

ARE CHRISTIAN ABUSE VICTIMS SUPPOSED TO BE LIKE JOB AND JUST SUFFER?

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 174 of the Flying Free Podcast. I just found out something really amazing this week. I found out that I can access my podcast analytics on Apple Podcasts. I know — it's ridiculous that I didn't know that or hadn't discovered that before, right? I've been doing this for three-and-a-half years. Anyways, I finally did, and what I found out is that the Flying Free Podcast has almost 800,000 downloads, you guys, on Apple Podcasts alone. That doesn't even include other apps like Spotify or Stitcher or Google Podcasts or all those other ones. We have almost 5,000 subscribers on Apple Podcasts and 12,000 listeners.

That's amazing, and I hope it helps you realize that you're not alone. I know you might feel alone sitting in your car listening to this podcast, or maybe you're walking in your neighborhood or doing your laundry or making dinner or sitting on your couch watching your babies. But you're not alone. Right now across the world, there are thousands of other women just like you, wishing they were seen and understood. And even though we can't connect in person at this point in history, we can connect in spirit and in love. So thank you for making this podcast possible, for listening, and for being a part of the change that we're creating in this world — much needed change.

Alright, we've got two questions today. So let's listen to this first one.

LISTENER: Hello. My question is in regards of the differences between a good guy or a normal guy, and an ass. I actually never use that word. One of the things was "share responsibilities" — for example, doing the dishes: "You do it on Monday, I do it on Tuesday," stuff like that. Things around the house, for example. My question is, is that a normal relationship? Is that even if the wife stays at home or is pregnant and has maybe small children and stays at home and doesn't go to work, or if she maybe works just part-time and the husband works like, ten hours a day and stuff like that? Even then they share responsibility like that, or just if both work outside the home or have, maybe, inside of the house, a business, but they both work full-time jobs?

NATALIE: Okay, I don't really think there's any right or wrong answer to this question. The listener that sent this question in was asking, if I'm understanding correctly, "What does a normal, healthy relationship look like? Do they share responsibilities?" Every

marriage is going to look different depending on the two partners that are involved and depending on what they've agreed on, alright? I believe that marriage is a partnership, so the two people sit down together, they look at their workload, and they decide who's going to do what, okay? Some things might be understood, which I'll get to in a minute. So in one marriage, a couple may have decided that they're going to share some of the homelife responsibilities based on how much they're at home.

So for example, in my prior marriage, my ex-husband was actually really good about taking initiative, and his contribution to our home was that he took care of the car maintenance, he took care of the lawn, he shoveled the snow, he took care of all of the home repairs — he was kind of a fix-it guy. He was really good at that. And so I never had to worry about any of those things. Now, he worked full-time outside of the home, but then he also shouldered these other responsibilities. And we just fell into this. It just worked out that way, and it worked great for us, alright? This was maybe part of our marriage that was functioning actually really, really well.

I was home full-time, so I gladly took on the responsibilities for taking care of the home that I was in. I cleaned the house, I grocery shopped, I did the meal planning, and I made the meals. Now eventually I had nine kids, I had a home-based business, and I homeschooled. So I was working really hard, but I was in on all of that. I wanted to do all of those things. I was doing what I wanted to do, okay? That was my choice. And as my kids got older, of course they were given weekly chores to help as well, and I did less and less cleaning because they did their chores, right? But I was the home manager. And so, again, that part of our marriage ran very smoothly.

Now in my current marriage, we both work full-time. I work full-time from home, and my husband works full-time outside of the home, but sometimes he actually works from home as well. But, when I'm at work at home, I'm working. I'm not house cleaning. Now, for a while I paid a house cleaner, but now I've got two teenage girls, and they actually asked me if they could do the work and get paid for it, so I let them clean the house and then I pay them. But I just don't have time anymore to clean my house because of my job. But if I wasn't working, then the way that I would contribute is I would clean the house. I wouldn't be making money to pay a house cleaner for it, so I would just clean it myself. Not that big of a deal, in my personal opinion.

