

# The Divorced Christian Woman Podcast with Natalie Hoffman, Episode 5 - Friendships After Divorce

**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:** Welcome to episode five of the Divorce Christian Women Podcast. This season is called the First 365 days after divorce, and today I have with me Diana, Loretta, Wendy, Gillian, and Lisa, who are all divorced Christian women, and we are gonna be talking about friendships. So thanks for joining me, ladies.

First question is this, when you first separated or divorced, how did you decide who to tell and how much to tell? And what were some of the reactions that you got? And maybe you could share how you handled some of the more hurtful ones. How did you figure out, you know, how much to tell, how much honesty to say, or like how much to, you know, how much you wanted to keep private, that kind of thing.

**Diana:** Hey, Natalie, Diana here. Hi. So great to be back. I love, I love this podcast and I love talking about all this stuff. I thought I would just jump in and go first and, uh, get this off my mind because this was one of the. Biggest things that I worked on, I, I think I spent hours thinking, how am I gonna tell people, what am I gonna tell people?

And I listened to the Flying Free podcast and I went, uh, to a whole bunch of resources online. I think I took notes specifically on things you said, Natalie, and then started putting together. And so I made a list of who I wanted to tell so they wouldn't hear it another way. And then I made myself a one sentence script.

It just went like this. Nice. While our marriage had good in it, my husband persisted with deception and destructive behaviors that undermined our ability to have a healthy relationship. Despite many attempts at counseling and

intervention, the harmful patterns continued and it just couldn't sustain it anymore.

And when I kept it really high level like that, it felt honest. So I wasn't like trying to be like, oh, it just, I mean, he's a good person. Everything was, I mean, you know, and not try to throw anybody under the bus. I wanted to be honest, but I didn't think it was my burden to bear. So it, it was interesting to see that people could respect that not, they did not ask further questions because they gave them enough.

'cause it would feel like prying if they asked more.

**Natalie:** Right. And,

**Diana:** and so then they just respected it.

**Natalie:** I love that. I had a great

**Diana:** experience doing that.

**Natalie:** Yeah, that is fantastic.

**Lisa:** Diana and thanks, uh, Natalie for inviting us. Um, I had something very similar where I crafted, uh, a little, you know, sentence that I would share, but I started with, I kinda went through and thought, who do I value?

Who do I want in my life? Um, and I started there and I, I said something like, you know, nobody knows what goes on behind closed doors. But I have felt like God's leading me every step of the way and his presence hasn't left me. And that's, I kept it high level as well. Like, and, and I was surprised, the ones that I gave a few more paragraphs to were.

Intimate friends, and I valued them and I was scared. I mean, the fear, I think, in every step of divorce and post-divorce is like you have to break through that fear all the time. Yeah. But when you do, I oftentimes you're surprised because they're like, oh yeah, I'm so sorry, or, you know. You get a reaction of empathy and love instead of condemnation and judgment.

**Natalie:** Yeah. I love how you brought up God right away, kind of preemptively saying, letting them know that God's been a part of this decision making process so that they can't come back at you and go, well, did you make God a part of your dec? You know what I mean? Exactly. And so it kind of, yeah, I I love that.

That's a great strategy. I don't know if you did that on purpose or if you Oh, yeah. Yeah. Very nice strategy. I sometimes will tell people, um, you can just say, you know, I, it's so painful, I just can't talk about it. Please pray for me and then just leave it there, you know? And then let their imaginations go wherever they wanna go.

But how can they come back and condemn someone who's in deep pain? And that's not lying either. 'cause we all were in deep pain. But sometimes we always feel like we have to talk about it, you know, or sit or disclose why we're in deep pain. We don't, we don't have to tell anyone why we're in deep pain. Um.

Jillian, did you have something to share here?

**Jillian:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. Most of my close friends had been with me through some of the challenges in my marriage and through kind of my awakening process. So they already saw it coming, like it didn't come as a surprise and moving around some friendships, which we became more Facebook friends or Instagram friends, and so there were certain people where it was like the core people in my life.

They knew, they weren't surprised. Um, they saw it as a positive, as a good thing for both of us. And then very similar to Diana and Lisa was having a, a little bit when if, if anybody asked me, which very few people asked why, but now I, I just tell people I wanted him to be someone he wasn't and he didn't wanna be, and he wanted me to be somebody.

I'm not, and it was like you have to drop trying to change the other person. And when I put it like that of like I am no longer gonna try to change him and I can also see how he, you know, he wanted me to be someone I wasn't, and I didn't wanna be that person either, and being okay with that. But very few people pride or ask questions.

There was a lot more support. I, I got very little pushback. The pushback I did get was from people I hardly knew. So in my mind I'm like, your opinion doesn't matter. I really don't care With all love and respect. Yes.

**Natalie:** You know what I love about what you said is the personal responsibility. Mm-hmm. Of saying, I did want him to be someone different.

I wanted him to be a nice person. You know, you didn't have to say that, but I wanted him to be a nice person. I wanted him to be non-abusive. I wanted him to be respectful and honoring, and he didn't wanna be that way. Mm-hmm. He

wanted me to give him, you know, to be his. He wanted to be a flea on a dog and just take everything from me.

And I didn't wanna be that, that person. Mm-hmm. And so, and that's taking personal responsibility, which I think feels so much more empowering in our bodies when we do that. Right. Yeah. Yeah. You feel like the leader of your life. Yeah, exactly. Yeah. Wendy, did

**Wendy:** you have any thoughts

**Natalie:** here?

**Wendy:** I do. I had, so all of everything they all said.

Yeah. That's great. So good. So good. I did have somewhat of a script too. I don't know how great I was about just, you know, having it at the ready and saying it. Great. You know, it took me a while. I feel like for me to not just kind of start saying all kinds of things and still trying to, I trying to coordinate my thoughts.

