

## WILL GOD PUNISH ME IF I GET A DIVORCE?

*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 225 of the Flying Free Podcast. Today I'm going to answer a couple of listener questions about God and Bible studies and verses that we twist to say that women have to stay married to abusers and other pet beliefs that we've been programmed with that just keep us stuck in the pits. So buckle up, butterfly. Here's our first question.

LISTENER: Hi Natalie. Love your work, love your book. I'm recommending it, and the podcasts are just awesome. I have a question. In our Bible study we are in the book of Joshua, and this week we are in the place where the Gibeonites tricked the Israelites. And when they realized that the leaders of Israel decided to honor the covenant they had made with the Gibeonites, and then it asks the question, "Read Psalm 15 in the NIV, paying special attention to the second half of verse four. Think of a time when you have kept a promise you made as a result of poor judgment. How does keeping such a promise honor God and preserve your witness?"

And at our discussion, of course, the women were saying, "Well, this means like the marriage, because God doesn't promise happiness. So that shouldn't be grounds for divorce. And the joyfulness that we have is what we have to do. And it's so sad that so many marriages divorce these days in our churches."

But my question is, how else can we interpret this part of the verse? Because that's always what they say. Later I thought it was actually maybe sad that they look at the breaking of the marriage, but actually not looking at what is the real cause. How many years has there been suffering in the marriage and that is the grounds for divorce, and not just happiness, because women don't just, "Oh, I'm not happy and so I'm going to divorce." They just don't do that.

NATALIE: So let's start by reading Psalm 15: "Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain?" That's the question. Now we're going to find out who gets to dwell in God's sacred tent and who gets to live on His holy mountain. "The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart; whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbor, who casts no slur on others..."

So I'm just going to stop right there. Can anyone raise their hands and go, "Yeah, I have a completely blameless walk. I always do what's righteous. I've never, ever exaggerated anything in my entire life because I speak the truth from my heart. I've never uttered any slander. I've never talked about anyone behind their back. I've never done any wrong to my neighbor, to my family, to anybody, and I've never cast a slur on anyone." Can you guys raise your hand? I can't. Okay, verse four: "...who despises a vile person..." Wow, you just got permission to despise a vile person. Just keep that in mind, because we're reading this for what it says, which is what these Bible study ladies were doing. So let's do it too.

"...but honors those who fear the Lord..." Do you always honor people who fear the Lord? How do you honor them? "...who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind..." You can't ever change your mind about anything, even though the Bible says that God changes His mind, but you can't. "...who lends money to the poor without interest..." How many times have you lent money to the poor without interest? "...who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken."

So do you know anyone like that? Anyone? I mean, Jesus is the only one who's perfect. I mean, even the Bible says God has changed His mind, right? He's repented of what He was going to do to different people in the Old Testament. There's verses like that.

So if you were to go back, let's just say that you were to go back to the little Bible study group of women who probably grew up in a specific pocket of the world — I'm guessing these women are not an eclectic group of women from all over the world, but probably grew up in a specific state, maybe, of the United States or something with a specific worldview, and they've most likely been immersed in that perspective for most of their lives. They are effectively programmed. Everybody is programmed, by the way, with wherever they grew up. They're programmed with whatever culture they grew up in. So these women likewise have been programmed in a specific culture, and their Bible study discussions will always fall along the same lines of their programming.

It would be like getting together with a group of people who had ever lived by a lake. If you asked the lake dwellers, "Hey, what is it like to live by the ocean?" they don't know. They might pretend to know based on their limited experience of living by a body of water, but they don't really know what it's like to live by the ocean because they've never lived by the ocean before. So if you want to learn about different bodies of water and what it's like to live by those bodies of water, like, "What's it like to live by a river? What's it like to live by a pond? What's it like to live by the ocean?" you're going to need to get out of the bubble by the lake and travel to the ocean or to the pond or to the

river wherever people live by those kinds of bodies of water, and then you can talk to those people about what they've experienced, and it's going to be different.

