

HAS GOD ABANDONED EMOTIONAL ABUSE SURVIVORS IN THE CHURCH?

Hi. This is Natalie Hoffman of 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 111 of the Flying Free Podcast. Today I have with me a friend of mine. Her name is Stacey Wynn. Her website is called ClarityUnleashed.com. She is a life and career coach. She works with leadership development. She does premarital coaching and deconstruction coaching. She's got her hands in all kinds of things. She's also helping with the new Flying Higher program, and she monitors some spaces in the community forum for the Flying Free program as well. Those of you in those programs will probably recognize her. Welcome.

STACEY: Thank you. It's good to be here.

NATALIE: I specifically invited you here, Stacey, because I've been collecting a bunch of questions. (By the way, if you are listening and want to leave a question, you can leave audio questions. Go to flyingfreenow.com/111. If you go to the show notes, there's a link to a place where you can record a question if you want to get it answered.)

I had a bunch of them in the queue, and three of them had to do with matters of faith. I always think of you when I have a question about that, because you've started this thing called the "Deconstruction Zone." Why don't you tell us a little about that?

STACEY: Sure. I feel like I am uniquely created with my gift. I've realized through the course of the divorce and the work I've done in your forums that I really love being in the tension of the unknown. During my divorce and journey through my faith, the changes that happened in my faith during that time, I felt like it was a period in the wilderness. I'm completely comfortable being in the space where I don't know the answer to the question, but I'm willing to ask the question and sit in that tension.

"Deconstruction Zone" is, for me, a natural result of that, because other women going through this journey have the same issues. They remain faithful. They believe in God. But their thoughts around church and tradition are shifting. I think we put so much emphasis on our own identity as a wife and the success of our marriage, and when that fails or we see it failing, our identity, what we've placed and held on tight to, starts to feel like it's failing and slipping. We have to reposition ourselves in that moment to say, "Is my faith based on the successful relationship, or is my faith based in God?"

Then all the ancillary and collateral damage – families, communities of faith, churches – some of that slips away too. Being able to sit with people in that tension of, “What do I do now? Is this okay to believe in, or am I all right with God if I no longer believe this?” That’s what “Deconstruction Zone” is all about.

NATALIE: Right. There is such a need for it. That whole process has been terrifying for me, so I’m glad there are people like you. That’s why I pulled you in here for these kinds of questions, because you don’t seem terrified. Like you said, you like to be there in that place. I think that’s beautiful. I believe God has gifted you with that, and I’m glad that God gifts us differently.

STACEY: Definitely. That’s the benefit of community, for sure.

NATALIE: Yes. Exactly. We’re going to play the first question and then we’ll dive in. Here we go.

CALLER ONE: The question I have right now is what is my responsibility after discovering that my marriage has been a sham? It’s been a lot of emotional abuse, manipulation, blaming me, deflecting, denial, scapegoating – in all those things I’m reading about, I see my story. Sometimes it’s word-for-word.

I’m grieved and I’m discouraged about what my role was and what is God’s, because I feel like I’ve been praying for my marriage for a long time. I’ve been walking on eggshells to know that there are disagreements that never got resolved. I question what I can expect from God. I feel like He stood by and turned a blind eye to it just like my husband’s family did, because I know they saw a lot of things like putting me down, criticizing, and yelling at me. I’m wondering, as a Christian and a woman of faith, what am I to expect from God going forward?

NATALIE: I think this is such an important question, and so many women have it. I think women feel like God has also abused them. She is really going where many people don’t want to go. She is actually going there. She is saying, “This thing happened to me and He didn’t do anything about it. So what does that say about God?” That’s a very scary place to go. What are your thoughts on that?

STACEY: Absolutely. I had so many thoughts about this caller. I wanted to express my gratitude and compassion also for her. Gratitude for being willing to open up and ask those questions in a public light. It’s the sign of a big movement inside, because you get to that point where you throw your hands in the air and scream out to God. You are upset with Him and enter this kind of wrestling match or argument: “Where were You

when I needed You? What can I do in the future? Can I even trust You?" Those are all great questions to ask. I think we ask them and then can expect to get an answer, too.

NATALIE: Not always the answer that we're looking for.

STACEY: Yeah. It depends on what we want. Sometimes we get a very unexpected answer and then look back over time and realize we didn't even know to expect or to want the result that we've received, but it's been such a huge blessing and tremendous change in our life. So thank you for asking these questions. We can walk through some thoughts I had.

