

## WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOU'RE MARRIED TO A FOOL?

*Hi. This is Natalie Hoffman of [FlyingFreeNow.com](http://FlyingFreeNow.com), and you're listening to the Flying Free Podcast, a support resource for women of faith looking for hope and healing from hidden emotional and spiritual abuse.*

NATALIE: Welcome to Episode 6 of the Flying Free Podcast. Today, Rachel and I are going to be talking all things "fools." All things foolish, all things about fools. And we're going to be talking about what a fool is, how the Bible defines a fool, and how we can discern whether someone is just behaving foolishly or whether they are actually a true, bonafide fool. And we'll also be able to talk about and discern whether or not we are fools, and Rachel's going to talk a little bit more about that in a minute. First of all, hi, Rachel.

RACHEL: Hi, Natalie.

NATALIE: First of all, I just want to start off by saying that... telling a little story, because I think it'll just set this whole conversation up. I was in a destructive marriage for twenty-five years and I knew right from the beginning that we had a problem. The main problem was that no matter what happened in my relationship, my ex-husband was not able to ever admit that he was wrong about anything. And so we never could resolve any conflicts unless I said that I was the one to blame and took the blame and said I was sorry and asked for forgiveness. And so that kind of cycle just was going on and on for many, many years, and I remember one day about, probably, I don't know, eighteen years into it when I was sitting in a wooden rocking chair in my bedroom and I was reading through my Bible and I came to the book of Proverbs. I had this habit of reading through my Bible every year since I was teenager, so I was really familiar with the Bible, but I also had a certain lens that I read the Bible through every year, so I would learn new things, but it was always under the same sort of lens that I had on, which was a very fundamentalist, conservative lens.

Anyway, I got to the book of Proverbs and I started reading, and I realized that every time it was talking about a fool that it was describing this thing which was that they could never admit that they were wrong about anything. And I don't know why, I think maybe I had seen it before, but I really was in a lot of denial about the seriousness of my situation, but I think I realized then. It hit me in the stomach that I was actually married to someone like that, and I even wondered if I was a bad person for actually even thinking the thought that my husband, who I was called to respect and honor and think well of, believe the best about, was a fool.

That that thought ran through my head... I felt guilty that that thought ran through my head and I felt like I was a bad person. And yet I did start underlining all of those passages in Proverbs that described a fool. Then I started making a list in my journal of all those things and realized with horror that no matter who guilty I felt or how bad I felt that I was having that thought, there it was in black and white in front of me, and maybe I wasn't the one having that thought. Maybe that was actually how God defined my husband, and that made me sad and also a bit terrified. Like, "What am I going to do with this?"

And actually, shortly after that, you know how God sometimes brings a lot of things together at one time? It's like He's trying to get something in front of you and give you a message. A friend gave me the book, "Foolproofing Your Life" by Jan Silvious, and I had never seen that book before or heard of it before, but I started reading it and realized that, yes indeed, that was the situation that was going on, and now I had to try to figure out what to do about it. So, Rachel, did you have an experience like that? Or when did you start...

RACHEL: It was only after I started really coming to terms with the reality of what had been going on in my marriage, and then I went to Proverbs and it was so validating to see it there. And I had never had the courage, I don't think, to step up and think in my own mind that this was what was happening because I loved, and I love, my ex-husband so much that I didn't want to think badly of him, like you said. I didn't want to believe that this man, whose reality I lived in, and who seemed so wise and always had an explanation for everything, could actually be so incredibly foolish. And actually, the most dangerous type of fool, which is the willful fool: someone who knows better but continues in being proud and not open to correction and unwilling to learn.

So it's been very validating to go back and see that God has so much to say about relationships and different types of people and advice to give about who to avoid, and it's not only the Ephesians 5 and 1 Corinthians verses about marriage that apply and give us guidance about life. There's actually guidance about life and relationships and people and evil throughout the entire Bible that we can apply and glean the principles to, and apply them even though we don't live in Bible times anymore.

NATALIE: Yes.

RACHEL: It's been quite a journey. I'm still learning about what it looks like to avoid fools in my life.

NATALIE: Right. Because there's a reason why there's a whole book in the Bible that

talks about fools over and over and over and over again.

RACHEL: Before, I wasn't ever really able to see how it applied. It was like, "Oh, those are back then." I just never made the connection that this was actively speaking to me and applied in my daily life here in this modern time. But actually, you know, these types of people have been around for as long as there have been people. So being able to glean the truth and the kernel of wisdom there is so key.