Anyway, my husband Tom, he takes care of the lawn and stuff like that, but he's not a fix-it guy, a fix-it-upper. He's not a repair guy, and he doesn't want to be. So we just hire repair services when we need something fixed, alright? Now I still make all the meals, but we probably do more takeout. We definitely do more takeout than we did when I was in my prior marriage and my kids were all at home. And I also have a repertoire of

quicker meals that I make, alright? But if I go on a business trip, which I do quite often, I never think, "Oh, I should make sure that I've got the meals in the freezer and make sure that everyone's okay." I just leave, and when I get home, Tom has taken care of the kids, he's fed the kids (usually with restaurant food, but it's fine), and the house is clean. Tom takes care of things because he's an adult, alright? He's not like a whiney, toddler-man.

Now, how you make it work in your home is up to you, but here's what I do not believe in anymore: I do not believe it is healthy to put every person in a box and have these so-called "Christian rules" about roles and who does what and when based on body parts, for example. Like, "Women have to cook." I'm sorry, but I know men who love to cook, and they are the cooks in the family, so it's ridiculous to say that everyone is the same. We're not cookies, people. We're living souls. Everyone is wired differently and gifted differently. Another example: "If the snow has to be shoveled, the man has to do it." What if the woman wants the exercise and she's a beast when it comes to weight lifting and running? What if she enjoys being outside? We're going to tell her that she can't because she doesn't have something hanging between her legs?

Now, if you believe that you're doing a disproportionate amount of work, then have that conversation with your partner. For example, if you just had a baby and you're sleep-deprived and you need some assistance with cooking or cleaning, then ask for that help. If you have a good guy, if you're married to a healthy, decent human being, he will gladly help you. If you're married to a really amazing guy, you won't even have to ask him. He'll just get a clue and do it on his own. But, you know, some guys don't have a clue, so you have to ask them. So ask them.

If he petulantly whines about how you're not recovering quickly enough and he just can't hack it, then I'm sorry, but you're married to a lazy asshole, and I feel sorry for you. Join Flying Free where we can love on you and support you and help you unhook from this toddler-man drama, because that shinola is about him, not you.

And I think it's good to put ourselves in the other person's shoes too, though. If I was at work ten hours a day and my husband was not working but was taking care of maybe our two kids and our dog and cat, and I came home every day and he was sitting on the couch going, "Hey girl. Where's my dinner? And why the heck is this house a freakin' mess? Keep up, my friend," I'd consider leaving him, because that's incredibly crazy. I'd hope that he would care enough about our home and our relationship that he would put in the effort to do his part while I was at work doing mine. So this is true whether it's the woman or the man at home.

Now again, if you're both working as Tom and I are, and one is working from home but you still have the same work hours, then you're going to need to come up with an equitable plan to get the chores done and put food on the table. Maybe you could take turns or hire help or whatever. Tom and I have worked out how we want to do it. You're going to have to work out how you and your husband want to do it. Again, there is no right or wrong answer, just a problem to solve, and two, hopefully adult, people who can solve it. If you're married to a decent human being, you'll be able to have that conversation and get 'er done. If you're married to an abuser, you will be expected to put out while he plays video games or goes out for beers with the boys or whatever.

Now, like I said, you could be married to someone who is emotionally abusive in other ways. This kind of situation was not the poison I lived with. My ex-husband was emotionally abusive not in these ways, but in other ways. But there are various kinds of emotional abuse poison, so don't think that just because your man brings home a paycheck and mows the lawn that you're good to go or that that automatically makes him a safe, respectful, emotionally healthy man. It doesn't. Those are good things, but those aren't the only things. Most of the women I've worked with over the past five years are dealing with very covert abuse, and their husbands are actually pretty good about helping out around the house when necessary, so I just want to put that caveat in there where I'm answering this question, but it may or may not mean that you're in an emotionally abusive relationship.