As I listened to this call, I thought immediately of Hagar's story in Genesis 16 because of that theme of, "Do you even see me? Can you see what's happened to me?" Hagar was the only woman in all the Hebrew Bible who had that kind of interaction with God. Actually, she is the only one to give God a name, which was, "the God who sees." I think her background, coming out of slavery into an abusive situation... Just go to Genesis 16 and look at some of what she walked through. In the midst of that, when she ran away, God found her. He found her and spoke to her. He did see her, and that's why she referred to Him and gave Him this name.

I think sometimes when we feel like everything we know has just come undone, when we're searching and don't even know where to go or what's going to happen with God, He does see us in all of that. I wanted to mention Hagar in case that's a story that is worth other women looking into. I think it is good to find other women in scripture whom we can identify with. We don't often hear about them in church or in sermons, but there are so many out there. That is one example.

Another thought I had is Psalms and Proverbs. I don't know about you, Natalie, but those were two places that I continued to go to as I lamented the state of my relationship with my ex-husband, some friendships I lost, and the people I thought were family that I lost in my ex's family. You can find yourself in Psalms when the psalmist is crying out and even accusing God of things. "You did this to me. You've done that. Where are You in all of this? You let people attack me. Why don't You strike them down?" Just reading through some of those can be so cathartic. It can also prompt you to write your own lamentation to God. I know I did that.

NATALIE: Did you?

STACEY: It's a great exercise.

NATALIE: Yes. I love that idea.

STACEY: It's not something I kept, either. I wrote it, I read it to myself out loud, and I burned it in a campfire. It was a wonderful moment. So I say, yes. Go ahead and cry out. Write down what you are crying out, all the questions that you have. Psalm 91 was one that was particularly powerful for me. I would encourage you listeners to take a look at that as an example, because there are parts of that about God being a shelter to us in times of terror, how He shields and protects us, and also what happens as a result of putting our faith in Him.

That gets back to my point about (because it is part of my journey and maybe yours, too) what do you put your faith in? I came to terms with the fact that I had put my faith in something that I had created, this marriage, and it wasn't what was giving my life a foundation. Clearly it was falling apart, and I had to re-evaluate where my foundation was. That makes me think how we hear in other places in scripture about what we build our foundation on and the sinking sand – building on rock or building on sand. I don't think it's a promise that everything is always going to go okay, because we know that's not true.

NATALIE: Right.

STACEY: But it gives us an opportunity to reevaluate. If we feel like we're slipping and we've built something that's not on a firm foundation, it's in that moment, I think (to her point), "You were there all along. Why'd You let this happen to me?" I think it's in those points that we could say, "Because You are there, God, I feel like I'm disconnected from You. I know You're there, but I don't feel connected. What is it? What's missing here?"

I think even that calling out and realizing that something is missing is an indication that we are in a relationship with Him. We just have to change our focus and our worldview and identity that has been placed in something else. We have to make that switch and say, "My identity... I'm coming back now. I'm knocking on that door because I know if I knock on that door, He's going to answer. It's time to knock on the door again. I feel You're missing, You're absent. Now I need to rebuild that trust and that relationship with You." He's right there.

NATALIE: I think even trying to figure out who God is, that's a huge piece of this. I think we don't know who God is. We thought we knew who He was, but it was based on what other people told us. When I was a girl, I used to literally think that God was just like my mom and that my mom and God were in cahoots with each other. So if I didn't listen to my mom or agree with everything that she said, then that was the equivalent of me not

listening to God or agreeing with what He said, which was fine most of the time. My mom taught me a lot of really good things, but she also taught me a lot of really crazy things. I bought that and thought those things were God.

I think dismantling or pulling out some of those beliefs we've had, forcing ourselves to look at them, and saying, "This is a belief I've had for a long time. But is it even true? Do I want to keep this belief or not? Does this belief line up with who I know and believe God to be now that I'm an adult and able to think through and understand things?" I don't want to believe that God is a God who is abusive. I don't want to believe that anymore. That means I'm going to have to change some of my beliefs about who God is and how He shows up in the world.

STACEY: Yeah. I think one thing that struck me as so odd, an internal conversation I was having and I can remember where I was at the time, was that sense that, "God, You chose this life for me. You chose me to go down this path. I wouldn't have met this man, I wouldn't have gotten married, had You not coordinated this whole part of my life." At the moment that I thought that, I actually felt very convicted and realized that I was the one that said, "Yes." That was my choice.