It's just recently, and I'm honestly still struggling with that just recently. I still can coordinate my, that I can coordinate my thoughts better, but I had a wonderful friend. Um, back, actually right before I was gonna leave, um, and, um, she, she's a real estate agent, so she would come by and pick me up. So that we could speak freely in her car.

And she was a friend, like we had been friend for friends for years and years and years. Went to church together. Our kids grew up together. We had told each other all kinds of stuff. So I felt safe to start, you know, telling I, I told her she was one of the first people that I, and even then I kind of felt like I had to tiptoe into it.

But it, a lot of that was me, like my feelings, um, 'cause divorce at that point was still like the D word, you know? It's like, we can't say divorce, you know? I can't, I can't, I cannot speak of it, especially that I'm gonna do it. But anyway, so she would, but she was amazing. And listened, and listened and listened to me.

And that's, you know, she did what I needed. She sat with me and grieved with me and. You know, comforted me and lifted me up and so, yeah.

**Natalie:** Nice. I wish every Christian woman had a friend like that. Right. Oh, a whole pack of friends like that. Yes. Can any of you share one friendship that surprised you after your divorce?

Either someone who disappeared or someone who unexpectedly showed up for you?

**Loretta:** I can. This is Loretta. Hi. Hi. So I, this is where God showed up for me in a way that at the time, you know, I was still immersed in the, the biblical stuff. Divorce is awful. I'm going against God. Like, so when, when these things started happening, I said, I.

God, like I think God's helping me. I think God's like helping me get divorced. And um, and so I go into, my counselor kind of leads off the last question, but I walked into my counseling. I kind of directed my counselor. I walked in and I said, um, okay, this is the session where I need to figure out what I'm gonna say.

Like, my close siblings know, you know, they, they thought I was brainwashed. They're like, whoa, we had bets on how long you would last. And you know, they're like laughing and we thought you were brainwashed. And, but the other people that I was gonna tell, and I knew it was gonna come up. What do I say? I don't wanna be a deer in the headlights and over, you know, recovering over sharer hair.

So I came up with what worked for me, and I think it was 'cause I was mostly concerned people, you know, the ages of my kids and the whole, this is gonna destroy your kids. So I just said I'm going to st. I stayed until I stayed for my kids until the day I realized I needed to leave for my kids. And there was nothing else to say.

Yeah. So I mean, they could have their opinions, but back to the friendship. So right after I had that counseling session, it was like the next day I get an email from a friend, she's not even a close friend, she's like a soccer mom, friend, an acquaintance, and she says, can I call you privately without your kids around?

So I leave the house and I call her and she says, um, by the way, um. Someone came to me and is everything okay with your marriage? Are you, are you guys okay? And I'm thinking. I haven't told a assault. I haven't even filed, only my siblings. How do you know? Well, I realized it was probably through my kids suspecting something or complaining to their friends that things got volatile in my home when I stopped walking on eggshells.

So I said, uh, well, part of me wants to tell you to tell your friend it's none of their business. And part of me wants to say, please pray for our family. Right? And this is a friend who happens to be of a. Fairly strict religion, and I am, I just really didn't know what to say. And she says, I said, you know what?

You coach my kid, why don't you? I said, he lives with a critical tongue in our home that will help you know how to coach him. He needs some encouragement. Oh. And she says, oh, I wanna tell you something about my life. She had a narcissist mom. She said, and I wanna encourage you that all of us kids are okay now.

Wow. And I was, I was just like, I was just crying and it was my first experience of dealing with it. That friend led to the day I filed, I stayed at my mom's. I come home and I have to have the talk with my husband who's still living with me. After that talk, I crawl into bed, the couch in another room. I opened up my email and that friend had forwarded me six emails from another friend.

She asked if she could connect. I live in a tiny town in the middle of nowhere. This friend had been in your program, Natalie, way back when. She used to have to call in for the calls. She had six emails to me, beloved, you know, this is what you're going through, and there was stuff from Bob Hampton there that I could, you know, I recognized it because I had been immersed, you know.

Drinking from a fire hose, all the information and the knowledge. And I just sat there and cried and cried and cried. And this was, this email was delayed. She had asked about it a week before, but it came at the exact moment I needed it. Wow. And this friend became a resource. She had like a group of women who were struggling, kind of like you have, but locally.

And when CPS came knocking on my door, this friend had been through it. She had been to court 12 times, but she was on the other side of it. So, I mean, God just showed up and yeah, it was great. And one thing I do wanna say is that, um, maybe I should have told a few more people because I had already filed and then my aunt gives me a shout on a Facebook for my anniversary and she shared, oh, we share an anniversary.

Oh, shoot it after I'd already filed it. I'm like my sister. Oh my goodness. You won't

**Natalie:** believe what Aria just put on Facebook. How did you respond to that? Did you say anything? Um, well, I'm

**Loretta:** messaging her like, please take this down. And she'd already gone to Home Depot. She had shared on there and I'm texting her daughter and then I just laughed.

I'm like, you know what? This is just, this is just par for the course.

**Natalie:** Yeah. But by

**Loretta:** this time I had learned like a lot of sense of humor in the whole thing, and that things probably aren't as. Big as they seem at the moment. And this too shall pass, right? Yes,

**Natalie:** yes. And now it's a funny story.

**Loretta:** It's great.

**Natalie:** Exactly. Exactly. Mm-hmm.

**Loretta:** Yeah.

**Natalie:** What advice would you give about dealing with mutual friends, friends that both you and your husband had together, especially if those friends are staying connected to your ex? Jillian, do you have anything? Yeah, so

**Jillian:** I've had some experience with this. Um, we had recently moved states when we got divorced, and so my ex was uh, a coworker of the husband of the couple, and then I was good friends with the wife.

