

## DO CHRISTIAN WOMEN EVER GET OUT OF THEIR ABUSIVE MARRIAGE AND THRIVE?

*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 229 of the Flying Free Podcast. I want to start off today with something I read in our Flying Free private forum. We have lots of spaces in that forum, but there's one space that is dedicated to sharing wins and successes so that members have this place to share how their personal work that they're doing in the program is paying off in amazing ways in their life.

Now, in the month of April, I retaught the course called "Healing Your Relationship with God," and I retaught it live. It's now in the course vault, so anyone who joins can access that course at any time. But one of our members started going through that course and then she dropped this win, and I want to share it with you.

She wrote, "I have listened each morning since Monday to the series on "Healing Your Relationship with God." I'm in awe of how the words spoken are the exact struggles I have had since I filed for divorce last October. There were days I thought I couldn't take another breath, that God was disappointed that I left my husband and that I was going to get consequences. Right before I left him, the abuse was getting more intense, more frequent, and scary as I tried to set boundaries. I did not feel safe sleeping in the same room with him. I was starting to have severe panic attacks that would wake me up in the middle of the night. He said one night after a panic attack that maybe this was God telling me I needed to sleep with him again. So wrong, and it made me question God even though I knew God was helping to get me through.

Over the course of these past seven months, God has provided for me and has made a way, including leading me to Flying Free. There was still so much I could not reconcile in my head about what was happening in my life and my belief system about God. This series has literally lifted heavy burdens I was still carrying. To understand the concept that God is in me, experiencing the things I am experiencing, giving me strength when I am weak, is life-changing. To let others have the freedom to choose their beliefs, and I can love them where they're at and not try to convert them, has been so amazing. I am walking around with new confidence and love for myself, love for others, and knowing God in a whole new way. I'm going to probably listen to the series a few more times. I'm a work in progress, but I am praising God for this resource. It's an answer to the cry of my heart. Thank you."

Now, if taking life-giving, healing courses like this as well as having a private place where you can interact with hundreds of Christian women just like you — if that's something that you need in your life right now, consider joining us. It's only \$29 a month, and you can head over to [joinflyingfree.com](https://joinflyingfree.com) for all of the details about the specific kind of help and support that you will get, and you can complete an application over there.

Now, today I have something slightly different for you. I have a special place where listeners can record their questions for the podcast, and then sometimes I will do an episode where I answer two or three of those questions. And by the way, if you would like to ask me a question there, we will make sure to put a link in the show notes for you to do that. So anyway, there are a few questions that I've saved up over the past few months that I have actually already answered in the podcast or I've addressed it in past episodes or in the Flying Free program, I go into a deep dive into some of these things. So what I'm going to do today is I'll play one of these questions for you, and then I'm going to tell you all the places where you can get some answers for that particular question. So if you're listening and you have that same question that the other listener did, you'll know where you can go to get some answers.

And all of the direct links are going to be in the show notes. So there's going to be a lot of links, and the show notes for this episode are going to be pretty important. So think of this episode as being kind of like a trailhead. If you follow the little trails, it's going to take you to a bunch of other resources, and then you can binge-listen and find some answers. So here's the first question.

LISTENER: Hi, Natalie. I've enjoyed your podcast, but there's one area I need to hear more about. Please, could you give us some survivor stories of women who stayed single who are happily enjoying their life, they're free from their abusive relationship, and they're thriving alone and doing life proud? Thank you. Bye-bye.

NATALIE: Well, I interact with hundreds of these kinds of women every single week in the Flying Higher program. Flying Higher is for divorced Christian women, and most of those women, I mean, maybe there are a handful that are remarried, but I think almost all of them are still single, and many of them are thriving. Some of them, they're newly divorced and they're in that rebuilding process, but many of them are thriving.

Not only that, though, we have numerous podcast episodes where I interviewed women who got out. And all of these women, I know many of them and still keep in contact with almost all of them, and they are all thriving, okay? So I'm going to tell you where you can hear all of these stories. Episode 57, you're going to meet Debby. That

episode is called “Nothing I Do Makes My Husband Happy.” The titles of these kind of give you an idea of some of the challenges that they were having in their relationship. All of these women, all of these episodes I'm going to tell you about right now, they're all divorced and they talk about how they got out of their relationship in the episode.

Oh, the other thing I should let you know is I'm going to provide the direct links to these, but also, anytime you want to go to a past episode for Flying Free, it's super simple to just open up your browser on your phone or your computer and go to [flyingfreenow.com/](http://flyingfreenow.com/) and then the number of the episode. So for example, the one I just told you about, Episode 57, you would just go to [flyingfreenow.com/57](http://flyingfreenow.com/57) and there's Debby's episode. You can also, of course, access all of these on your favorite podcast app, okay?