LISTENER: I started the Sisterhood program in December 2021. Three months later, I'm still stuck. I'm still in my destructive marriage. But I'm more unstuck than even in my twenty-five years that I've been with my soon-to-be-ex-husband. Natalie just has a way to explain and encourage and edify me as a woman in a destructive marriage. After three months, I'm no longer a victim, but I'm living in victory each and every day, despite the same circumstances. She has really showed me that divorce is okay, that it is a way for me to be set free and to fly free. And yes, even though the process is daunting, it's emotional, and it takes a lot out of me, I still know that it will be worth all of it, all the tears, everything that I need to go through, all the emotions. Thank you, Natalie and team. I truly appreciate the fact that you are there for me, even though I'm in South Africa, and I'm not even in the same country, I still get encouraged. I still am able to be a part of a sisterhood that just overflows with love and encouragement. I truly appreciate you.

NATALIE: That is amazing. I have received some really incredible feedback and reviews from people over the last few weeks, and I'm so grateful to be able to share a person's actual voice so we can hear the emotion in their voice and we can hear the hope that they have now. If you're someone who has been listening to this podcast, you can

actually use your voice and leave a review. You can either do it on Apple Podcasts right there in the app, or you can also, if you go to flyingfreenow.com/174, which is this episode, there's a place where you can actually leave a voice message just like this woman did, and you can leave a question if you want and ask a question, or you can leave a review.

If you are part of the Flying Free Sisterhood or if you're part of Flying Higher, you can leave a review about that, or if you just want to leave a review about this podcast and how this podcast has changed your life or helped you in some way, the rest of us want to hear that. We want to hear from you. Feel free to do that. You can be anonymous — you do not have to say your name, and no one will ever know who you are. I don't even know who you are unless you leave your email, and you're not required to leave an email to leave a review.

Alright, we have another question, so let's listen to that.

LISTENER: Hello! I just finished listening to "If I Leave My Abusive Marriage, Am I Giving Up On the Power of God to Change My Husband?" I appreciated the podcast and the information that you shared. I guess my struggle is the Saul-to-Paul transformation or the suffering of Job. My parents understand my situation that I'm in and agree that it is unhealthy, but they like to use the Saul-to-Paul transformation, and my fear is, am I not being faithful enough that God can transform my husband's heart and do a miraculous Saul-to-Paul transformation, or is my journey like Job's, and I need to stay in this marriage for my kids, and maybe eventually he will change? What are your thoughts on that? Thank you.

NATALIE: Well, I have many, many thoughts about that. So thank goodness I have a podcast, right? Alright, so what your parents are basically saying is that your husband is like Saul, who put people in prison and tortured them to get them to recant their faith, and if you are faithful enough, you can change the heart of your husband from a Saul's heart to a Paul's heart, and then he will be a missionary and suffer hardships and lay down his life for thousands of people. The only reason that Saul, the Saul that is living with you, is not a Paul yet, is because you're not being faithful enough that God can transform the heart of your husband from Saul to Paul. Like, that's literally what we're talking about here.

Now this is fascinating. This is fascinating thinking. It reminds me of when my little kids believed that since roller coasters existed in the world and they liked roller coasters, that meant they could build one in the backyard if they just tried hard enough and believed long enough. It's the same logic here. So if something happens in the world,

then it can happen again if we just use our imagination or have enough faith or belief or whatever. It's like the field of dreams — if we build it, they will come. That's great script writing for a movie, but it's not really rooted in reality or even how God set up the world and humans to operate.

Another way of looking at this or saying this is that, "If God can change people, therefore He will." But, really? If that were true, then we'd be living in a world full of people like Paul, right? I mean, if God can change your husband, why can't He change Putin? Why can't He change all of the pedophiles and abusers and murderers? Maybe we just don't have enough faith. If you look around you or if you even look at any snapshot in history, you will notice that we are not living in a world full of people like Paul. We are living in a world full of naughty people. That argument is so not rooted in anything remotely resembling reality.