And so for most of our friendships, I had my friends, he had his friends, and we each went our respective ways, but. There was this one couple, and they tend to host things and we are still connected. He, the, the men still work together. I'm still good friends with the wife and they told me, uh, very honestly of like, Hey, we are gonna invite you to both things.

Anytime that we have a party, we, they do a big. Holiday party, um, around Christmas and 4th of July, and it was very much like, we're gonna invite both of you and we know that you can be both be civil and respectful and you can choose not to come. But we're both gonna, we're gonna invite both of you and it's, it's your choice kind of how you want to show up.

And I was. I was like, that's fine. I respect that. And our co-parenting relationship is pretty good right now, so we haven't been, he has chosen not to



attend those parties, which is fine. And so I haven't had a lot of interaction with him. I imagine that may change in the future at some point, but for me, I know.

We're gonna be fine. Um, and, and so it wasn't, it, it's not that I have to see him a lot with those mutual friends. Um, it, it literally is gonna be a couple times a year at most, where it would be in a social environment like that. Uh, but I, I really respected and, and I never asked her to pick sides. I didn't want to do that to them.

I didn't. Like, I don't wanna make things uncomfortable for other people either. Right? And so I'm like, I can, I can show up and, and if things are uncomfortable for me or I don't wanna be there, I can leave at any time. And so it is, it goes back to that self ownership and self-leadership of like, I'm gonna decide what's right for me, what's best for me, and, and I'm gonna choose to have fun.

And, um, but you know, we can, we can both be at a soccer game. I coach my son's soccer team and you know, my ex is there. So, you know, we have those interactions so you know, it, it's gone relatively smoothly, I would say, for me.

**Natalie:** That's good. It sounds like you've embraced the fact that there are going to be awkward moments and you've just decided to make friends with that.

**Jillian:** Yep.

**Natalie:** Yeah. Yes. Yeah. Diana,

**Diana:** yeah. One approach is to, um, to come at it from, I like to, you know, I don't like the cliché terms, like an abundance mindset, a scarcity mindset, but you know, that's the easiest way to kind of identify this. Yeah. So I approached my friends thing with the abundant mindset, like there's always people that can be my friends.

I can make a lot of friends. Yes, I can make the friends I need. How about that? And so I just decided, uh, and no mutual friends invited me to anything, so I didn't have to deal with it. But I decided I wasn't gonna reach out anymore. I just decided to let them all go. I'm like, I don't have any need to contact them for anything.

I, well, I will, I have other friendships I've already been building, and I'm gonna create more and I'm, I'm just into a different season. It's like I moved to a



different country. There's just different people gonna be living in my life than there were before. Yeah, yeah. And I just let 'em go without a, a word and it was fine.

**Natalie:** Yeah. I, I found that my friendships mo, many of my friendships were in the church that I was in and, you know, in, in our church and maybe in a lot of churches, they. I kind of want you to be involved in a smaller group, especially if you're in a large church. You know? So you get to know intimately, a small group of people.

And so those people that we had been in a small group with for many, many years became those women, became my friends, but they weren't necessary. I didn't think about this till later, after the whole thing blew up and they weren't my friends anymore. I didn't think about it at the time, but. I realized later that they were my friends because they, because we had to be friends.

They weren't the kind of friends that, you know, the friends that you make in high school and college. You just gravitate towards people that you just enjoy being around. And there's like a lot of, um, I don't know, just magic that happens between you and those friends. I still have friends from high school and college that I still get together with.

I mean, we don't get together every week, but we still get together one a couple times a year. Those friendships, are they, those friendships were the ones that lasted through the divorce. When they heard about my divorce, they were like, oh my gosh, what can I do to help you in both of my divorces? How can I pray for you?

Let's get together for lunch. They know who I am. Whereas the other people, the church friends that I had didn't really know me or care about me in that way. They just, um. Maybe I was just a person that they had to be a friend with, you know, and they didn't really necessarily click with me either. So anyway, I just think what kind of friends we have and what we think a friend is supposed to be is probably very different when we're younger than when we're older and we've got responsibilities and we're a parent and we are in a church and we are required to, you know, do certain things with certain people in our ministry or our small groups or whatever.

**Jillian:** Yeah, I've heard it talked about very similarly of like an adult friendship versus a childlike friendship. Yeah. And you know, it's like when you're a kid, you're friends with whoever's in your class, you know, it's friends out of

proximity, it's friends. Not quite outta necessity, but you know, it's you ride the same bus or you're in the sports team together.

But when you become an adult, you do have more of that authority to choose who do you want to be friends with? And I noticed that some of my friendships have been more of that childlike. Stage of like, oh, well we were just friends because we went to the same gym, or we were in the same fitness class, and now that I've moved, we're not really that great of friends.

And, and like, and that's okay. Yes. And I think it's like when we can find that peace and contentment and kind of like Diana was saying of, of like, I can make new friends. I can find new friends. There's new people, there's plenty of people to be friends with. Um, it really, it helps to give you that confidence to do that.

**Natalie:** Yeah. Yeah. And you don't have to have a ton of friends. You know, they're concentric circles. You can have two or three really, really best friends or maybe one best friend. And then you've got other friends that on, on the next circle out and then the next circle out. And that's been, um, something for me, for me that's been eye-opening.

I. It and helps me accept the different levels of the friendships that I have with different people. Alright, so we're gonna segue, or actually I'm gonna ask a related question to kind of what I touched on as far as the church or faith community. Um, how did your faith community or maybe lack of one, impact your friendships during this whole time when you were in the process of rebuilding your life, beginning to rebuild your life after divorce?