I grew up going to women's Bible studies just like this one. What you experienced was a typical Christian women's Bible study designed to avoid acknowledging and admitting to our own frail humanity, because we can't do that as Christians. We know that we're right, right? We're right about everything. So if we admit to being wrong about something, then that makes us not a good Christian, and we can't show up that way in our Bible studies. It just feels too bad. It feels shameful.

So instead we'll shift the gaze from ourselves and how we are not perfect to how other people are specifically failing to be perfect, because when we get ourselves out of the hotspot and put someone else there, it feels so much better. Ask me how I know.

So we might be thinking something like this: "Well, okay, I guess I have changed my mind about a few things, and I may have said something negative even about some of these women sitting here with me, and I may not be perfect, but at least I'm keeping my oath by staying married, unlike some women I know." If you ask them to go through that Psalm and raise their hand for everything listed that they had done perfectly, you would not get one hand raised if they were being honest.

But they didn't do that. They didn't go through the whole Psalm. They wouldn't even know what to do with the kind of overwhelming shame they would feel if they saw how they, too, right along with all those divorced folks, fall short of goddess perfection. So instead, these married women, if statistics are correct, half of whom are very likely in abusive marriages themselves, feel better when they can look at how they are keeping at least one promise: their promise to stay married to a naughty man who doesn't keep any of his promises. Just notice that as well.

And I know this because this was me for decades. This was the pond that I swam in. This is how I felt good about myself. "At least I didn't do that bad thing or that bad thing." So in this case, the women were instructed — just notice this too. It's so fascinating — they were instructed to look at a specific part, the second part, of a specific verse in a specific translation and then apply it to a specific, leading question.

You guys, this does not get good discussions going. What this does, it's like what we do with kindergartners when we want to teach them to stay in a line. We'll teach them the concept and then we'll ask them questions like, "Do we let Johnny in or do we butt in front of someone else when we're supposed to stay in line?" And they all say, "No, we're not supposed to do that. We stay in our own place," or whatever, okay? But if you want

to get a really interesting, stimulating discussion going, you don't give leading questions like that. You give open-ended questions.

But this one, this Bible study, did what a lot of Bible studies do. They give a leading question. It's designed to get a specific discussion going. It's not even a discussion — like I said, it's just a specific answer stated that serves as a tool to further suppress any dissension or argument or discussion about staying in an oppressive marriage or even in an oppressive religious environment. The propaganda that these religious cultures that have been created by men that these men have spread, it's so effective and it's done its job so well that the men don't even need to be present anymore. The women are so thoroughly brainwashed and effectively taught that they are now passing on this propaganda all by themselves, no men necessary.

The Bible wasn't meant to be read literally like that. That's why I read the whole thing through and I wanted to show you what happens when you read the Bible literally like that. It's not even possible because it's written with words, language, and language changes over time. If it were written literally, then a lot of Christians would need to stone their children. It would mean that God only owned the cattle on a thousand hills, and we don't know who owns the cattle on the rest. The Bible says don't kill, but we read that God instructs the Israelites to slaughter men, women, children, and animals.

Here's some other verses that say one thing, but then the Bible also says another thing. In Proverbs 12 it says, "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord," but then in 1 Kings 22 it says, "The Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets." In Ephesians 2 it says, "For by grace are you saved through faith." In James 2:24, it says, "You see then how by works a man is justified, and not by faith alone." Romans 3 says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Job 1:1 says, "There was a man whose name was Job and that man was perfect and upright." There are too many of these examples to count, but do they mean that the Bible is bad or that we can't learn anything from the Bible? Only if you think the Bible is supposed to be read literally, okay?

So what do we make of verses like this? First of all, the Psalms are poetry, so they need to be read through that lens. They are meant to be expressions of how we feel toward God and how He feels towards us. The writer of this poem was not saying, "You will go to hell if you are not perfect" or "If you divorce your abusive husband, you will go to hell." That is our modern spin on it in our own heads when we take the poem literally, and then when we're led by a Bible study leader or a written Bible study to go there in our minds, and they've woven the propaganda into it, all right?