I think sometimes we separate ourselves from choice. One thing she talks about is, "You were there. You knew all this was going to happen." Sometimes it's a hard space to sit in, but you must evaluate that against God knowing what is going to happen in our lives. I do think He knows – He's omniscient. He knows the outcome of everything, regardless of the fact that I believe we all have free will and get to make choices throughout our lives. But I also think He knows us and knows what we will choose. It's a weird place to be in, but I don't think He chooses those things for us that harm us.

NATALIE: No.

STACEY: He doesn't choose them, but He will redeem them. At that point that we realize we've made a bad choice (and it could be something simple or something that has taken thirty years to figure out), we can then hand that over to Him. It's like a burden. We lay it at His feet and say, "Teach me. What do I need to learn from this so that this doesn't happen again?"

NATALIE: "The Queen's Gambit" has been really popular in the last few months. I try to imagine this woman, who was this genius at playing chess, that God can sit down and play a million, bazillion games of chess at the same time and know exactly how to make the moves to make it all come out right in the end while still letting all those millions of bazillions of people make their own moves and make their own choices about where

they want those chess pieces to go. He can do it all and bring it all together for good somehow. That's a mystery.

There are stories in the Bible that show... Joseph is a big one, with all the pain that he went through, sometimes, because of things that weren't his choice. His brothers chose to do bad things to him. And sometimes it was because he did make choices. He chose not to sleep with Potiphar's wife. If he would have slept with her, things may have turned out very differently in the story, right? But he chose not to, and then he ended up suffering for that. The point is that God wove all those things together. That story is told to us for a reason, because God wants us to see that He is sovereign in and within the really crappy choices that people make that cause us to suffer, the crappy choices we make ourselves, or even the good choices we make that sometimes cause us to suffer.

STACEY: Yeah. One more point on this call that came to mind. It's an example that I turn to a lot. It is Paul's Damascus Road moment. I know for me, going to an evangelical church for so long, when you heard Paul's story it was all about the person who had wronged you. It was always said that you pray that they have the same experience that Paul did on the road to Damascus, that they suddenly see their wrong ways and then recommit themselves or discover God in that moment.

Well, I think it is very much what we go through as women who've traveled this road and suddenly become aware of abuse in our families and abusive behavior in our spouses. There is a darkness there that starts to come to light. Once it starts, you can't unsee it. Then more and more comes to light. That is our own example of God's love and care for us, that He does slowly bring darkness to light. I think it is very much like Paul's experience because we have tread for so long down the path of tradition, religion, and going to church, doing all the things, and saying all the prayers and all that. That is what Paul did. He knew everything. He was very knowledgeable on the Torah. He was a God follower.

But at some point he became a Christ follower, and the Holy Spirit suddenly became his guide. That is the shift that I think we made as well. We start to really see our choices and religion versus what a relationship with Jesus looks like, what a life guided by the Holy Spirit looks and feels like. That's a big shift for us.

NATALIE: What is also interesting about that story is that he doesn't just suddenly become "Paul." He doesn't just go from Saul to Paul in an instant, and then he's the greatest missionary that the world has ever known. He goes away for I don't remember how long. Do you know? He goes away for a long time. He has to deconstruct

everything he's ever known about God. He doesn't become a missionary until he's done with that time period. I wish I had my Bible open right now. I think it said, "I did not consult with men." I think that's part of it. He goes away and has time with God, just him and God. He did not consult with men. Then he comes back and becomes a firehouse for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

STACEY: Yep.

NATALIE: Alright. Should we listen to our next question?

STACEY: Sure.

CALLER 2: Hi. I'm in a separation. I left my husband eight months ago. I know God helped me a tremendous lot. But the last month or two, it's really weird. I'm really scared because I don't know what I believe. I don't want anything to do with spiritual stuff. I don't even want to read my Bible. I don't want to be around church people. I'm scared because I don't know how to move forward.

NATALIE: I can definitely relate to this woman, and I know many people and have seen many people on social media, Christian women, who, many of them just don't go to church anymore. They stop reading their Bible. They stop praying. That's what I did. I had spent my whole life reading the Bible through every year. I was one of those people who paced the kitchen floor every morning praying. I was a card-carrying Christian club member. All of a sudden, I needed to just take a break from everything. Do you have any thoughts about that? I'm coming back, but I had to take a break.

STACEY: Yeah, it's not exactly my story. I think there are a lot of different stories. I see that all the time in the "Deconstruction Zone" space, and I totally honor that.

NATALIE: What's your story?

