

WHEN WOLVES PLAY DRESS UP

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 154 of the Flying Free Podcast! Before we get into our subject today, we actually have a couple of questions that I'm going to answer. But I want to share a couple of reviews that came in recently. I really appreciate those of you who are leaving reviews. Here's one. She says, "This podcast has so much truth and insight into a terrible, confusing, scary time. As a Christian woman who has been married over twenty-five years to a man who uses the Bible as a weapon against me and created a standard of a wife that no woman could fulfill, I've been lost in despair. Now coming into the light, this podcast, along with the book "Is It Me?" and the companion workbook, have been my tether to reality and healing. Thank you so much for sharing these tools." Thank you for leaving a review, and I'm so glad to hear that the book and the workbook and this podcast have been instrumental in helping you to heal and find hope.

Another woman writes, "My life has done a 180 since listening to the Flying Free Podcast! I've learned about what it is that I'm experiencing in my destructive marriage and how to live my best life in the future for me and my kids. I've learned how to love and honor myself as an adult woman, not the child I felt like I was for so many years. I highly recommend giving it a listen. You will not be sorry." Thank you to you, as well, for leaving that review. I love it that you brought up your children and how your healing has an impact on them, because that is 100% true.

Okay, I'm going to answer two listener questions today. Let's listen to the first one.

LISTENER: So I married my best friend, and we had a really close relationship. He was extremely funny, loving, affectionate, supportive, and once we got married, he became very verbally abusive and very angry. But in between it was always on and off, loving, then angry, then loving, then angry. Loving me, worshiping me, then hating my guts, couldn't stand me. And now we've been separated for a while. How do I deal with the fact that I still love this man and that I still miss that part of him that was so perfect? And then how do I deal with in my mind and in my heart that he was also abusive and nasty when he was angry? How do I move on from this? How do I heal? And how do I separate that? How do I deal with this? Thanks.

NATALIE: What you've just described is the abuse dynamic. That's what abuse is. The abusive behavior is not constant, it's intermittent. So it's nice guy + mean guy = abusive guy. Not mean guy + mean guy = abusive guy. Nice guy + mean guy = abusive guy. Even serial killers show up with nice behavior. Does that mean they're nice guys? They're called serial killers because sometimes they go about their everyday business and sometimes they kill people. Abusers are called abusers because sometimes they go about their everyday business and treat their intimate partner kindly, and sometimes they abuse their intimate partner. So when a victim says "I miss the part of him that's perfect," she is missing a mirage. That person doesn't exist. It's like Little Red Riding Hood thinking that the wolf is nice when it's dressed up like grandma, and she misses the costume when the wolf takes it off. But the nice grandma never existed. It was always the wolf in the grandma costume. So what she missed wasn't real.

How you heal from that is, first of all, embrace that reality. Accept that reality. You married a wolf. He had a Prince Charming costume on when you said "I do," but it was just a costume. As long as your brain plays with this idea that he really was Prince Charming with some wolf behaviors here and there, you will never heal because your brain won't accept reality. How do you get your brain to accept reality? When your brain says "Oh, it's so sad that I can't be with my prince anymore!" you stop and you say "No, what's sad is that he was never a prince to begin with. I can grieve my loss of that dream." If you say "yes" to the fraud, you're saying "no" to the real deal one day.

Healing takes time. What you need is support, validation, tools, and strategies to help you stop trying to solve for your pain through other people and circumstances. And I can help you do that in the Flying Free program. I can help you discover who you actually are so you become your own hero, the one who has your own back, so you can take back the life God gave to you and let go of taking responsibility for everyone else. That's how we find real freedom. And ironically, this is also how we love others well. We learn how to hold space for ourselves to be who we are, and then, in turn, we learn how to hold space for others to be who they are. It's an amazingly peaceful and joy-filled way to live life. I believe it's the kind of life Jesus modeled for us when He was on earth. So I encourage you to join Flying Free and then we can work together to grow and heal. Alright, let's listen to the next question.