NATALIE: Okay, I have a question for you. In Matthew 5:22 it says, "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment. Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council. And whoever says, 'You fool' will be liable to the hell of fire." What do you think about that?

RACHEL: So this is, I think, one of the verses where someone like myself with a very, perhaps even overactive, conscience that was cultivated by living with a fool, one who constantly tells you that you're stupid and you've got bad motives, et cetera, this was a verse that really pricked me and I felt condemned because I don't want to go around accusing other people of being a fool. Jesus really warns us about that: doesn't He in this verse? It's pretty clear.

NATALIE: Right. We're not supposed to judge people and He's the one that judges rightly.

RACHEL: Yeah. So how can we use His judgment instead of what He warns against? I think really what Jesus is saying in that context (this is the Sermon on the Mount), He's really calling the Jews of that day to attention because they were so focused on outward appearances, and they were always following every stroke of the law is what He said. And He was calling them to pay attention more to their hearts instead of every single tiny little outward action, because their hearts were so far from God. And so, what I think what He's warning against here is just going around and accusing people falsely and trying to maybe control them or condemn them. Actually, I think what you could say is He's warning against verbal abuse. Don't go around and call people falsely what they're not, because even if we come to the point where we realize that our husbands are fools, I don't think it's probably the best course of action to just storm into the next room where he is and start screaming at him that he's a fool. That's not the wisest decision to make, right?

NATALIE: Right.

RACHEL: That doesn't show that our hearts are actually loving towards them. So we can

choose to love even if we do come to the very sad realization that the people that we chose to spend our life with are fools.

NATALIE: I was going to jump in and say even the story in the Bible about Abigail, who was married to... the Bible identifies her husband as a fool, Nabal. And the Bible doesn't talk about her disrespecting him or verbally abusing him and calling him the fool that he is, but she does disobey him. She does stand up and do what's right, even though he in his sheer and utter foolishness tells her to do what's wrong, she does what's right in the face of what he does. And in a sense, in that day and age you could say that she was defying him, really. And God blesses her for it, and God ends up destroying Nabal in the long run. Actually it was in the short run, I think it was within a matter of days.

RACHEL: It was very... yeah, very immediate. And she even said to David, "His name means 'fool.'" She called it for what it was. She wasn't saying that derisively, she was just stating a fact.

NATALIE: Right. So I think there's a difference between calling someone a name and identifying the reality of someone's behavior.

RACHEL: And it's about the position of your heart, and I think we are called to always examine our own hearts and see what our motivations are, and it can be tricky because as I've referenced, we've had people telling us what our motivations are, and telling us who we are. And it's not correct. And so I think it's important to look at our fruit. Are we choosing to love? Are we choosing to pursue love? You know, obviously, we're not perfect, but how can we do the next thing in love, as you've talked about, Natalie, and also choose to see the truth of who we are and who others are? And not live in denial, but live in reality?

NATALIE: Yes. Okay, so one of the things that I think we should do in this episode, as far as the fool thing, is make sure that listeners know how God defines a fool. What exactly is a fool according to the Bible? I think it's really, really clear if you read Proverbs. You can read Proverbs through, and I encourage people who are listening who want to explore this further to actually take a highlighter and highlight all of the verses that talk about a fool and what a fool does, how a fool thinks, what their behavior is like. One of the verses is Proverbs 12:15: "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel." So, a fool, because they already believe that they are right about everything, why would they listen to anybody else? Everyone else is wrong, and they're right. And this is one of the ways you can tell.

Now, this is not to say that whenever someone fights for what they believe or has an

opinion that's different from yours, then that makes them a fool. Obviously, right? Because everyone has different opinions about things. How you would identify a fool is someone who chronically (that means over the course of their lives), they err towards always believing that they are right and they err towards not listening to someone else's counsel. And this goes for a husband-wife relationship. Sometimes I think in conservative circles we think "Well, the husband is always right because of what hangs between his legs. He must be." You know? Does this even make common sense? And do we get into racism then as well? Does it matter what color you are? Does your color determine whether or not you're right? I mean, this is where we go into just total and utter insanity, right? And we're not even being rational anymore.

RACHEL: Right.

NATALIE: But there are people who actually blindly believe that "Well, you know, God speaks to the husband and so therefore, if the husband has a different opinion than the wife and it comes down to it, then it's the husband's opinion that's the correct one, and the wife's is not correct. And the wife needs to, you know..."