STACEY: For me, I just dove in headfirst into the deep end. I couldn't hear enough podcasts, read enough books. I entered the seminary. I needed more and more because I started to see myself in the pages of scripture where I hadn't before. I started to feel like I was grasping some truth that had been hidden from me, and I just wanted to see all of it. For me, and it's probably because of the space I find myself in, I looked for... I thought, "These are the verses that really have held me hostage. I'm going to study the crap out of those verses. I want to know. Have I really been held hostage by these for a good reason, or have I been taught incorrectly?" So I dug into the Malachi verse about divorce. I dug into some of the creation story and the subjugation of

women in scripture. I had to figure it out. That was my story.

But on the flip side, I totally understand and honor women who just need to take a break. I think it's like a cleanse. That is what it is. You need to take a step back and reorient yourself. I sometimes ask women this, and I would ask you this, Natalie: "If you woke up tomorrow and there were no more Bibles anywhere – so overnight they all disappeared, none that you could get your hands on anywhere – would you still have faith in God? Would He still speak to you?"

NATALIE: That is such a great question, because if you would have asked me that question ten years ago, I probably would have had a visceral feeling of panic because the Bible was everything to me. Now, because I've had that experience of stepping away... I didn't step away completely. I picked the gospel of John. I decided I was going to land in the Psalms and the gospel of John. Those were my two things that I clung onto.

But now I can say that God is not just in the pages of a book for me anymore. He was real to me before, for sure. But I think I needed to find out, "God, are you with me all the time, even if I'm not reading my Bible? Even if I'm not doing these Christian disciplines? Are You going to stay with me? Am I going to feel You? Am I going to know that You're there? Is my faith going to hold if I let the Christian disciplines go?"

It did, and I feel so much more free. I now read the Bible for a completely different reason. It's because I want to and I love that connection rather than feeling that if I didn't do it, then I wouldn't be connected. It's a very subtle shift. Before, that was my lifeline to God. That was the artery that connected God to me. Now I feel like the Holy Spirit is the artery that connects God to me, and the Word of God is this really rich tapestry, a beautiful gift, that God says, "And also, here is this beautiful jewel that I'm going to give to you. You can explore it whenever you want to."

STACEY: Yep. I think it's important right now to talk a bit about what that really means, because I think when you decide to pick it back up again, some of what has tainted our view of what religion is may be a version of the Bible, a translation, that we've always read. When you get back into it, I think you can explore multiple translations. Maybe read two or three at the same time. Start to read some commentaries and talk to people about other ways of reading the scripture.

I don't think we abandon it, but when we pick it up again, I think we need to know what we are picking up, because we try so hard to find ourselves and our culture and everything like that within the pages. We have to lay that down and not expect that

because it wasn't written in our time, our culture, and our space with our worldview at all. We have to look at it for what it is and then find a way to apply it in a meaningful way to what we are going through.

NATALIE: Right. My experience of the Bible is so much richer and more multifaceted than it was before. I remember I would go to church, or when I was reading the Bible, I would feel like I hadn't quite gotten it unless I felt convicted about something. I had to be convicted about something. I remember my mom once said, "You know it's a good church if you walk out every Sunday and you feel convicted." So that was just my mindset. Now it's like... I don't know! I want to be running through fields of grace. I don't want to be afraid I'm going to step on a landmine and explode every time I take a step.

STACEY: Yeah, conviction is much different than guilt and shame, right? There's even a difference in knowing what conviction is, because teachers can make us feel shame and make us feel guilt, but the Holy Spirit doesn't do that.

NATALIE: Right. I guess I should clarify because I don't want to say it's bad to feel conviction, because it's not at all. But I think it is unnecessary to go through life like I did, which was constantly battling guilt and shame about everything, so much so that it was very debilitating.

STACEY: Right. I think a hit on her last point is that "scared" is a word that came up with both callers. Just being scared. She said, "I don't know how to move forward." I think you don't have to do what other people have always told you to do. I think this is one of those times, this deconstruction journey, where you get to think for yourself and decide for yourself. It could be on a day-to-day basis. "What do I feel like doing today?" It might be nothing, and it might be something, but it's okay. God is there, and He's not rushing. What you chose to do in your deconstruction journey is up to you.

I think removing yourself from feeling like you must follow a certain pattern or path is part of it. Just that in and of itself, taking that back, can feel weird because we're so used to relying on going to church every Sunday and hearing a pastor tell us what's important for this week, what we need to do in the small group study and our little devotionals we do and post on Instagram... That is just not what other cultures even do. It's not something you can replicate around the world. So our relationship with Him and what we do is so much different.