Here's an example of why we don't take poetry literally. I found this online. This is a poem, okay? "Please take this literally. My body is a rainbow. My blood is an explosion. My heart is a rusty cage. These are not metaphors. Please take this literally. That cloud is my opinion. That road is an orange. That wish is my house. That burnt toast is my belonging. These are not metaphors. This hand is a metal spade. This foot is a knife edge. This mouth is a dark valley. These words are made of light. This is not a poem. This is the ultimate answer. This tells you how to live. This tells you the only truth. Live by these words."

Okay, if we think that's ridiculous, which we do, then we also need to understand that it's ridiculous to take any poetry and then to say that it is literal. "God owns the cattle on a thousand hills"? I hope that's not true, because that's a very small God. Our God's much bigger than that. When we read that, we don't take it literally because to take it literally gives us a very small Greek god or Roman god, or just a god, small "g."

When we read it through the lens of poetry, now it means something. Now it means that God owns everything — not just cattle, not just on hills, and not just a thousand of them. What it's saying in using a metaphor is God owns everything. So do you see how taking the Bible literally is actually really making God very small and also making the Bible reductive? And frankly, I think that's disrespectful. I think it's disrespectful to the Bible, and I think it's disrespectful to God.

All right, I'm going to read Psalm 15 again, and this time I want you to think about it through the lens of poetry and see if you can get a deeper and richer and bigger meaning out of it than "Don't get divorced or you'll go to hell," which is really a big stretch. "Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks from their heart; whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbor, who casts no slur on others; who despises a vile person but honors those who fear the Lord; who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind; who lends money to the poor without interest; who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken."

Now, to me this Psalm is describing someone whose heart is toward the Lord and loves to do what is right by other people. They are a person of compassion, generosity, faithfulness, trustworthiness, and truth, even though no matter who they are, if they're human, they will not be able to do all these things perfectly, but the one who does these things and lives their life with this bent is going to be one that honors God. That's what this is saying.

So let's just think about this for a minute. If you look at a woman in an abusive marriage who has stayed and endured abuse for the sake of her family and has showed compassion, generosity, and faithfulness in her relationship even while her husband has lied to her, lied about her, mistreated her, called her names, yelled at her, controlled her until she is shaken almost to death, and then she realizes after several years that she has actually been unkind and unfaithful and ungenerous towards a particular human being who desperately has needed her, and that person is herself, the way to stand and not be shaken is to offer honor, generosity, truth, and faithfulness to herself, and to call the abuser to accountability by leaving him if she is able to do so.

I wonder how this world would be different if Christian women really did live by this Psalm and rose up in strength and honor against abuse of all kinds. The Psalm, notice that it says "despises a vile person." I love the book "The Woman They Could Not Silence." It's a story about Elizabeth Packard who lived in the mid 1800s and fought for the rights of women not to be put into insane asylums just for having some opinions. This woman's abusive pastor husband would claim that she uttered slander against him when she protested the fact that he put her in an insane asylum, but who was doing wrong to his neighbor? Do you see how we must read the Bible from the lens of the loving heart of God, not from the lens of dogmatic, black and white, literal, honestly kindergarten thinking? One is for adults, and the other one is for children. Children can only understand, "Do this — don't do that." So that's why we need to teach children that way at first, but hopefully as we grow up we are striving to mature beyond that.

LISTENER: Thank you for the opportunity to share. Before Flying Free Sisterhood, I always thought, for one, I was crazy, and I had no connection. I felt like I was on a deserted island and I was the only one in the world that was going through what I was going through. My feelings were hopeless, I was depressed, I felt like I was in a hole that I could not dig out. I had no connection.

Since joining Flying Free Sisterhood, I actually have hope. I actually have connection. There are so many other women going through exactly what I'm going through. And for me it was the connection, to be able to connect with people that know how I feel. And I'm learning so much in such a short time. I've been with the program only a month, and I am so excited for the future. I have hope now that I didn't have before.

NATALIE: So I want to thank this woman for leaving that review. She was reviewing the Flying Free Sisterhood program. You can learn more about that by going to [joinflyingfree.com](http://joinflyingfree.com). There is an application process to get in, mainly so that we keep everyone safe. But if you're interested in learning more about that, I am going to actually talk a little bit about it in my answer to this next question, so you'll see how it



relates. But let's listen to the question first.