Okay, so the next one — you'll meet Lisa in Episode 61, and that episode is called “Abused by Husband and Rejected by Church.” In Episode 65 you'll meet Karyn: “God Loves You More Than He Hates Divorce.” In Episode 70 you'll meet Julie: “When Giving the Silent Treatment is Emotional Abuse.” In Episode 74 you'll meet Kathryn: “When Your Christian Husband Yells at You All the Time.” Episode 78, you'll meet another Julie: “Are You Married to a Quiet Covert Abuser with a Hidden Lifestyle?” Episode 82, you'll meet Robin: “I'm Always Walking on Eggshells in My Christian Marriage.” And no, I don't think we planned on doing a play on words there, like “Robin” and “eggshells.” I don't know how that happened, but it's okay — whatever.

Episode 86, you'll meet Lynn: “When Your Abusive Husband Is a Pastor.” Episode 95, you'll meet Barb, who's actually a coach inside of the Flying Free program now. Her episode is called, “My Husband Changed After We Got Married.” Episode 96, you'll meet Sarah: “You Are Not Responsible for Your Husband's Behavior.” In Episode 102, you meet a different Robin and Stacey: “What Life Can Look Like for Christian Women After a Divorce.” Episode 103, you'll meet several of them. It's called “Christian Women Who Care About Other Christian Women.” And in Episode 132 you'll meet Marie, who is an amazing human being.

A lot of these women are still in the Flying Higher program, and I get to see them on a regular basis and interact with them, and I get to keep following their stories. And their stories are all still unfolding, and they're all incredible human beings. And their stories are still being written. Go meet those women, deep dive into those stories, and I think you'll be really encouraged. Okay, here's the next question.

LISTENER: In the Bible, God speaks of being submissive to your husband. At what point do you refuse to have sex with your husband if he's emotionally abusive, and what

scripture stands behind that if you don't have sex with your husband?

NATALIE: This is a great question. Some women will initiate what's called an "in-house separation," and this means no sex. You're separated. I did this myself in 2013, and my ex-husband and I slept in different rooms. Now, it's not super effective, by the way, because you are still in the home with them, you're still experiencing all the same emotional abuse — that doesn't go away. In fact, it usually ramps up if you're not giving them whatever they demand. But sometimes that's the only option for you.

So Proverbs is a book of the Bible that's full of verses about fools, and that's what abusers are. They're fools. So if you read through the book of Proverbs and you highlight every verse that's referring to your husband, you'll get direction about what to do. Now, when you don't want sex, and your husband forces you to have it, that's called "rape." Yes, there's a thing such as marital rape.

Your "no" is your "no," and sometimes women will say "yes..." Or, think about it. Think about — I don't know how many of you have teenage girls — but can you imagine a teenage girl that's been groomed by someone and she says "yes" to them, but she really doesn't want to? That's what it often is for Christian women in abusive relationships. They feel like they have to — if they don't say "yes," then they will suffer more serious repercussions. But I'm just letting this listener know, and any of you who can safely say "no," your "no," your internal "no," can become your external "no," and then that needs to be respected. You are a human being just like your husband is, and you can say "no" to sex.

The Bible is a book. It's a book, you guys. It does not directly address everything in the universe. How could it? It's one book. I say this over and over again, but even the Bible itself says that if everything that Jesus did and represented and taught was put into books, the world couldn't hold it. So if that's the case just about one person who was God, who lived on this earth, and everything that they represented, then certainly we have to add to that everything else that's in the universe, okay? The Bible does offer wisdom, though, and principles, and it gives us through Jesus Christ an introduction into the heart of God. And trust me, God's heart is for you, not against you. If you wouldn't want your daughter to be raped by her husband, I promise you God doesn't want that either.

All right, so there are some episodes that address this in more detail. Episode 170: "Does the Bible Say I Have to Give My Abusive Husband Sex on Demand?" Go listen to that episode. Episode 108 is my interview with Sheila Ray Gregoire on her book: "The Great Sex Rescue." We talk about things like that in that interview. Episode 179 is my

interview with Aimee Byrd on her new book, and that episode is called, "We Need a Sexual Reformation in the Church." Episode 221: "Unraveling Purity Culture's Effects on Your Marriage," and more recently as well, Episode 223, which is where I'm interviewing Sheila again on her most recent book. The name of that episode is called "Raising Girls to Resist Toxic Teachings on Sex, Self, and Speaking Up."

And by the way, all the topics and the issues that we want to help our girls to understand, we want to understand those things for ourselves, too. We are also valuable human beings just like they are, right? Okay, next question. And actually, this is going to be two questions right in a row, because I'm going to answer both of them in one fell swoop once they're done.