RACHEL: It's an example of people adding to the Bible what is not there and failing to accurately interpret and discern the heart of what God's purpose is for husband and wives. And I do want to point out, you know, we talk about Abigail and Nabal and how Abigail defied her husband because he was a fool. Well, there is an example in the New Testament of a wife who did not defy her husband when he was choosing to lie to the disciples about his gift of this land. It was Ananias and Sapphira. And so, what was the price? He died and then she died, because she was committed to his foolish ways. So I think there's a pretty stark example of how God sees this, and we need to think about that really carefully because there are so many ways to get tripped up here, right?

NATALIE: Right.

RACHEL: And start believing and start adding things and start acting like you can be more holy if you add things. Well, guess who did that too? That was the Jews, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees of Jesus' day. They loved adding things so they could be more holy. Let's avoid that trap.

NATALIE: Yes. Okay, so a fool doesn't accept feedback.

RACHEL: Yep.

NATALIE: They don't take feedback. And that doesn't mean that they never take

feedback. I know that some men, or women for that matter, are picky about who they'll take feedback from, but for the most part they resent feedback.

RACHEL: Especially if you're coming to them and you sit down and you say, "This is the way your behavior is affecting me." And it requires a significant turnaround, repentance on their part. In my experience, there's always going to be some excuse and then turning it around to say how I'm demanding too much or expecting too much and I'm the one with the problem.

NATALIE: Yes. Shifting the blame back on you.

RACHEL: Right. So, it's marked by a significant amount of pride. There's no humility, hardly any self-reflection. They may say they are, and then they always come back with, "But you're the one who's wrong, and I'm the one who's right because of this, this, and this."

NATALIE: Yes. And hand in hand with that comes a lack of compassion and understanding for another human being's experience.

RACHEL: Right.

NATALIE: Which, does that sound like Christ? Did He just have a really hard time empathizing with the experiences of other people? No.

RACHEL: No, His compassion was so beautiful. You know it says in one of the gospels about how Jesus saw the crowds, and He was just overwhelmed with compassion for them because they were weary, like sheep without a shepherd. And that is love. And the true heart of a servant is to be able to look at someone and understand their experience.

NATALIE: Yes. Okay, let's look at another verse in Proverbs here. Proverbs 18:2 says, "A fool does not delight in understanding, but only reveals what is in his own mind." And Proverbs 18:6: "A fool's lips bring strife, and his mouth calls for blows." I thought that was interesting because there were times when the things that came out of my ex's mouth caused me to just want to pull my own hair out, but also it caused me to feel a great amount of animosity and frustration and just wanting to react in violent ways. You know? There were a couple times that I picked up my own... well, twice I did this, actually, several years apart. One time I picked up a tea cup, a tea cup that was important to me, and I threw it across the room against the wall and it crashed into a million pieces, because I think in my mind I wanted to show him that this was so

devastating to me that it was worthy of breaking one of my tea cups. I think I was trying to get his attention. You know?

RACHEL: Yeah. Well, your words had failed. You had said the same things over and over and over again, it was like talking to a brick wall, right?

NATALIE: Right.

RACHEL: Because you're trying to get his attention.

NATALIE: Right. So when it says, "His mouth calls for blows," it's like, that to me is... that what comes out of their mouth, it's like you just want to... I mean, think about how many bar room brawls happen. They happen because people are being fools, right?

RACHEL: Yes.

NATALIE: They're being fools, foolish things are coming out of their mouths, they are not trying to understand another person's perspective, they are not coming at a conversation from a place of rational, logical thinking, they're just spewing forth foolishness, and it calls for blows. You know?

RACHEL: Yeah.

NATALIE: And then Proverbs 18:7, "A fool's mouth is his ruin and his lips are the snare of his soul." So, you know, I spent several years debating about leaving my ex-husband, and we were in-home separated for a year and then separated for two years physically, and then the divorce process took another almost two years. But during all of that time, I felt sad that I had to be the one that was initiating the end. Well, it felt like I was the one initiating. I look back on that now and the reality is that that foolishness and that destructive emotional abuse was the cause of the end of our relationship. But because I was the one that initiated the separation, initiated the divorce process, initiated getting out, I still had that feeling of "Ugh. I feel like it's all my fault because I'm the one that's actually putting the closure on it, tying it off, and ending it." Okay? But this verse is... "A fool's mouth is his ruin." I was not the ruin of my ex-husband. The women who leave their ex-husbands or their husbands, they are not their husband's ruin. In this podcast, I want to be clear: Yes, women can be the perpetrators. There are emotionally abusive women. And there are women who are fools. Absolutely.