LISTENER: Hi Natalie. My name is Suzanne, and I'm a mother of six and homeschooled for many years like you. My son who is twenty-two who has been very supportive of me and very understanding of all that I've been through has recently been gaining a lot of respect for John Piper and his teaching. When I voiced my concerns, he was surprised. We watched a video together of John Piper, the one that you made the Twitter post on. We would pause it and I would say "Cory, he's minimizing here," just all the way

through. We kept pausing, and my view of what I was seeing and hearing was very different from what Cory was seeing and hearing, and I just didn't know what you thought about that. Am I being overly sensitive, or is it just hard for these kids to understand what we've been through? I was just hoping for your advice on how to help my son understand the falseness of some of these teachers and just how to open their eyes to that. If you could help me with that, that would be great. Thank you.

NATALIE: I get it. I mean, I wanted my kids to understand what was going on with our church and all the harmful teachings that were and are still causing so much destruction in the lives of so many families. I still get upset when my kids come home from the little Baptist school they attend and tell me some of the things they're learning or some of the things that are going on over there. Sometimes, I try to show them what I see. I have one daughter who kind of gets turned off by that. I've had to do some of my own thought work around what's going on inside of me internally that's causing my frustration, because my feelings are not caused by my daughter's lack of understanding or that school's harmful teaching or those people's ignorance about different things. My feelings are caused by my thoughts. All of that other stuff is just my external circumstances. So if I want to get to the bottom of my own frustration and anxiety or anxiousness to make my kids believe what I believe and see what I see, I'm going to need to take a closer look at what I'm making all of those external circumstances mean.

So in my case, when my daughter says "I just don't see it, mom," my brain's programming is screaming "She has to see it! She has to understand!" And then I ask my brain "Why?" And then my brain says "Because if she doesn't, she may end up being part of the problem and not part of the solution, and I want all of my kids to not only be the kind of people who fully see what's happening for themselves for their own safety and well-being, but also so that they will hold safe spaces for others to find spiritual and emotional well-being."

Doesn't that sound beautiful? But let's continue to play this out, because when I think those thoughts, I feel fear in my body. And when I've got this kind of fear, I begin to show up in desperate ways. I raise my voice, I talk a lot, I get defensive, my face gets this ugly kind of scowl on it, I get sarcastic. It's true, I kinda get sarcastic. I loop in my brain; I'm not present; I'm easily annoyed by little things that have nothing to do with even this; I'm distracted, I'm agitated. And when I'm showing up that way in my life, the result is that I'm not part of the solution. I'm not holding space for others to be who they are and believe whatever they want to believe. I'm not holding space for me to be different from them. I'm not experiencing spiritual and emotional well-being, and I'm not modeling that for my kids.

So all of those beautiful things that I want to see, I'm creating the opposite. Because we will never be able to create those beautiful things with fear. Fear creates powerlessness. It taps into our base, primal nature rather than our adult, differentiated selves. Fear is contagious, that's the other thing. In fact, I would argue the reason that Piper and Doug Wilson and other people like them teach the things that they do in order to power-over others is because of fear. Fear of a terrifying God who must be appeased by our good works and sacrifices, which include being abused. And we have to convince everyone else that He's a terrifying God that's out to get them if they don't do their good works and make their sacrifices. And also, I think, not just fear of God, but fear of others. Fear of not being in control. Fear of losing control. I think those are some of the fears that people like this have deep down inside of themselves. So when we react in the ways that we do, we're simply meeting their fear with more of our own, and the cycle continues with all of us living out of this fear of condemnation and separation from our Creator and from our human families.

But what if we could tap into something very different? The Bible says that love casts out fear. So the antidote for fear is love. What if we could tap into love in this situation? What if we knew for 100% sure that God was big enough, powerful enough, and loving enough to have all of this under control, and that there was going to be an amazing ending? That the truth would one day be known in a beautiful way? And when I say "ending," I don't mean an ending of all things. I just mean an ending to this story that we're in right now where the plot line has a lot of abuse and bad things happening in it. What if we were going to be a part of this tapestry of truth, that we didn't have to panic or feel pushed to make all the peoples see the truth, but that God had all of us on our own personal journey with Him and His timing was perfect, that nothing has gone wrong and that everything is falling in place according to His loving plan?