LISTENER: I've been married thirty-two years. I can't make myself do what I need to do. I know what kind of relationship I'm in. My husband is a narcissist. I've left him four times, but the guilt overwhelms me and I can't do it because I know how much he's hurting. I always come back like, in a day. I do love him, but I'm a follower. And from what he said there's a reason, and how I was raised. I was raised by just my mom. My dad was not in the picture. I don't have any childhood memories.

I've seen many counselors through the years, a couple Christian ones, who have said exactly what he said — that I cannot leave. It was up to me to marry him. Anyway, we've been married thirty-two years, my second marriage. I have never been able to be me. It's always been who he thinks I should be as a Christian, and that's my problem, is the fear of God punishing me for anything I do. And so I've never been able to just be who I want to be.

NATALIE: So I appreciate that you left this question. What you're expressing is the quintessential expression of a survivor in an abusive relationship who would really like to be who she is, but who is not able to do that in an abusive relationship. You are the person that I am passionately interested in helping, okay?

Now, the things that you've shared here in this question, they tell me what your programming is. Our programming is what we believe in. Our programming creates the feelings in our bodies, and then our feelings dictate our choices in life. So when you think the thought, "I should go back and manage my adult husband's feelings" — you know, you mentioned that you left four times, but then a day later you'd go back, probably some version of that thought is going through your mind — that's when you feel guilty. That thought creates a feeling of guilt in your body, and then that guilt in your body drives you to make the decision to go back and do exactly that: try to manage his feelings. But that belief that you are responsible for managing his emotions, that's what's actually driving that emotion of guilt.

If you believed something different about relationships between two adults, then you would feel different things in your body and then you'd make different choices, okay? So here's what you told me you believe, and this might sound really stark to you, but it is. Sometimes when we really come face-to-face with what we believe and we really look at our programming, it can be very jolting. So hang on, okay? This could be triggering for some people.

But number one, you believe that you are responsible for the emotions and wellbeing

of an abuser. That's what you believe. Now, you might think, "Oh no, I don't think I'm responsible," but that is what your brain believes. That's your programming, okay, on a very subconscious level.

Number two, you believe that you are not responsible for the emotions and wellbeing of yourself, okay? I know you're probably thinking, "No, that's not true. I totally think I'm responsible. In fact, I feel so bad because I don't manage my emotions well" or whatever. Those are all things that I felt and believed, okay, but I didn't take responsibility for myself because I was too busy taking responsibility for my abusive husband, and the reason that that was the case is because I believed that my responsibility lay not with taking responsibility for myself, but with taking responsibility for my husband's emotions. Number three, you believe that counselors have credibility to make decisions for your life and to tell you what is right or wrong for you.

Now, you mentioned that you have had several counselors, and I think you only said two of them were Christians, but no licensed counselor that is experienced or skilled is going to tell their client what is right or wrong for them or tell them what to do, like, "You have to stay." No counselor would do that. So I don't know what pool of people that you're finding your therapists from, but I would definitely check out a different pool. Sometimes you can get good referrals just by talking to other people who have been seeing people in your area, and you can find out from them. But for sure if you're going to a Bible counselor — you didn't specify — but Bible counselors, those are not licensed therapists, all right? They've usually been trained in a specific theology and they will tell you to stay. Most of them will. So you need to be really careful. And I do have a podcast episode and some other information about that on my website.

So here's the problem, though, back to number three. You're giving these people credibility. It's kind of like what we do when we're kids. We think, "Well, my mom and dad said that, so it must be true because they're my mom and dad, and how do I know? I'm just a kid," right? And we are just a kid and we don't really know.

But when we're adults, we don't have to give everyone credibility. You don't have to give someone credibility just because they make more money than you, because they have a degree and you don't or they have a better degree, or because they have more years of college, or because they drive a better car, or because they live in a better neighborhood, or because they're a man and not a woman, or because they're a leader in the church. Just because people have made achievements or whatever doesn't mean that you should just automatically give them credibility and trust. We give credibility and trust to people who have earned that over time in our lives.