**Lisa:** I'll speak to that. Yeah. This is Lisa. Um, so we were in a, um, healthier church when I filed, but most of the toxic brainwashing, as I like to call it, um, happened in a smaller church that we spent the majority of our, our married life, um, in. So, so I was really fearful of. What this new church was going to think when this was all going down.

And for a time, I, I didn't go to church. I, I did the online thing, but I, I'm a worshiper, so like to worship corporately and to sing and to praise the Lord, like it's super important to me. So, um, because it was a bigger church, I felt like I could just kind of sneak in. But I had one friend from that. Um, small church, um, that had gone through a divorce and I actually reached out to her shortly after I had abruptly left the house before I filed kind of thing, and, and.

And it was a short time, and we found out her story was really my story and like it was happening more to more couples in that church than I cared to realize.

Um, but I, I sat next to her. In, in big church, um, because that was a comfort. So I felt like I had to just kind of sneak in, sneak out, and I was, I was just riddled with a lot of fear.

Um, but over time, as, as I gained my confidence and, and honestly reprogrammed my thinking on divorce and. Feeling less guilty, so to speak. Um, I found the friendships, but, but really when I, I was scared most about what the pastor was gonna think. I'm a two on the Enneagram, so what people think of me is like my, my best, best thing and worst thing all in one.

Yeah. And, and so, um. I agreed to meet with one of the pastors in, um, big church, so to speak, and, um. I was, I was really scared and I, I was like, I'm gonna tell my story and if this isn't gonna go, um, the way I think it should, I know that this isn't the church for me. I'm not gonna be able to find a home here.

And I was met with such deep empathy and love. It was like Jesus showed up with skin on, and the fact that it was a man and a pastor like. I wept. I literally just wept because that would've never happened over here in small church. Yeah, so having those experiences just helped me to gain more confidence in showing up.

In person, you know, in that faith community. And I found my people, you know, those are, I found a lot of people that have on the other side of divorce as well, that shared a lot of my similar um, story.

**Natalie:** That's wonderful. I'm so glad you had that experience. I think so many Christians, unfortunately they don't, they have the opposite experience and it's very traumatizing.

Yeah. What. Jillian, did you wanna share something here?

**Jillian:** Yeah. So being that we had moved, uh, frequently and had only been in this church a few months, when I initiated the divorce, I really was not looking for approval at that point. Like, I got to the point where I did not need the pastor's approval, and he definitely did not give it.

And, you know, it was something that I, I did not expect it to change some of the friendships, but I, it also showed me that maybe some of them weren't. Very deep. I kind of felt like I was, you know, friends with other moms who had kids. They were other married couples and that was the bulk of the church.

And so after the divorce, I almost felt like a bit of a pariah, kind of like I had this scarlet a and it's not that people, people would still talk to me occasionally, but it's. It just, it, there seemed to be like a dynamic shift. You know, I wasn't invited out for coffee or wasn't invited over for play dates or, you know, some, some things like that.

And, um, and it, it also helped me to see that that was not really the church that I wanted to be a part of. And so switching churches helped, but I needed a gap. I needed some time where I wasn't going to church and I, I kind of took a. Call it a break, not a break from God, but just from like attending a church on a regular basis.

And then I felt really called to attend one particular church, and I've been going there since August and like, that feels like home now. And so it, I'm finding new community, building new community and it's also helpful of like building it now post-divorce and, and it's not that kind of. Messy middle part.

Um, but, you know, I, the, the friendships weren't super strong to begin with, and so I found my connections and my friendships elsewhere that really helped through the divorce.

**Natalie:** Okay. I, I'm curious, um, we're gonna kind of deviate a little bit from the, our questions that we have sort of prepared for, and I'm wondering, um, it's like Jillian brought up, you know, she found a church that she really likes.

She's been going there for a few months. The, I wanna kind of normalize different experiences for divorced women because I, I know some divorced women like myself, for example, who tried going to different churches and then just never ever found one. And now I don't. Now I, now I, um. Lead Bible study on Sun Sunday mornings with the Flying Hire Group, which I'm assuming are mostly made up of divorced Christian women who also aren't going to church 'cause they're in the Bible study on Sunday morning.

Right. So how, for how many of you guys, um, I mean, we don't have time to go into it, but maybe just quick, say if you found a church that you, that you love, that you, that you're at home with, or maybe you're looking. Or maybe you've given up. I'm just curious what all of your experiences are. Wendy, we'll start with you.

**Wendy:** Okay. Yeah. I'm currently not going to church. I did look around for a while and I tried visiting a few, but I have not found any around here that I feel. Comfortable with,

**Natalie:** okay.

**Wendy:** My church is the bi. I'm in the Bible study when I can on Sunday morning with you, and I've really appreciated that. That feels like my church.

And then I have individuals from my previous church who are the church to me in what I consider kind of the real way in day-to-day life. So, yeah.

**Natalie:** Okay. Thank you for sharing that. Loretta, do you? What about you?

**Loretta:** Yes, I tried out some different churches because I was at home. My, um, husband at the time was our pastor, just a home for three years.

So when I went shopping for churches with my brother and my sister-in-law, I just, I found some that I would have to sit there and manage my mind through the whole thing and kind of filter through my new Yeah. Information. And it's like, and then my friend invited me to a new church, um, in our tiny little town.

Just a couple streets up the block or up the block there. And, um. I, I just wept through the whole thing. I think the first thing he said was something about legalism versus relationships or, and I just sat there and cried and I went to their very first, like small group and they did the whole meet around the, like, everybody introduced themselves and I'm like, oh my gosh, you know, this is where the marriage divorce thing comes up.