Think about it, you guys. How would we show up with our kids when they came home worshipping the men they admire? Would we feel panicked and fearful and earnest to convince them today that what they are seeing is false and wrong? Was Jesus ever in a panic or a rush to convince people of who He was? Never. You never see Him rushing or worrying or ringing His hands in anxiety, wondering how God's plan was going to unfold. He just trusts that He is pure love, and where there is love, there is no fear. He held space for small children and for ignorant adults to be silly and ignorant. He spoke truth, yes, but He never tries to convince anyone. He never defends the truth. He just lives it.

What if that's all we had to do as well? What if it's okay if our kids get to have a normal human experience, just like we did? One where they make mistakes, change their minds, follow the wrong teachers for a while, and then do 180s? Where they discover

that hindsight really is 20/20, just like we had to discover and still do? What if that's all part of the plan and we can just let it be? How would that feel? Instead of fear, I think I would feel peace, and when I feel peace in my body, I show up very differently. I have a peaceful look on my face, even a smile. I answer questions calmly. I hold space for my child to disagree. That's okay. I'm curious about what he or she is learning. I'm a better listener and less of a talker. I'm so much more present. I'm focused. I go to this place of self-leadership and creativity. So instead of communicating with this ready-sarcasm on my tongue, I discover coming out of my brain these creative metaphors, and I can communicate with more wisdom. And when I show up in this way, the result I create for myself is that of becoming more like Jesus. And it's my personal opinion that the more people who are walking around and being like Jesus, the better this planet is going to be.

I can't control John Piper and Doug Wilson and abusive churches. I can't control what my kids know or what they believe. But God did put me in control of this person on earth whose name is Natalie Hoffman and what I know and what I believe. And therein lies our power. Therein lies our freedom.

Before we go here, I want to tell you about our winter book groups that we have that go through the book "Is It Me? Making Sense of Your Confusing Marriage" and the companion workbook for that. What we are doing now is I have a trained facilitator who is taking small groups through the book, and you can go and learn more about that. I record these podcasts too far in advance. We haven't decided what night it's going to be, but when this podcast is aired, we will have that day and time chosen and you can find out when it is if you go to flyingfreesisterhood.com/book-group. So just go to flyingfreesisterhood.com/book-group. And I will actually put the date and all of the pertinent information in the show notes for this episode, so just check those out as well. But we'll have a date and a time.

And what these groups do is they meet for eleven weeks in a row. We meet on Zoom. They are two-hour meetings. I'm not there for most of it. There's a trained facilitator who takes women through it, but I do come in on the last week, the eleventh week, and we do a Q&A with myself, and we just get on and have a big Q&A together. It's \$49 to be in a group, and that \$49 pays the facilitator to lead the groups, and you also get a PDF download of the book and the companion workbook. And the format is actually a PDF download each week. Each PDF has that week's chapter, so chapter one of the book and chapter one of the companion workbook, and there's going to be a version of it that you can fill out electronically. So when you download it to your computer you can actually go in, open up the PDF, and write right in there in the workbook on your computer. That way, you can keep it hidden from snoopy eyes that might be around.

You won't have the book or the workbook lying around your house. It will just all be right on your computer. So hopefully that's convenient for some of you. That's what the \$49 covers.

Now, you can still get the hard copies on Amazon. The book and the workbook are both sold on Amazon. You can still get the Audible version on Amazon if you want, and you can get the Kindle version, but the \$49 doesn't cover that. You don't get hard copies for that. You just get the PDFs. Also, you get access to ten weeks of little introductions. I've made these little introductory videos, and you'll get access to those introductory videos for each week of the book. I think that's it!

We'd love to have you join us. We've done these groups in the past, although they have not been quite this complex. They have not included the free PDFs and all of that. But we're doing this now. We're kind of developing it out a little more so it's a little more controlled and a little more organized. We'd love to have you be part of the winter groups. So I do know that they're going to start in February. So if you go to flyingfreesisterhood.com/book-group, you can sign up there and hop in, and you can also read reviews of other women who have gone through these groups before. We've been actually doing it for a year and a half. That's it! Alright you guys, that's all I have for you today. Until next time, fly free.