But what I see people doing is they're like, "Well, my counselor said this," or "My pastor said this, so therefore it's true. And they must know." Absolutely not. Absolutely not. They do not know what is best for you. You actually have the answers deep inside of yourself, but there's so much smoke and mirrors that are causing you to not be able to see clearly what those decisions and what that wisdom is for yourself. So we need to clear that away first. Again, this is what we do in the program. We work through some of these faulty beliefs that we've had that are really wreaking havoc in our lives.

So number four, another thing that you believe is you don't believe that you have credibility to make decisions for your own life. You're just like, "I'm just little old me, and so what do I know? I can't make a decision for my life. I'll probably make a wrong choice. I'm not a good person," or "I'm not a smart person," or "I'm not a wise person." And so you're not giving yourself credibility.

And then number five, you believe that God is abusive and petulant. You really do — I hate to say it. You might be thinking, "No, I don't believe any of those things," but I promise you do, because our lives always reveal what we believe deep down. Our words do not reveal what we believe. Our lives reveal what we believe. The only way that you're ever going to be free is to change what you believe. Our brains, when they're left unmanaged, they always do three things, always, across the board. If you are a human being and you're not managing your brain, your brain is going to do three things.

Number one, it's always going to move you towards what's easiest and has the least resistance. It does not like to change. Number two, your brain is always going to move you towards what feels good right now. That's what our brain wants. "What's going to make me feel good now?" And then number three, our brain, when it's unmanaged, it's always going to seek to avoid anything that's unpleasant or uncomfortable or painful. Make sense? Can you relate to this? I certainly can.

This is what our brains do when they're left unmanaged. And by "unmanaged" it just means that we've not really looked to see what our beliefs are, and we just kind of let everything go on autopilot. And then we kind of wonder, "How did I end up here?" Well, it's because we've kind of gone on autopilot. We've kind of let our brains do whatever our brains want to do. And our brains are trying to keep us safe. They're not doing bad things — it's just that our brains don't always know exactly what is really going on.

So first we're going to talk about how your brain is doing this for you and keeping you stuck. So let's look at the first one: Our brain moves us toward what is easiest and has the least resistance. So what is always the easiest and has the least resistance is

anything that just keeps us on the same path — just keep us doing the same things. So the brain dislikes change. It wants to keep its programming. It's like if you were driving along a road and you came to this option to either stay on the same road, which is like a nice, paved road, or you could go off onto a really rocky, unpaved, dirty, ruddy road. Which way would you be inclined to choose? Our brain would definitely want to stay on the same road. It's easier. Change is hard, especially if it means that we're going to be uncomfortable.

So, for example, if we have lived with someone for thirty-two years as this person who asked this question has, our brain is not going to want to change that. It's going to come up with 5,862 really good reasons to just keep things status quo. "The counselor told me to," "God will punish me if I don't," "Well, I just really love him," "I am a follower," "He will feel bad." Do you see this? This woman's brain offered so many reasons for her to stay.

So if she really wants to leave, she's going to need to take back control of her brain and begin to manage it herself. She's going to need to rewire some of that programming with new thoughts that are more empowering. They're going to be uncomfortable at first, just like that road, that ruddy road that you've never driven on before, but they're going to be more empowering in the long run.

Because all of those reasons that her brain was giving to her, they're just thoughts. None of them were facts. They were just her brain's go-to reasons to keep everything the same and keep her safe, because the same is safe. That's what our brain believes. Now, right now her brain is saying that she should stay because her husband will feel bad if she leaves. I mean, that's one way to think about it.

I'm going to talk to her now. I'm going to say "you." Your brain likes to believe that because it means that you'll stay and keep things the same. But here's another way of thinking about it. What if you should leave because the woman who has your name will feel bad if you stay? Just another way of thinking about it. What about her? Who are you responsible for? Did God give you responsibility for another person's life, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors for you to control? Or did He give you responsibility for your own? What if your husband's only chance to see the destruction that he's doing is if you get out of the way and allow him to experience the consequences of his sinful behavior?