Plus, it presumes that God is like the Greek and Roman gods who petulantly control the affairs of men with threats and rewards. Those gods were created in the image of the imaginations of the men who created them. The Creator God isn't like us. He's not a control freak who gets off on making people do what He wants them to do. He gives humans free choice, autonomy, personal responsibility. This means He doesn't force anyone to do anything, and He did not force Saul to convert. He invited Saul, but then the other half of that is that Saul accepted. Now, that doesn't mean that your husband will do that or even that most people will, right? God invites, but some people don't accept.

So notice how your parents, how they're pressuring you to stay with your abuser. Notice how they're showing up in the world. They're showing up like the god they worship. It's just natural we do. That's what humans do. Their god is very controlling of people, he forces people to change, he picks and chooses who he wants to change, and then we're just at the whims of this petulant god, and we really have no control or choice in the matter at all, except that we are supposed to then, you know, he's whipping us into having enough faith so that... It's so weird. It's like, you can't have your cake and eat it too. It's like, "God is the only one who can change people, but you also have to be a good wife or else they won't change." Like, that doesn't make any sense. You can't have it both ways.

So your parents want to control you and force you to do what they want you to do instead of just holding space for you with love and respect. But they really, honestly, they can't help it, because that's the god they worship. They're just being consistent with their religion. Now, Saul did change, but again, it was because he was confronted for his sin and repented of it. Okay? The Holy Spirit convicts, but there's another half to

that equation: repentance. And God doesn't force people to repent. Again, if He did, we would not have war. We would have peace on earth, goodwill to men. And we just don't see that in reality.

The other thing to note is that Saul's transformation happened from inside of himself. It didn't happen because of anybody else. Nobody else's faithfulness contributed to Saul's conversion. That was between Saul and God. So when your parents are putting pressure on you to be a catalyst for your husband's change, as if somehow your faithfulness is a magical potion to change your abuser into another human being, Saul to a Paul, then that's actually an abusive way of looking at it and an abusive way of treating another person. Because what they're doing is they're placing responsibility where it does not belong. They are trying to meddle and control someone else's life. Nobody is responsible for another adult person's behavior. We are responsible to God for our own behavior and our own choices. And He gives people free choice. He is not Zeus.

So what about Job? Let's talk about Job. Maybe you're called to suffer like Job. Let's compare the Job story with a woman living in an abusive marriage. In the book of Job, things happened to him that were out of his control. We humans, we can't control the weather. Back in those days, nobody could control disease. We have some control over disease nowadays, but back in Job's day, there was no disease control. There was no CDC. We can't prevent death. It comes for everybody. When a twenty-two-year-old girl marries her high-school sweetheart with next-to-no life experience and no understanding of how he disrespects and treats her already, even before they're married (I'm just giving one scenario — there's lots of different scenarios, but let's just go with one), and then the disrespect and mistreatment escalates in the marriage, all of that is out of her control. So yes, in that way, she is like Job. She's got a situation — she can't control this other human being, and he's showing up in the marriage in an abusive way. She is in a situation where outside forces are wreaking havoc on her life and emotional and physical and spiritual wellbeing.

But here is where the analogy breaks down. In the story of Job, there are no other choices or options. His kids are all dead. He can't bring them back to life. The cattle all got stolen. They're gone. His body is riddled with boils. It is what it is. But in the case of the woman married to an abuser, there is legal protection if she can get access to it. It's called "divorce." Sometimes she might need help to get a divorce. She might need financial help. She might need emotional help. She might need physical help. But she has a chance, in most cases, to get away from a suffering that is unnecessary and can be fixed.

So comparing her situation to the story of Job is really unfair. It's like comparing two people who have an illness. One person has an illness that's terminal, and that person will die in three months and there is no cure for it. The other person has an illness that will lead to death in three months as well, but there is an antidote. There's a cure for it. Now, according to these Christian thinkers, if one illness leads to death (that's the Job story), then all illnesses should lead to death. "Don't cure the person, because here's the good thing: As soon as you die, you're with Jesus. So accept your fate and die like a good Christian soldier, but don't take the medicine, because what about the guy who doesn't have medicine to take? Bring glory to Jesus by staying in your suffering, even if you can get out."

