respectful conversations, then when someone raises their voice, I know what to do. I'm gonna leave the conversation, right? It's so easy. And, and when I'm rooted in knowing what my value is, I'm like, this doesn't have to be so hard. I mean, it is still hard to execute boundaries because the people pleasing side of us doesn't want the other person to feel upset or bad about a decision we make, and so we wanna placate them to avoid that.

So, I know there's a lot involved in this, but the stronger you get in your own values, the easier it is to have boundaries. And I like to think of it another way too. If, if boundaries sounds scary, you can just decide ahead of time how you'll act in certain situations. Yeah, have decided ahead of time. If someone raises their voice, I'll exit the conversation.

Natalie: Yeah, making that decision in advance helps you feel more powerful. 'cause you, when, when it happens, then you're like, well, I've already decided what I'm gonna do. I don't have to make the decision on the spur of the moment when it's scary and uncomfortable.

Diana: Totally. Yeah. Yeah. What are your thoughts on boundaries and, and that, uh, how that fits in?

Natalie: Yeah. Um. There is a, an exercise in the, in the kaleidoscope where you go through and figure out what your core values are. And I remember when I did, when I did that exercise and I made this little kind of collage of my core

values and put 'em up, they are a, they're like a north star for me. And I, I don't remember what they're now, but this is back when I was going through my first divorce, I was like, I need to know what my values are and I do need to make decisions based on that.

Um, I think the more I know and appreciate who God made me to be, the more I stick with, with what I'm good at and decline being involved in things that I don't enjoy and I'm not good at. And I'm just gonna give an example. I became a grandma almost two years ago. And I've had to figure out, you know, what that looks like for me and how different it is.

And it's okay that it's different that I'm a different kind of grandma than my mom was or than my, my even grand my own grandparents were. And um, like for example, my mom was very involved in her grandkid's lives their whole lives. JJ ve, she went to each home of her grandkids. She had three daughters, so she went to each home every single week.

She spent a, a whole day in each home playing with the kids, and then the her daughters, we could go and go do our grocery shopping. Uh, that was our errand day for, for, for all three of us, I think. And, um, and so my kids grew up just bonding with my mom. Which was beautiful, but then I, but then now I'm, now, I'm a grandma, but I have a full-time job and I also have four teenagers in my house right now.

So I don't have the capacity to go and spend an entire day with EI have two, two kids who have children, so two fam, uh, separate families. And one of my son had triplets. Now when he had triplets? Well, can you imagine what that was like? The first, no. Their first year? No. Yeah, it was unbelievable. I mean, we were so thankful that they all, you know, survived and that they, they were born prematurely, but, um, they did really well.

But, but I was going over there once a week in the evenings and bringing them a meal once a week. And I did that for over a year. Until I had my car accident and then I broke my wrist and couldn't do anything. But, so that kind of shifted things. But I do remember thinking after about a year and a half, no, it wasn't quite that long.

It was over a year though, almost a year and a half before my accident. I remember thinking, I don't know if I can do this forever. Mm-hmm. Because this is really. Like it was a challenge. It was challenging to, um, to do that every single week. And so I, and then I, and then I had the accident kind of decided

for me, and then I kind of had to go back and think, okay, what am I willing to do?

You know, it took a couple, three months for my wrist to be workable again. So what do I wanna do? What do I wanna offer my kids? And, um. By that time all the kids were, my daughter had a baby at the same time. My son had his triplets. So they were, they're all right around the same age. Um, and it's so much fun, but life looks different.

But I'm not able to be that kind of grandma and I, and there's a part of me that's like, bad grandma. You're just bad. Oh, and also the triplets. Their other grandmother is, uh, their, their other grandparents. It's an intact couple. They are retired. They've been able to just help out a ton. So those kids have really bonded with, with their other grandparents.

And you know, there's a part of me that feel kind of, I mean, I'm so happy for that, for the grandkids and for the other grandparents, but also there's a part of me that's like, oh, I wish I could have that, but I don't have the time to make that, to make that happen. I went over to babysit and the other grand was there and she, she said, uh, she said to one of the grandkids, she goes.

Natalie's here. Look at Natalie's here. Uh oh. And I didn't say anything but inside my head I was thinking, actually I am the other grandma. Right? But as the kids get older, we'll, you know, that'll all iron out. But that's kind of it, kind of it, it. It tickled the little, not tickled, like, uh, poked at the part of me that feels like I'm, am I really being a grandma?

Maybe I'm just being a Natalie to these beautiful children that I love so much, but I really can't. But that's okay. Those are my boundaries. I'm, that's not who I am. I'm working full time. I have four teenage kids at home and I can't be that kind of grandma, and that's okay. That's not my identity. Yeah.

That's not who I am. And I'm not even, I raised nine kids. I'm exhausted of kids. I'm doing that, to be honest with you, I'm, I don't really like being by myself with small, small children. It, it, it, it's exhausting to me. And I think it triggers a lot of, uh, some of my trauma even of being just, yeah. Raising my kids in, in the environment that I raised them in and feeling overwhelmed all the time.

That can come up a little bit for me too. So, but I love it when all my kids come over and they bring the grandkids and they hang out at my house. Oh my gosh. I'm just, I am in seventh heaven when that happens. So. Anyway. Yeah. And

also, here's another thing. I'm sorry I'm just blabbing here, but let me just say one more thing.

I, my, my life is super busy, but I also have health issues that I have had to make a priority because I think, I feel like when we get older, if we don't start taking care of ourselves, you know, work, working out, uh, doing. Whatever, walking more, um, that and those things take time. We, we, and, but if we don't do that, we're not gonna last into our eighties and nineties in, in a way that is, you know, where we can be active and actually be interacting with our kids in the way we probably want to.

So even because of those time consuming things. But, you know, there's a part of me that's like, well, that's so selfish to go work out.

Diana: Yeah. But actually no, no, no, because we've gotta take care of ourselves. These boundaries help us take care of ourselves. Yeah. If we don't feed ourselves, if we don't nurture that essence, our identity and have boundaries to make sure that we're a priority, we will be depleted for everyone else.

And that, I don't think that's fair. So I think, yeah. No, it's not. I think it's our responsibility. Anyone. Yeah. It's our responsibility. Have boundaries and take good care of ourselves. Yes. And I do believe Jesus expects that of us and he modeled it to the hilt. If you don't believe me, just go Google. How did Jesus has Jesus Have Jesus have boundaries.

And you will find it everywhere. Yes.

Natalie: Yes. Yeah. I think we'll end

Diana: there. Diane. This was a great conversation. Speaking fart.

Yes, it was a great conversation. Excuse me, I'm being silly.

Natalie: There you go. There you go. Fortunately I do have an editor so I can edit out anything that any, but do we really wanna edit it? No, don't edit out me being

Diana: silly. I want more. I don't think so, that I have never said that. That was a moment for me today.

That's important. Let that live in cyberspace forever. Me being silly. All right, sounds good.

Natalie: Thank you so much, Diana, and we'll see you next time. Bye.

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