By the time they got around the whole circle to me, I realized I was the, that my friend was the only one in there that hadn't been divorced. Oh, this was a church where people who were church hurt have gone to, right. And, and, and this pastor bonus was someone that my ex just would rip apart all the time.

He was a youth pastor and he didn't want anyone else to influence my kids. So it was. Amazing. Yes. And, and so when I, it's not like I have super close relationships there, but when I talk to people, they just, they get it. They, they've, they understand it's a safe place. I don't, the other thing is I don't feel, I feel free to show up or not show up.

If my kid has a soccer game, I'm not gonna feel guilty anymore for not showing up to church. Yeah. But I know that my kids are being deprogrammed in that church and, um. In fact, my ex went and tried to talk to this pastor to convince him to tell me to reconcile. And after three hours of that conversation with him, I had to go to this pastor and just say, so do I still have a safe church to go to?

What'd you say to him? And I, I did the same thing with my counselor, one of my ex. So I felt confident enough to say, do I have a safe place with you? You don't have to agree. I just need to know that this is gonna be okay. Whether it was with my counselor or my pastor. Yeah. And it turned out I do have a safe place and they don't have to agree with me on everything.

So,

**Natalie:** yeah.

**Loretta:** That's, it's been, yeah. That's been really great. That's

**Natalie:** so cool. Yeah. Mm-hmm. Um, if you, if you're going to church and you talked about managing your mind and you're feeling ex emotionally exhausted by the time you walk out, like that's a problem. I'm glad you found a, a good place too. A good landing place.

Lisa, what about you?

**Lisa:** I am in a great church. I mean, I have, I built, you know, really intimate, um, connections. It's a bigger church. Um, but one, one little tiny story, um, a few, probably a month back, the pastor, um, read the, the sermon, um, the scripture at the beginning of the, the. The service, and it was from first Peter, you know, wives in the same way submit to your husband's.

And I bristled, like I bristled. I was like, I'm, if I'm outta here. I mean, I was ready to bolt before anything. And I'm like, okay, Lisa, just calm down. And I mean, my hurt, I mean, I, I was, my body was totally speaking to me. And I'm like, okay, just give him a chance. And he delivered this totally fresh new message that I had never heard that interpretation of those verses.

And he talked about oppression of women. And I was like, I wept. I wept through the entire sermon. And I'm like, oh, it was just such an, uh. A healing moment inside the church, which was like, but I, I emailed him afterwards and I, I did tell him I, I almost left, uh, like I was ready to bolt at any point during that sermon that he was going to say something was on high alert and I was gonna be out.

And it never happened because he had such a high respect for delivering the word of God. To women in particular. 'cause there's a lot of hurt women in the church.

**Natalie:** Yeah. Yeah. Gosh, this is giving me so much hope really, Diana, what about you?

**Diana:** Yeah, I love hearing all these stories and I feel a lot of freedom for my own journey.

Just hearing other women and where they're walking in it. So I'm still part of my same non-denominational church. I just kind of. Went to the services less and less until I kind of stopped going. But I do go to my life group, which is like 10 weeks, twice a year, except actually this last year I didn't go at all, but I'm thinking about going again this fall.

So I haven't been going. Um, but I do have a lot of, uh, spiritual growth and type conversations with some very close friends that I have that I can be intimate with, including. Talking about theology and all this kinda stuff. And then I, um, I heard some other podcasts. I don't remember, you know, oh, some of the books that are being written about.

Um, maybe it was the pastor's wife. What, what is the making of the pastor's wife by? Is that Barr? I'm not sure, but I heard her on an interview and she was talking about how different churches. You know, a lot of 'em don't even allow female pastors. And then she kind of said, well, the Methodist Church allows female pastors.

And I'm like, that's right, because I got married in a Methodist church. We brought in our own pastor from a non-denominational church, but they made us also include the current pastor, which was who was a woman. I. They've been having female pastors for a long time. So then I googled Methodist Church near me and then I found this one 10 miles away that I've heard of for years that people in town have always said great things about this church.

And for the past 10 years, their head pastor has been a woman. And I'm like, I think I might go try that out. So, uh, no pressure before the year is out. That's what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna go check out this. Methodist church with a female pastor and go to one service. That's all I'm committing to. And I don't know what'll happen after that, but, but again, freedom.

This is, we can have freedom in this journey. And I know all of us here, like we, our relationship with Jesus didn't waiver.

**Natalie:** Yeah.



**Diana:** Our relationship with the church has been something we've been exploring and that's totally okay.

**Natalie:** Yes. And I think the church has it, it's, it has something to do with friendships.

That's our community, right. Church is our community. Totally. And, and yeah. And even if, and I don't wanna be

**Diana:** in community in a scary place, and so Exactly. It feels scary to go try places.

**Natalie:** Exactly. Okay. Um, let's do a round robin, like kind of a really quick, uh, I, I wanna talk about red flags that showed you that a friend wasn't emotionally safe for you, but let's focus on friends after divorce.

Because we all went through, you know, like figure, you know, when you share that you're gonna get divorced. I mean, I had one of my friends came over and wanted to, she was so nervous, I felt so bad for her. She was just shaking like a leaf, but she felt like God wanted her to tell me, you know, that I, what I was doing was sinful and I was deviating from God's will for me and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

And um, red flag, right? We all have kind of experiences like that before we got divorced, but after you got divorced. How do you recognize, like what are some of the red flags for you that you're like, you know, I probably, this is probably not gonna be a good friend, gonna be a good friend for me, or I'm not gonna pursue a friendship with this person.

I'll feed him with a long handled spoon, but I'm not gonna, you know, go out for breakfast with them on a regular basis.

**Loretta:** I can talk to that a little bit. Okay. Um, so I think when I hear I, I became met much less judgy when I went through, through the divorce process, and I think people who've been through hard stuff, whether it's cancer or divorce, whatever.