RACHEL: Absolutely.



NATALIE: This podcast, though, and my website is to help women of faith deal with emotional abuse. So if you're a man listening and you're hearing this and you're going, "Oh, it's not fair. My wife was the one that did it." Well, that may very well be, and you'll just have to change the gender, okay?

RACHEL: Yeah. It still applies.

NATALIE: But because we're trying to help women of faith, we're going to obviously come at it from that angle. So anyway, his lips are the snare of his soul. When fools end up reaping the consequences of their behaviors, it can sometimes take many, many years because sometimes they're surrounded by people who really love them and care for them and give them bazillions of chances. But ultimately, it's their own lips and their own mouths that are their ruin and the snare of their souls, so I think that's important to point out. I didn't say it, God said it. Right?

RACHEL: It's going to come at some point. It may not happen the first year, second year, twentieth year of your marriage, but it's going to come at some point to where the lips create this ruin, this destruction around himself. And I do want to make a broader point, Natalie, about the church, because I know I've sat through a lot of sermons that talk about the destruction of the tongue and the power of the tongue and it always felt for me... it was very abstract, and honestly convicting, though, because you know, I've said stupid things that I regret. Everyone can let things slip that they don't mean or say things in a way that they don't mean, but it seems like the church has a hard time making the connection between a purposefully destructive tongue and what that looks like in everyday life, what that can look like in a marriage, what that can look like for a parent to a child. And I think that's a failure on the part of the church to really make those connections in modern day life and call out what that looks like.

NATALIE: I agree. I think there's a fear of stepping on toes. How many times did you feel afraid to confront your husband, your ex-husband, because you knew that if you confronted him, you were going to raise his wrath and you were going to get blamed and shamed and attacked?

RACHEL: Yes. I can't tell you how many times. I was someone who was able to stuff the hurt and anger and turn it over in my mind and brood on it, and then try to figure out a way to go to him in the perfect moment and say the perfect words and try to finally get through to him, you know? And I can't tell you how many times I put my hope in that. And it was in different forms. I would write him letters, I would approach him after a meal or talk to him after physical intimacy or something like that, and it never worked.



My hopes were dashed every single time. It was never about those things, it was about the foolish state of his heart.

NATALIE: That's right. Okay, another Proverbs,, which helps us to understand what a fool is and does, is Proverbs 29:9: "When a wise man has a controversy with a foolish man, the foolish man either rages or laughs, and there is no rest."

RACHEL: Oh, man. Was your ex-husband someone who just delighted in crude humor and was always able to make a joke out of everything and would smirk at you? That was my ex-husband. Everything was a joke. If I said something, a word that he found funny as I was making a really meaningful point, he got caught up on that and suddenly we're off talking about his funny word or something I said.

NATALIE: Yes. Exactly. My ex-husband was not crude. He actually had a very clean mouth.

RACHEL: Oh, okay.

NATALIE: He didn't swear. He was actually very careful about that kind of thing. But definitely, definitely made light of and made fun of and tried to make a joke out of everything that was serious if he wasn't angry. So it would either be an angry response and a shaming, devaluing response to me, or he would make a joke of it and try to make light of it. But either way you felt devalued and dishonored as a human being. You know? You felt dehumanized, really.

RACHEL: Right, because they're not recognizing your experience. They're ignoring what you're saying. I can't think of, there's almost really no words for what it feels like to just sit there and have prepared in your mind and written down notes to bring to them and then to see them react in such a lighthearted, dehumanizing way. It's soul-crushing. It really is.

NATALIE: I've seen that happen, too, with these men, and talked to other women where they do this to their kids. Their kids come to them and they make fun of their kids or laugh about something serious, and it's devastating to children when a father does that.

RACHEL: My ex-husband would say, if I would call him out on that, that my sense of humor was really poor.

NATALIE: Yes. Yes. "Can't you take a joke?"

RACHEL: You and I, Natalie, we have wonderful senses of humor. That is so far from the truth. And we can laugh at ourselves. We don't take ourselves too seriously. But, you know, there is a time to be serious and to take things seriously, and Romans 12 talks about laughing with those who laugh and weeping with those who weep. It's empathy. It's what we're called to do as Christians, and it is such a failure for them to continue to just make light of it and to dismiss it and to act like you're so silly and you just don't have a sense of humor and you don't get it.