So, I don't know. Do you see how this argument — it's stupid! It doesn't make any sense. So when people give these dumb argument, now you know what to say. Or not, because I've noticed that when people are making arguments like this, they just are not thinking at all, and if you introduce them to these new thoughts that really don't align with their brainwashed, robotic programming, they might attack you. So this episode is not really for them. Don't send them to this episode, alright? This episode is for you so that you can unhook from the Kool-Aid that they're drinking.

Now I want to share some resources for those of you who are stuck on the phrase, "God hates divorce." I'm not going to go into the translation of that verse here, because we've already covered it elsewhere, and I'll get into that in a second. But if you're thinking that you are like Job and that there's no medicine for your fatal illness, because if you take the medicine (divorce), you and your kids will burn in the fires of hell for all eternity, well, then I've got some really good news for you that will bring you a ton of relief. You've been immersed in one very abusive way of viewing God, but there is another way. I like to call it, "Viewing God through the lens of Jesus."

So here are some resources to go get some more information that will probably blow your mind. Episode 9 of this podcast: "What Does the Bible Say About Divorce and Remarriage?" You would just go to flyingfreenow.com/9. Episode 63 of the Flying Free Podcast is called, "Can a Christian Get a Divorce?" So you would just go to flyingfreenow.com/63. Flying Free Episode 156: "What are the Biblical Grounds for Divorce?" So you would just go to flyingfreenow.com/156.

I also have a couple of articles on my website, which is flyingfreenow.com. One is called, "Biblical Divorce Resources for..." This isn't an article — I'm sorry. It's just a bunch of resources: "Biblical Divorce Resources for Christian Women in Abusive Marriages." It's actually up in the menu bar. If you look under "Resources," you'll see this one. And I will link to all of these. All of these will have links in the show notes, okay? So go to the show

notes if you want to go straight there. Some of you guys are writing notes and taking all this down, and I should have said this at the beginning, but. Another article that's on my website is called, "The 'God Hates Divorce' Lie." Again, I'll put a link in the show notes.

The two books that I always recommend about this are Gretchen Baskerville's book. It's an excellent book called "The Life-Saving Divorce." It's a Christian book written by a beautiful Christian woman, and it's completely biblical. It is an amazing book that I think will encourage your socks off. It's evidence-based; it's research-based. She's a huge researcher. And she also just did a deep dive into the Bible. And David Instone-Brewer's book, "Divorce and Remarriage in the Church." And actually, David Instone-Brewer edited and looked at one of her chapters, which is more of the Biblical basis for divorce, so if you get her book and you like that chapter and you want to go a little bit deeper, his book "Divorce and Remarriage in the Church" is not hard to understand. You know how sometimes you can get a book on theology and you're like, "Oh my gosh, it goes over my head and I don't get it. I don't know what all these Greek and Hebrew and all that stuff — I don't get it"? I understand where you're coming from. My brain likes to shut down about that stuff too. But this book is very easy to understand. He wrote it specifically for the layperson. And it blew me out of the water, because I was raised in a home where I was completely brainwashed with that other way of thinking, and I had no idea that the Bible had been misinterpreted in the translations that I had been raised with.

And I don't know if you noticed this, but in your church, do they tell you that you can only read a certain translation or maybe a couple of different translations? It's actually intentional. The reason why is because they don't want you to read the translations that translate it a little bit differently. And by the way, what's also fascinating is that they might tell you, "This is the traditional way" or "This is the way it's always been." That's so not true. Some of the older versions are actually more accurate, and the ways of viewing it were the ways the early church viewed it. And so these so-called "traditional ways" of viewing it are actually modern ways of viewing things that were created in the twentieth century. Isn't that fascinating? Anyways. There's a whole world out there to learn about, and I invite you to keep learning.

So that's all I have for you for today. Until next time, fly free.