They just are more open to people. And when you hear someone criticizing other people making judgements, and it could just be on the soccer field about the coach or about the, like you recognize manipulation tactics. You recognize, um, just red flags in their relationships with other people even. And so knowing how to navigate the.

Oh, okay. If they're thinking this about this person or saying this about this person, they're probably gonna be, and how do I know that? Because I was that person, because I was always judging myself. So I, um, and I do, I just wanna talk real quick about. I don't know what book it was that you had a student find hire, but the permission to have, uh, everybody doesn't have to be your ride or die friend.

Like telling myself, I can have a friend who's just my shopping friend. Yeah. They might not think deep, but they're just my shopping friend and it's great. And just giving myself like. Permission to, to acknowledge that this other friend is my ride or die friend. That's the person I call to discuss this.

This person, even though they might be my best friend, I'm not gonna call them about things with my kids. 'cause they have a lot of opinions about that or this person. Right? So acknowledging that it's great that we can have all these different types of friendships and like Diana said, um. There's an abundance of them.

So I love, I love that. Mm-hmm. That's great.

**Wendy:** One of my thing, oh, sorry. So similar to what Loretta said, but um, uh, if someone, one of the red flag phrases or words for me is if someone's like, you should. Fill in the blank and they're very sure that I should, I too was one of these people back in the day.

'cause I thought I had the answers, you know, and I was just schooling them. So I do know how to recognize it too, from personal experience. But now I know if someone, and I had an experience with someone, kind of, she was trying to help, but she was like, you should do this. This is how you need to do it, and so on and so forth.

And I had to take a step away for a little bit and then go back and tell her like, I appreciate what you were doing and in that, but I'm not gonna tell you, you should. Do something and I'd appreciate it if you don't tell me when I should do something because you don't know for neither one of us knows, for sure all the nuances in each other's life.

That's right. So that's a big one for me.

**Natalie:** That's, that's a great example. Lisa.

**Lisa:** The thing that I wanted to add was, um. I learned through divorce and even now I'm on a journey of listening to my body and so red flags, I can feel 'em, right? Yeah. I can feel, I can feel if I feel like a, I'm an agenda. Like they have their agenda and I'm their project to try to convince of this, that the other thing.

Um, so I am really like loving the fact that God gave me a body that I can trust, like I can trust my body. I never even like, it was such brainwashed and it was trusting everything out here. And now I go in and I trust my body, and my body tells me if this is a safe relationship or I have to feed from a long spoon.

Like it's a beautiful, beautiful thing.

**Natalie:** Yes. I'm glad you brought that up. We have to. That's a skill to learn too. It's kind of something that we develop over time. Yeah.

**Jillian:** Yeah. One of the things that I thought, like I thought if somebody, like, especially a woman, if she had shared that she had been in a toxic relationship, I thought that maybe she would be safe and like somebody who would be like a safe friend, close friend.

And I also learned that's not necessarily the case. And I really need to get to know somebody and not be so open and vulnerable and share details and be like, oh my gosh, me too. Or you know, something like that. But to really let. Let them show me who they really are. And, and this is, this is true of friendships.

It's true whether it's a man or a woman or if you're dating, you know, it's like a person will show you who they really are and we just have to give them time. And so for me it was recognizing. Kind of my desire to want to trust and open up to somebody, um, kind of quickly. And also knowing if I didn't know them very well, not to do that and to, to wait and see how, like, would, do they share secrets?

Do they talk about others behind their back? Because I know that that's like a behavior of like, she's gonna talk about me behind my back. Things like that, where it's just become a lot easier I think for me to. Have that discernment around friends. Mm-hmm. And to, to very easily, you know, go to coffee with somebody and then just not make a plan for another date.

You know, like, just to say like, you, you seem lovely, but, um, it's just not the right fit, you know? Yeah. And I think that that permission of, of knowing it's not the right fit has been huge.

**Natalie:** Yeah. Yeah. All right,

**Diana:** Diana here. I have just a couple. One, Loretta said already, that's a red flag if they tend to be judgmental of other people instead of open-minded.

Um, another one for me is if they challenge me on not meeting an expectation, like, uh, you know, you didn't, you didn't text me all last week, or, um, you know, why didn't you show up at this? Or if, you know. They've got expectations. They've got a list of what they think I should, how I should perform as a friend, and if they are challenging me, me on that.

Even under the guise of, you know, I just wanna have a good friendship here and I wanna have give and take and whatever. That is a red flag. I think healthy relationships, we do reciprocate, but we never challenge each other. It's just it, a healthy relationship is much more natural in that way. We do end up calling each other, we do end up initiating.

Connection. But also if white space goes by, if months go by and nobody's upset, we're just like, ah. You know, I'd say to one of my friends, I'm sorry I didn't call you all this time, and she's like, I have a phone too. I'm like, oh yeah, okay, cool. Nice. Right? Yes. And then I pay attention, especially with newer people I'm connecting with.

I like to go out on for a walk or a coffee date with new people here and there to keep my connections going. It's something I challenged myself to start doing like eight years ago, and I just keep doing it just one a month. But if in that time, 'cause these are newer relationships, uh, I ask a lot of questions.

I'm very curious and if they're all always answering freely about themselves, but then they're not really. Super interested in asking me stuff that's a red flag. A healthy relationship is gonna notice I just gave you information and now I would love to hear from you too. So if that's missing, that's a red flag.

And none of these are necessarily super scary off the bat. They're just not relationships I want to invest in because of where the lead and then they're gonna take my time and energy and uh, away from healthy things and relationships and I wanna move toward healthy stuff.