NATALIE: Yep. Proverbs 26:11 says, "Like a dog that returns to his vomit, is a fool who returns to his folly." And how many times did you feel like you were going around in circles and it was the same thing happening over and over and over again?

RACHEL: Yeah. For the women who maybe are separated or who are looking for a change in their husbands, I think that's why it's so important to make sure that if there is any change, it is over a long period of time. Because they may be able to put on a cloak of seeming like they are changing for a little bit but they can't do it for a long time. They probably will return to that vomit at some point. Whether it's three months or six months or a year. So I think it's really important to see that consistent change over a period of time.

NATALIE: Yep. Here's another one. Proverbs 27:3 says, "A stone is heavy and sand is weighty, but the provocation of a fool is heavier than both of them."

RACHEL: Don't we know that?

NATALIE: I don't think people on the outside, people who do not live with this kind of provocation on a regular basis, they don't understand the weight of that burden. It's huge. And really, I felt like I was obsessed. This was the problem that I had to try to solve for years and years and years: the problem of what to do with the constant provocation that I was under.

RACHEL: Yeah. He ... Oh gosh. Even now as I'm sitting here, I can feel the way... just thinking about it makes my brain go staticky. You know? You're trying to figure it out, you're trying to find some edge, some toehold of getting through and making a difference and finding a solution because you love your family and you love this man and you want this to be okay and solve this problem together because that's what we're supposed to do. We're partners. It's overwhelming, and it defies description.

NATALIE: Yes, it does. People who are listening and do know what we're talking about, they're saying, "Amen" right now.

RACHEL: They're nodding right now. Yes.

NATALIE: Proverbs 13:20 says, "He who walks with wise men will be wise. But the companion of fools will suffer harm." And the actual Hebrew for the word "companion" means "he who grazes in the same pasture with." So he who grazes in the same pasture with a fool, and the word "fool" translated there means "stubborn, dull, and arrogant," will suffer harm. And that word is translated, or means, "destroyed." So if you graze in the same pasture with, meaning, if you live with somebody, that means you're eating, drinking, living, moving, breathing with someone who is stubborn, dull, and arrogant, you will be destroyed. That's what that Proverbs is saying.

RACHEL: You can't get more clear than that.

NATALIE: No. No, you can't. And I'd like to say, too, and I've said this in other places. I heard this from the church that excommunicated me: they didn't believe that emotional abuse was a thing. They kind of poo-pooed it. "Oh, that's ridiculous, no. Yes, if you are getting black and blue eyes and your arms were getting broken, then we would understand what was going on in your life, but you certainly are not." That is not what God says. The Bible says that people who are living with fools will be destroyed. They'll be destroyed. And that is a serious thing. Destruction happens. We aren't just physical bodies. We are spiritual beings and we are emotional beings and we have brains. People who are emotionally abused, their brains actually... I think we talked about this in a different podcast. They've done images of brains of people who have post-traumatic stress disorder and brains that have been on drugs, and the same areas of their brains are actually damaged. It is a physical abuse. It physically affects your hormone balance, it physically affects your endocrine, your immune system, your blood pressure, your brain function. All kinds of internal organ issues can occur because of the constant stress of living with someone who is a fool.

RACHEL: Yeah. And someone who refuses to see that and really think about this problem is being foolish themselves. They're not looking at things with wisdom and discernment. They may have pride that's preventing them from wanting to see the truth of this. And obviously that's a big characteristic of a fool, but that it is so devastating. I think that's really at the core of what all of this is is pride and refusal to see the truth and to humble yourself to experience what someone else has gone through.

NATALIE: Yes. In fact, that actually is a perfect segue into the next verse which is Proverbs 14:7: "Leave the presence of a fool or you will not discern words of knowledge." There were people in the church that excommunicated me who, at the

time that they were working with me and I was working with them, I didn't want to believe that they were also fools. But I realized later that they were. Looking back at the way that they handled the situation, they were also foolish. So they were actually rubbing shoulders with fools, they were defending fools, and they were also foolish. And it says here to leave the presence of a fool or you will not discern words of knowledge. When we hang out with fools they rub off on us, and we can become foolish ourselves. And I think part of this too is we become fuzzy-headed. You know, like you were talking about. It makes your brain go bonkers.

RACHEL: Staticky. Yeah.