You know, part of the human experience is pain and negative emotions, right? So why are we always trying to keep everyone around us from experiencing that? Doesn't your husband also have the right to have a human experience? Why aren't you allowing him

to experience what it is to be fully human? Why are you trying to control his emotions?

Now, I can come up with all these other thoughts and these questions, not because I'm some kind of wise guru, because I'm not. I have these other thoughts as options in my own brain that come immediately to mind when I read things like this because I've taken the time to take a really hard look at my own brain's programming, and I continue to do that. It's a daily thing that I do. I have intentionally practiced, practiced, and practiced some more new beliefs. I've worked on taking my power back over my own mind, and I no longer just let it go off on its own.

Every time I feel big emotions, that is my wake up call. That's like a red light on my car's dashboard that says, "Wake up — pay attention to this. There's something going on. You've got a belief inside your brain right now that's causing you to feel a certain way in your body. What are you thinking right now? What do you believe right now?" And then I stop and I look at that thought: "What am I thinking right now that's causing me to feel scared or causing me to feel sad or causing me to feel angry? What do I believe is causing these feelings in my body?" And I listen to my thoughts. I try not to judge them. I try to listen to them with compassion, and then I ask myself questions and dig into why I believe what I believe. And then just see, "Do I want to change anything?"

You know, the Bible talks about renewing our minds, talks about taking every thought captive. Honestly, that's exactly what this is. This is what we do in the Flying Free program. We systematically go through the thoughts and beliefs that are keeping us trapped, and once we've identified them and then dismantled those lies, we are free to feel differently and to make different choices.

So we've just looked at the first thing that the unmanaged brain does. It wants to keep everything the same. "Don't change anything. Change means danger." That's what our brain says. The brain is going to resist change. So the second thing the unmanaged brain does is it always goes towards what feels good in the immediate moment. And this is why you leave for a day — you're like, "I can't do this anymore. I'm going to leave" — and then as soon as you're gone and the negative feelings wash over you the next day and you realize, "Oh my gosh, this is serious. I can't believe I did this. I'm not ready for this," your brain fixes that problem and those painful feelings by just going back to the house or back to your husband, back to status quo.

Your brain says, "Hey, wait a minute. This feels terrible and I can't handle terrible feelings, so I'm going to go back." Even though going back also feels terrible, it is a terrible that you are familiar with and that feels better than the unfamiliar terrible, all right?

Now, I'm not touching on the fact that you may not be ready to go, too. Sometimes we leave and we are like... I mean, I did that a few different times where I just left the house to get away. I went to a hotel a couple times, I went to a friend's house a couple times, I went to my parent's house a couple times. Throughout my marriage I would just be at the end of my rope and I would just leave. But I never left thinking, "I'm never going back." I always left knowing, "I'm going to have to go back," because all my kids were there. But I wasn't able to actually leave for good... It took me years to plot a course and make a plan and actually end up leaving for good.

Now, she's been married for thirty-two years, so I'm guessing her children are adults, so maybe she can just leave for good and just decide one day. But for most of us, we kind of have to make plans and figure it out and maybe separate our finances, and there's a whole course inside of Flying Free that teaches how to make plans to leave. But anyway, that's why we might leave and then go back. If we don't want to go back, we actually do want to go back because our brain is like, "I can't do bad feelings."

Okay, so the unmanaged brain resists change — that's one thing — and then it moves towards what's good — that's another thing. But the third thing it does is it avoids pain. So another thing that we do inside Flying Free is we learn how to tolerate discomfort and negative emotions, because nobody is ever going to be able to leave their abuser without this skill. If you can learn how to sit with your emotions and process through them, you can do anything in life, because all accomplishments, all growth, all learning, and all change requires the ability to tolerate negative emotions.

Emotions are simply vibrations in our body that come over us in waves. They don't come and stay. Just notice this sometime, because your brain is going, "Oh, I feel so terrible and I've been feeling so terrible. I feel terrible 24/7." Actually pay attention to what's going on in your body. You'll notice that it comes in waves. And also you'll notice that if you fight these emotions and resist them, they actually get bigger and they last longer. The wave will last longer and be bigger and more painful if you fight and resist it. But when you allow the emotion, you sit and you allow and you breathe through it, you're going to feel it make its way through your body. And maybe you'll cry, maybe you'll shake, but eventually that emotion will pass through and get processed, and this is healthy. This is how we heal.