I would say to her it's okay not to know and it's okay to not see the end of your story, because I don't think God ever gives us the billboard that tells us where we are headed ultimately and how many miles we have to get there. He promises us, as in Psalm

119:105, to light every step of our path. It's that one step at a time. Today you just take a step, and tomorrow you get to choose your next one and rely on Him to help you figure that out.

NATALIE: That is the point, I think. Those steps, that journey – that is the point. It's not the destination. It's not the outcome or the final product. Now, I think that eternity... We're always going to be... God is always going to be teaching us new things. We're always going to be on a journey. We're not going to arrive and then suddenly blip out into a state of, I don't know—where we're just dots of light floating in the universe. That's not what our destiny is. I don't believe that. If I started believing that, I would get scared. Okay, we have one more.

CALLER 3: I am reaching out to you today to see if you might be able to create a podcast, perhaps with Gretchen Baskerville or someone else. I understand she has in her book, "The Life-Saving Divorce," a chapter on finding a safe church. I'm not able to get the book. I know there are other women in my situation who have been kicked to the curb. I'm wondering how they can walk in the doors again. I know that would be a great help to me, so I'm wondering if it would be a great help to others as well: How you find one or what things to look for in a safe church? I appreciate you and your podcast and all you do, Natalie. Thanks so much.

NATALIE: Okay, that is the perfect question to follow up the last one, right? This will be our last question, and I think it's a great question to end on.

STACEY: I wanted to start with that little comment that stood out to me, which is "being kicked to the curb." It feels like that, but I want to say that with time, you realize that there was no better place for you to be. It is extricating yourself out of abusive, perhaps patriarchal, power-over and power-hungry situations, communities, and churches, whatever that was. I am thankful for being able to see that and being kicked out of that, because I think it's a healthy place to start your own journey.

She refers to Gretchen Baskerville's book, "The Life-Saving Divorce." She's right: Chapter 8 is the chapter that deals a lot with what to look for in a church and "How do we know that it's healthy and safe?" We think about that with people too – it's sort of the same concept.

For me, if I go to a church or listen to a service online and I hear one of the relationship series, I will go look on a website before I attend a church. If they've done a relationship series, those are the ones I listen to, because that gives me an idea about how they feel about a woman's role in marriage, what they think about marriages in trouble, whether

they make marriage the pinnacle of Christian success versus making singleness sound like it's okay. "One day you'll find your wonderful Christian marriage." You've got to listen to the relationship series. That will give you a lot of information.

NATALIE: Seriously.

STACEY: The other thought I had about this is that you're not entering a lifelong commitment. I think two things. Thing number one is not everyone who goes to church and calls themselves a Christian is a Christian. Thing number two is that it's okay to leave a church. It's not a lifelong commitment. The minute it feels like it's wrong, that is the minute it is okay to step back. Too often we get involved in a church community and we start volunteering. Before you know it, you are knee deep into this system, and then it's hard to get out of it. Go look online and listen to some services online before you even enter the building. Or maybe just stay online for a while.

NATALIE: Seriously, you could do that nowadays.

STACEY: But once you're there, if you are going to some place physically, don't get involved for about a year. Just sit back, take part, and don't volunteer. Just learn and see if it's a healthy space. I think you'll know if you're accepted for who you are: No one talks about praying more for the reconciliation of your marriage, they honor your decision for leaving an abusive marriage, they encircle you with support and you don't have a stigma, you're just part of the community.

You might even be someone who can help another woman who is going through something similar. You may become a resource to someone, which would show that they respect what you've been through and your growth as opposed to not. I think those are some things that stuck out to me. What about you, Natalie?

NATALIE: It's interesting, because I just found out that there are some people who are bringing a lawsuit against the church that excommunicated me. Interestingly enough, it's men. I don't know what their situation was, but I work with women, so I tend to... But here we've got a group of men who are mad at this church, so my radar goes up. I'm thinking, "Are they mad at the church because the church was trying to stop the abuse from happening or what was going on there?"

But here's the thing I started thinking about. When a church decides that it's going to step in and be the judge and jury and tell everyone what they should or shouldn't do, that is when you get some toxic stuff going on, because sometimes you actually don't know what's going on. What all of us can do is empower other people to make their

own choices. If that church had said to me, "We believe you. We encourage you to do what you think is best for your life and the lives of your children, and we will support you and love you through that," that would have been all I needed. Then I could have grown up and put my big girl pants on and made some choices for myself.