NATALIE: Yeah, staticky, that was the word you used. Things start fritzing out because there are disconnections that start happening. Fools will twist words and do crazy mental gymnastics that cause you to actually start fritzing out inside. And it's hard then to unravel the logic. Because there is no logic there. You've entered into the Twi ... I always used to call it the Twilight Zone, or I would say I'm Alice in Alice in Wonderland, you know?

RACHEL: Mm-hmm.

NATALIE: I'm in a place now where logic does not count. You can't have a rational conversation. Everything is twisted and upside down, and now I don't know what to do. I can't find up from down or east from west. I'm remarried, and in my current relationship I have never ever once experienced that disoriented feeling. Never ever once.

RACHEL: That says a lot.

NATALIE: Everything is rational and logical and normal. And it's a beautiful thing. That's like a normal relationship.

RACHEL: Yeah, it is beautiful. And I think when we're realizing, when our eyes are opened to what fools look like in our life, it can be overwhelming because you start to realize this person (maybe not your husband, but like you were saying your church leaders that you realized were foolish)... it can be overwhelming because these are people that you've trusted, you've loved, you've done life with. And you wanted them to be the person you wanted them to be, someone godly and walking with the Lord, et cetera. So it really requires you to take people off the pedestal of God in your life and really look to God as God and realize that every single person, no matter how righteous they may seem, how well they can twist logic or make their points, they may be foolish

and you've got to act accordingly. And it's painful. It is painful.

NATALIE: It is. It is painful. There is no easy way of dealing with a fool, but let's actually talk a little bit before we close about what we can do if we are exposed to a fool either in our workplace, or maybe even there's a... I had a couple of friends that are no longer friends of mine, that once I started learning about this stuff, I realized one of the reasons why I kept butting heads with them is because they had all of these earmarks of being a fool. So anyway, what do you do with a fool? Let's look at the Bible. What does the Bible say? Proverbs 19:19 says, "A man of great anger shall bear the penalty, for if you rescue him you will only have to do it again." And so, what I get from that is that you can correct a fool if you want to, you can give him feedback if you want to, but it's never going to work. They're never going to say "Oh, now I get it. Oh, okay." You're never going to have a meeting of the minds.

RACHEL: Because one of the marks of a fool is they are unable and unwilling to learn. They are not open to correction. They treat whatever righteousness you may want to present them with, or whatever you see in their life, with ridicule. They're going to ridicule it. So the very problem that you're trying to address is the problem that keeps them in their problem.

NATALIE: Exactly. So when they do something that is wrong or destructive in your life, what do we do with that?

RACHEL: Well, it's interesting because Proverbs makes it pretty clear that don't walk with them. In fact, Psalm 1 talks a lot about... it was pretty profound in my life, because it talks about how "happy is the person who does not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path of sinners, or join a group of mockers." Mockers is another word for a fool. "Instead his delight is in the Lord's instruction and he meditates on it day and night. He's like a tree planted beside streams of water that bears its fruit in season." I mean, that was really profound for me in thinking about how to deal with this and looking back and seeing how I had been sitting in the company of people who were scornful and mockers. It's pretty hard to know how to proceed when you come to these revelations and it's going to be different for every person, I think. But I think overall, consistently it says put some space between yourself and these people.

NATALIE: Right. So, for listeners who actually have to live with them, they're married to them, or maybe they have a child who, well, children are always foolish, but I mean, maybe an older child who's consistently being foolish or destructive, I think one of the ways that we put distance between them, maybe we can't put physical distance between us and them, but we can put emotional distance between us and them. And

the big piece there is accepting, finally, really accepting the reality that you're never ever going to be able to get through to them. Part of our problem is that we want to try to control the destruction. We want to try to minimize it and control it, and we can't do that. I mean, we can't control it by controlling them. So we have to stop focusing on that other person and getting them to stop because they're never going to stop and they're never going to understand and they're never going to listen. And we need to start looking at, "Okay, I can't do that, so what can I do myself? What can I do to create some emotional distance?" It means emotionally detaching from them, so you stop investing. I mean, I don't consider that a relationship. A relationship that's one way, that's not a relationship. That's a care-taking position, you know? So, now you're taking care of them.