Now, if you're going through grief, you're going to experience wave upon wave, and the waves are going to be very, very close together and very, very huge, especially at first. But you'll notice, and if any of you have gone through grief before, lost a loved one, you'll notice how over the course of time, the waves are a little bit less and less, they come less frequently, you have a little more breathing space between them, and pretty

soon, a few years later, they just come once in a while.

So this listener who asked the question mentioned that she believes that God is going to punish her if she leaves her abuser. So I would get really specific with my brain about this and say, "What do I believe God will actually do to me if I leave?" and then write down your list of things. I'm a big believer in writing things down. Writing engages your brain on several different levels because you're using your body, you're using your eyes, you're using your hands, you've got the tactile feeling of the paper, you have to think and use your brain when you're writing words, you're using right and left side of your brain, and so writing helps you process things. It's very effective. The other thing it does is it gets things out of your brain and onto paper, and often that helps to alleviate the bigness and the hugeness of things, and it's a great way of processing.

So write down your list of things that you believe that God is going to do to you if you leave. Maybe you think He's going to take all your money away and you'll live in the streets. Maybe you think that He's going to take your children away. Maybe you think that you'll get breast cancer and die because He'll punish you, or someone you love will die. By the way, those are all things that I thought were going to happen to me if I left my husband.

But as you get a little life experience under your belt, you realize those things happen to men and women who love and obey God too. They happen to humans, not just humans who get divorced. Is God punishing humans every time He takes a child away or someone gets cancer or you lose your money?

Plus, think about this. I actually know lots of divorcees who are not living in the streets, they have amazing relationships with their kids, they never got cancer. Life happens to everyone. The Bible says, "It rains on the good and the evil." And sometimes life is good and sometimes it's not so much. I promise you this: God is not a Greek or Roman god, small "g," who strikes people with lightning when they don't please him. That is a very small view of God. That's how the Israelites viewed God. That's why the Old Testament is all about that, because they viewed God the way the people around them viewed the gods and they just superimposed everything they knew, all of their understanding about the gods, onto their God, onto Yahweh.

If we as humans would never force our children to be abused for the duration of their lives and go, "Yeah, this is really good. You know, you're really bringing a lot of glory and honor to me by just sucking it up and being abused. And also, this is really helping you to grow and develop as a human being. This is great" — we would never do that, but instead what we probably would do is what Jesus told us to do, which is to offer mercy

and to set captives free. So then my question is, why do we think that our heavenly Father is going to do the other thing and not the thing that Jesus commanded? Why would we think that God would be all for people being abused for their entire lives, but not all for what Jesus Christ taught? It literally makes no sense you guys, okay?

At the time of this recording, I'm teaching a course. I'm actually reteaching a course that I taught several years ago inside the Flying Free program. It's called "Healing Your Relationship with God," and I think that anyone listening to this episode right now who believes that this is what God is like, because we've been taught that this is what God is like, but I think you'd benefit from this course.

At the time of this recording, I'm actually teaching it live on Saturday mornings. But when you listen to this recording, that course is going to be all finished and available to you as a completed course, and you can listen to it or watch it if you want. You can listen or watch. You can listen on our private podcast or you can watch it as soon as you join Flying Free. I will teach you so many life-giving and healing thoughts about God than the thought that God will punish women unless they continue to stay in abusive relationships.

I truly believe that churches that teach that idea are guilty of blasphemy against the Creator. They've made a god, small "g," in their own abusive image, and my mission in life is to expose that lie so that women can repair their relationship with themselves and with their Creator and they can heal. Head over to [joinflyingfree.com](http://joinflyingfree.com) for more information about that program and how you can be part of that.

Hey, beautiful butterfly. Thank you so much for listening. If you liked this episode, be sure to subscribe, and then consider leaving a rating and review so others can find us. To connect with me and get a free chapter of my book, head over to [flyingfreenow.com](http://flyingfreenow.com), and until next time, fly free.