**Natalie:** Yes. Oh, you guys, that was so good.

All of you guys had so many, so many great things to share. Okay. We're gonna close this out by going around and sharing, and you don't have to share, but if you have something that, that you think would be encouraging to offer to maybe someone who's listening who feels very isolated right now. Maybe they're fresh out of their fresh, out of their divorce, or maybe they've been divorced for several years and they still just feel like they're not gaining traction in this area, or they're grieving over lost friendships.

What would you, what would you say to that woman?

**Diana:** Diana here. I'll just chime in with a quick one. I would say first, and I know it's hard because you want to, you really crave with those relationships. God made us relational. We crave that, number one, become a really good, awesome friend to yourself. And work on filling that void in yourself first. So you're not going out there trying to pull people in to, to feel fill this need for friendship.

I mean, again, we were made for that, and so we want that. But if we can be an awesome friend to ourselves first and in practical ways, I go around saying, you know, look myself in the mirror. Hey Dana, how are you? Nice job today. You know? Um, I got your back. We're gonna do this. I talk to myself in either in my head or out loud and I like hanging out with me.

And so be a great friend for yourself first, and I think the rest will feel easier and even be more fun as you go out and try to make new friendships.

**Natalie:** Yeah. Okay. I'm gonna jump in here too really quick and say this, we, I have a program for divorced Christian women called Flying Higher, and we, that is one of the biggest things.

That I teach is and help women with is being a friend to themselves. I think that is like probably one of the number one most important things that we can do to heal. And I, I just, if you're interested in learning more about that, you can go to join Flying hire.com. I also want to, maybe while we're going around, we could also share, 'cause these, these are amazing women here, as you can tell.

After listening to them talking, they also have. Different businesses that they have built or grown or that they're working on to support their families post-divorce. Most of us don't have child support or alimony. We are just doing it on our own, and we're the one raising the kids. We're the one, you know, we're the

ones still in thick of it, and I just want to honor their hard work by let, uh, by having them share some of the things that they're doing also to support their family.

And then we'll put that in the show notes. So, Diana, why don't you, since you just spoke, tell us what you do.

**Diana:** Yeah. Well, first I just wanna say I love Flying higher. I love being a part of it and participating in that, and I recommend it to even my own clients. I am a life coach and I have a Life Coach certification school.

And if you wanna hear more from me, all you have to do is check out the Renew Your Mind podcast.

**Natalie:** Yes, the Renew Your Mind podcast and Loretta. Is one of your, Loretta is one of my

**Diana:** cert. She's renew your mind. Institute certified coach. Why don't you go next, Loretta? Yeah.

**Loretta:** Great. Yes. I, I actually coach women who are in difficult relationships.

Um, and, and also I find myself coaching more people who are dealing with family of origin. Um, things you kind of gravitate toward things, you, you, you go through yourself and, um. But one thing I I just wanna say to the women who are struggling with friendships is, if you feel I just coached someone on this the other day.

If you're kind of desperate for friends, it's kinda like being desperate for a relationship with a guy. You come across that way and what you end up is either you're turning them off, which is opposite of what you want, or you end up with not such great quality of friendships. Right? Yeah. And after what you've been through and you've struggled and you've grown, so the more you grow and the more you become authentic, you attract who you are, you're no longer interested in those.

Surfacey relationships. Right. And in Flying higher, I, I have friends where you, I just don't like that. I've never liked dating and that little, oh, how, how are you, well, what do you like? What's your favorite color? I hate that. I wanna go into the deep stuff. You skip all over that and Flying higher, they know your story.

I mean, not everything, but you've just been through tough stuff. Yeah. And those authentic relationships are there. And the healthier I have become. The deeper and the more quality friendships that are attracted to me. Yes. And and even though I know I coach a lot of women, and I, and I hear them on your, on your podcast or I mean, I'm sorry, in the forum and on your private coaching, Natalie, that they just struggle to find someone and they want someone locally.

I'm really busy, so my group chat with my Flying hire people, I'm good. Or my best friend who lives across the country, who I've seen twice in 20 years. I know I can call her and just having that connection in my heart and in my brain, like it's, it's security to me to know that they're a phone call away.

And I have a great story about your online Butterfly bootcamp. I did. I ended up, I. With like a 6% chance of being in a small group with this woman. She lives 20 minutes up the road from me, and she is one of, she's so great. And I did end up with a local friend, but this is, you know, four, four years later.

After, after being through. Was that just a,

**Natalie:** an

**Loretta:** accident? Did you not know her before? No, I didn't know her, but, but my friend that I told you about, um, that was local who had been through your program. Yeah. He coached us both in the thick of no way, like we were mutual. So when after Flying the Butterfly Bootcamp last year online, I went to her house, we took a selfie together, sent it to this mutual friend, and she is like probably one of my closest, I would consider one of my closest friends, like someone who I, I call and we we're kind of on the same path and that's just great.

Um, yeah. But that was because of your, your program? It's, yeah. That's awesome. Fun

**Natalie:** story. That's a great story. Thanks for sharing that. Anybody else have something? Wendy?

**Wendy:** I, yeah. I, oh my word. Flying Free and Flying higher has been a godsend to me, and I'm a pretty serious introvert and I lurk a lot on. So, you know, it's like, I think most of, I

**Natalie:** think most of the women actually lurk, which is totally fine.



**Wendy:** I be lurking. So, um, I listen to so much on there and, you know, watch the conversations and listen to the coaching calls, all the coaching calls and everything, and just have gleaned so much. From all of that and reading the books along with you guys, even if I'm not able to be in the discussions. So yeah, that and the fact to, to have a group of women, a community, they know what you've been through.