Instead, I thought I needed their permission not only to do what I thought was right, but that I just needed to do what they thought was right. If they would have told my ex, "You have a story too. We're going to support you. You need to make your choices..." If an abusive partner wants to continue to make the choice to deny, to blame shift, and to keep doing what he's doing, he should have the right to do that. But then everyone has the right to make their choice within that. It's not the church's job to say, "You're out; you're in. We decide." It is the church's job to teach and preach truth from the pulpit.

One thing Gretchen said just today in this Reclaim Conference that Bob and Polly Hamp were having where Gretchen was a speaker – she actually answered this question. It struck me because she said when the church teaches on marriage, what do they teach about marriage? Do they teach that it's two partners who have equal say in what goes on? Is it more of an equality thing? Or do they teach this power-over dynamic? If they teach from a power-over dynamic from the pulpit about marriage, of course that will carry out into the rest of their teachings.

Or when they talk about abuse, do they even talk about abuse? If they do, do they include emotional abuse and spiritual abuse? You just will not see that in an unhealthy church. But she made the point that you just did, Stacey. You can actually go online now and listen, because a lot of these churches are posting sermons online for their people. Now is the best time ever to vet a church before you even go.

STACEY: Yes.

NATALIE: I want to say one more thing from my personal perspective. I tried to find another church. I went to several churches. I gave each church at least a year, some longer, and I finally decided I would not go back. For me, for right now, I'm not going back to church. Here's what I landed on for me, and this is not for everyone. But for me, I landed on the place that the church of Jesus Christ is actually all around me. It's not just in the organized church. It is there for sure. You can find pockets of it.

But it's also in the coffee shop. It's also here online with you guys. It's when I talk to Stacey. It's when I interact with women in the forum. It's when I'm on Facebook talking with Christian women. We are a community of Christians. It's when I get together with some of you guys in real life. For me, that is the church of Jesus Christ. We're supposed

to be like leaven. We're supposed to be infiltrating the world, loving the world, and making a difference in the world like Jesus did. That's what we're supposed to be doing. So for me, that's what I'm doing now. But who knows? I might end up in a church again someday.

STACEY: Yeah. You have the freedom. It's not a rule that you have to follow. I love our Sunday night "Deconstruction Zone" Zoom calls, because that's what it feels like. It feels like a church gathering even though we talk about things that we're questioning and scripture and tradition. Tonight we are talking about, relevant to this point, churches that require both the man and the woman who are going through a separation process to both abstain from the Lord's Supper. Why? Why is church discipline imposed on a woman who is leaving an abusive marriage?

Anytime you get together and talk about God, what He's doing in your life, where He's absent, and what your questions are, then you are in community with believers and are having great conversations, which is the goal and is the important thing whether or not you go to a building. That's the power of the pandemic. The Holy Spirit has moved throughout this past year in ways that are just amazing to see. Most church doors were closed, and that's the power of the Holy Spirit and the power of community right there.

NATALIE: Yep. Some pretty amazing things have happened because of that pandemic. By the way, speaking of the "Deconstruction Zone," we will include a link to that. So if anyone listening would like to join those Sunday night meetings, they are open to anybody. We'll have a link where you can find out more information about that and join. Is there anything else you want to share, Stacey, before we end?

STACEY: Just to end on a note of encouragement, "deconstruction" is not a bad word. I think when you enter into it, especially in a community... "Deconstruction Zone" might not be for everybody, because you have to be willing to hear things that are maybe settled in your mind but that other people are questioning. But it is so enriching to go on this journey whether you do it yourself or you find some friends to bring along with you. But continue to wrestle. The church was built on wrestling. When you look at what Jacob did with God, when he wrestled with God overnight, and it was only then that He received the blessing. Our church stems from that point. It stems from wrestling. So I say wrestle. Get in the dust. Get in the dirt, get dirty, and grow as a result.

NATALIE: I love that. When you said that, it also made me think of all the back and forth that you see on Facebook these days, even between Christians. There is so much back and forth. In the "Deconstruction Zone" you can ask questions without being afraid that you are going to get attacked. I don't know if you guys talk politics on that? Do you guys

ever do politics?

STACEY: We did last weekend. We went there a bit, but we do it knowing that we're not going to... We can disagree. There is no judgment and no arguing. It just is what it is. We talk, and that's how it should be.

NATALIE: Right. Well, thank you so much for listening. And Stacey, thanks for coming on here with me. It's been a great discussion. Until next time, fly free!