Jan Silvius calls it "feeding them with a long-handled spoon." So that means you are polite to them. When we pass someone on the street, we're polite to them. If they ask us a question we answer the question, but we don't sit down and have coffee with them and build a relationship with them, right? We just answer the question and we move on. We keep walking. So we do that with the person that we're living with. We're polite to them, we answer their questions, we keep conversations transactional. So, we don't share our inner world with them. They're not sharing their inner world with us anyways, right? Because usually they have a wall around them, they're not interested, they're not vulnerable people. Fools are the opposite of vulnerable. But the problem is that we've been vulnerable with them, and that's like taking off your clothes with someone who's got a whip in their hand. And we don't do that. We put our armor on. But the problem is that Christian people will say "Oh, no. You need to be open and vulnerable to everybody. Be an open book to everybody because that's..." No. The Bible does not teach that, okay? It does not teach that. We have to be careful about who we're an open book to.

And then other people will say "Well, if you're married to them, you have to be an open book to them." No. Was Abigail an open book to Nabal? I don't see any indication of that in the Bible. She did not even tell Nabal what she was doing. She did that behind his back. She did what was right behind Nabal's back. She wasn't making herself vulnerable to him. She didn't say "Oh, and by the way Nabal, can I ask permission to do this because I..." No. She just went and did it. She did what was right. That's called adulting.

RACHEL: Right. She was shrewd because she knew Nabal's foolishness. She had seen it as a pattern enacted in his life. And so that's what this type of action is in response to. We're not saying like, you know, if you just get married don't open yourself up if your husband is a good man who is vulnerable himself, but this is in response. This is being

wise with your actions and stewarding your life appropriately in response to the environment around you. Jesus was not open with everyone. He did not tell people that He was the Son of God immediately. The first woman He ever told was the woman at the well, that He was the Messiah. And other people He revealed it to as time went on, but He was not vulnerable to all these other people who were crowding around Him.

NATALIE: Right. You know, one other thing, too, that I think that we can do that obviously Christ did, is always speak the truth. And that means speaking the truth to ourselves. So maybe we can't speak the truth to them, although I think we can. When they've said something that's not true, we can speak the truth: "Actually this is what happened." And then we walk away. We don't get into an argument, we don't defend ourselves, we don't get into it with them, but we speak the truth for our own benefit, and also because it's right to just speak the truth. And I wanted to close with a quote, actually, by Jan Silvious if I could, and then we should probably go because we've gone over our time, although I think this has been a great conversation. Jan writes about the idea of letting go, just finally surrendering to the reality that this person is the way that they are and there's nothing you can do to change it. She says, "You may be thinking, 'Let go? If I let go everything will fall apart. I can't let go. What will happen if I...'" [Note to reader: the audio went out at this point, cutting off the quote. Natalie continues to quote Jan Silvious:] "The only thing you can know is that if you let go, you are making a positive step toward freeing yourself from the complications and chaos that bind you, and you're releasing your fool to the natural consequences of his foolish behavior. When you see the source of your problems and are willing to admit that only God can change your fool, you will have stepped out of denial into reality, where only God can work. By letting go, you remove yourself from the fool's realm of influence and you give up responsibility for your fool. It is a conscious effort on your part, as well as an act of faith. If you will determine to remove your fool from the center of your attention by detaching and leaving him in God's hands, then and only then will you see what God can do."

Back when I read that book I was not thinking about getting a divorce. I was actually just trying to figure out how to live with mine. And I suppose I was thinking "Well, hopefully if I let go then maybe my fool will change," but that's actually not how it works. Fools don't change. That's what makes them a fool. It's one of the reasons why they are. It's like a pig has a snout and it's always going to have a snout, right? If you finally surrender to the fact that a pig has a snout, that doesn't mean all of the sudden the pig is going to grow an elephant nose. It's always going to have a snout. Just because you leave a fool in God's hands doesn't mean the fool is going to change. They're always going to be a fool.



Now, can a miracle happen? Yes. Miracles do happen, but they are few and far between, and God does not force people to change. He invites change, but usually foolish people don't want to and they refuse.

RACHEL: Their hearts are hardened.

NATALIE: Exactly. They have hard hearts. So I would just end with this, by saying that if you do surrender your fool to God, don't expect your fool to change, but expect yourself to begin an incredible transforming change that will actually ultimately set you free. And that is why we call this "Flying Free," because that's ultimately what we want to be doing, right?

RACHEL: And we're the only ones we can control. The fool and their soul are accountable to God just as we are accountable to God.

NATALIE: Yes. Okay. I think we're gonna stop there. Thank you for joining us, and we will see you next time. Bye. No, fly free.