Mm. And it's so hard to find that necessarily Exactly. In real life, you know? Uh, and so when, as soon as I got on in this community, it was just such a huge relief. It was like a load off. Like I didn't have to explain stuff. You know, I somebody all the time, somebody saying something, I'm like, I know exactly what she's talking about, even if it's a different circumstance.

So that is. That has been so life-giving for me, so thank you.

**Natalie:** Yeah.

**Wendy:** And yeah, I'm an artist and an art teacher. I teach mostly junior high art. My friend was just telling me, one of my friends yesterday, she's like, I could not, I could not do what you do like with the, especially with junior high, but I love it.

They're, they're. They're a hoot. They're a real hoot. But I do that in person and I'm working on some classes on out school, putting more self-paced class on that, if you've ever heard of that platform. And then I'm at Win Kat Designs on Instagram and I've got this, one of those Link Tree links. It has all my shops and everything.

I've, I've just done like a multitude of side hustles. I was just telling Natalie last time, but 'cause that's worked for me and I love it, so, yeah. Yeah. Got that. And then friendships, I try to come at it with an attitude of like, yes, work I've worked on my, been working on myself and will continue. But also if I'm kind of feeling lonely or something.

To, to come at it. Like, what might one of my other friends be feeling right now? How could I show compassion to her? You know, could I just, A lot of times I'll just shoot a text to a friend and just be like, how are you doing? We haven't, you know, see, like, I won't even, I don't even bring in, we haven't seen each other while sometimes that feels like it comes with implications, but just like.

Hey, I love you. I'm sorry I haven't contacted you in a while or something. And I might do that with a couple. And I have, there's a chain of us that'll always tell each other Happy Mother's Day or, you know, Merry Christmas and stuff like that. But sometimes then one of my friends that I get together with regularly will be like, whoa, we need to get together.

And then it, you know, it goes from there. So just coming at it with a heart of compassion and love for them instead of from my me feeling desperate like you have to. You know, do this with me, so that helps me a lot too. Yeah,

**Natalie:** yeah, yeah.

**Lisa:** Well, I'll jump in. Um, I think for, for me, the little bit of encouragement that I, I'd like to share is that like God made you. And he's got dreams he's put in you and he's gonna put the people that are going to help you become that person. Um, I remember even going through divorce, I had a mantra on my, um, mirror and it said, um, you are worthy of the things that you desire.

Hmm.

**Natalie:** And,

**Lisa:** and so much of. Of my life was making someone else's dreams a reality. And now it's time for me to figure out my dreams and, and follow that. And that starts with the friendship and, and finding out who I am and finding out what that really is. And Flying Higher has played a really significant role in just offering the class.

Classes. I'm a replay girl, so I, I listen to the replays and I'm like, oh my gosh. I just feel like knowledge is power and it changes how the wiring in our brain. Mm-hmm. And that's what Flying. Hire has really been for me is just kinda opening these boxes going, oh my gosh, I never thought about it like that.

And let's look at this. So yeah, it's been life giving. Um, and as far as my business, I. I've been in direct sales for, um, 14 years with, uh, a company called lebri Pure Natural. It's a Wisconsin based company and it's aloe based skincare. So aloe is the first ingredient, and then we use natural ingredients as much as possible, and I love sharing it because I'm also a cancer survivor.

So the, the clean, non-toxic, affordable, um, is my jam. But my real passion. Is helping women create that side hustle to be able to get an income source on

their own so that they can feel the confidence to, to leave, um, a toxic marriage if, if that's where, where God's leading 'em.

**Natalie:** Yeah. I will say, um, for those who are listening to this on a podcast app, rather than watching it on YouTube, Lisa does have very beautiful skin.

So, oh, you're so kind. Just saying

**Lisa:** Thank you,

**Jillian:** Jillian. Yes. So with the friendships, one of the things that I realized was that some friendships are here for a season and some are gonna, for some people, well, I would say probably all, but like some seasons will be longer and some seasons will be shorter.

Yeah. And so that has helped give me a sense of peace and having, um, a lot of friends spread out around the country, family spread out around the country, it's been pretty easy to be able to maintain. Those kind of online digital friendships as well. And that's one of the things that I loved about Flying higher.

And I started in Flying Free and then joined Flying Higher. And it's been great to con, to continue to nurture those friendships and to have, uh, a place where you are believed. And I think that was a big thing for me. When I was first thinking about telling people about the divorce or what and how much, and, and it's, who's like, are people actually gonna believe me because my ex wears some really gr really great masks and yeah.

So you can come into Flying higher though. And you like, we believe you. You know, like if anything, we are going to love and encourage you not to gaslight yourself, you know? Yeah. And, and so it's, it's such a great, a great group of women. Um, and, and I am also, uh, a life and weight loss coach, and I help women lose weight and end emotional eating.

After being in toxic relationships, and for most of them it is marriage and so they are divorced. Um, for some it also includes childhood trauma and growing up with a narcissistic parent, uh, because it changes our brain and our, our brain structure and how we're wired. And there can be a lot of fear of success and fear of good things because we're just waiting for the other shoe to drop.

And, and it does show up with food and in those habits and in pursuing any goal. But weight loss is often one of the, the challenging ones that we face. So, yeah, I, on my, I have a podcast

**Natalie:** called,

**Jillian:** oh, go ahead. Hungry for Love. Yeah.

**Natalie:** Oh, I love the name of that. Oh my gosh. Yeah. Thank you. Okay. That's amazing. I'm, I'm actually learning about how stress impacts my metabolism.

Mm-hmm. And my cortisol levels and then my glucose and the whole thing. I'm on that journey right now too. So what you're doing is really important I think, for all of us who are recovering. Yeah. Thank you. Alright, ladies, this has been amazing. Thank you so, so much for spending time with us and for those of you who are listening, thank you for listening.

Until next time, fly higher.