LISTENER: Hi Natalie. I have questions regarding... I have upcoming mediation and just regarding custody. Obviously, I never wanted a divorce, but did this because essentially the one sentence in your book of all the many, many books and podcasts I have listened to to educate myself over a long period of time. It was the sentence in which you say, "An abusive marriage tells a lie about God." And that hit me so deep. I think it's something I'll never be able to forget, and I'm so glad. I never want to forget that very important truth. I feel like the truth I'm standing in is my entire reason for getting out.

The spiritual apathy that developed in me was that final straw, along with my children, right? They were so intuitive, and yes, they're four and six years old, but my gosh, like, they know. They just know. And of course, I want majority and I'm trying to get to a place of how to present that well, knowing that he is absolutely expecting 50/50 and that's how he's going to go in as far as I know. Any recommendations and resources that you may have to kind of keep my sanity and to go in there?

My lawyer, I do feel she is fantastic. She's well aware. I've, like I said, given all the documentation I possibly can. She sees what's going on. Anything new to her, interestingly enough, it's very common. So any advice that you would have, though, regarding mediation, custody, how to discuss that and how to meet your wants with that?

LISTENER: Hi, Natalie. That was an amazing podcast, and it was something I needed to hear. I don't know if you've ever addressed the issue of going to divorce court. My divorce trial is coming right up and I'm about to be pooped all over, and it's not going to be pretty. But if you could address that at some point with your material, that would just be so appreciated. I'm sure maybe you have done that, and I just became a member of Flying Higher, so maybe I'll encounter more in that area if I have the time.

But please do. There are a lot of women out there. It's such a huge need. Although only 10% of divorce goes to trial, I'm in that 10%. So anyway, it's about to get really bad, and podcasts like this just are so useful and helping me and other women to prepare for the horribleness of divorce court. So thank you for what you're doing. You are amazing. I just so appreciate encountering this podcast today. The timing was perfect. Thank you for all the good info, your sense of humor. You are just so appreciated. God bless.

NATALIE: Oh, that's so sweet. So I think what I would do for both of these listeners and anyone else who has similar questions is recommend that you join Flying Free and that you take the "Preparing for Divorce" course. Now, the one gal said she just joined Flying Higher, but I think she meant Flying Free. Sometimes we accidentally mix up the two, but you can't be in Flying Higher until your divorce is already final, so we actually don't address divorce in Flying Higher because that's behind us. But in Flying Free, we definitely talk about divorce for people who are interested in going that route. We don't tell them that they have to, but we are obviously open to that because many people do.

So I have a course. At the time of this recording, I'm actually reteaching it live, but by the time you are listening to this episode and it's been published, that course will be completed. And it's the "Preparing for Divorce" course. We have one lesson that's devoted completely to talking about mediation and another lesson focused on court, going to court: what to expect and how to prepare for both of those different outcomes. So that's where you're going to get the deep-dive into all of the things, okay? And I'm not going to do that on the public podcast. But I do have several podcast episodes where we talk about divorce and a little bit about preparing, and so I'm going to offer you those titles right now.

So podcast Episode 9 is called, "What Does the Bible Say About Divorce and Remarriage?" Episode 28: "Sometimes Divorce Is a Gift of Mercy." Episode 35: "Shame Busting Your Divorce." Episode 63: "Can a Christian Get a Divorce?" Episode 84: "How to Prepare for Your Custody Case." Episode 88: "Protecting Yourself Financially During Divorce." Episode 156: "What Are the Biblical Grounds for Divorce?" Episode 187: "Will Divorce Ruin My Kids and Their Opportunities in Life?" Episode 190: "What if I Want a Divorce but My Abusive Husband Doesn't?" And Episode 218: "7 Ways to Prepare for Divorce."

But again, if you want to actually get into the nitty-gritty details, I've got a whole course. I think it's got like fifteen lessons that all go deep-dive into all the different aspects of divorce. By the time you're done taking that course, you should know way more than you do now if you don't know anything about divorce.



I know when I filed... I mean, it's very scary. I'd never been in court before, I didn't know anything. And when you don't know something, oftentimes our brains are like, "Well, I can't do that. I don't know anything about that." But that's not true. We don't know about a lot of things. When we're growing up, we don't know about what kindergarten is like, and then we go to kindergarten and we find out. We don't know what it's going to be like to play in a sport, but then we sign up and we go learn how to play the game and we start to compete and then we find out. It's just part of life development — we learn about new things. And divorce, it's maybe not one of those things that we really wanted to learn about or know anything about, but for some of us, it was a necessity. And if that's you, just know that knowledge is power.

And I'm glad that these two ladies asked these questions, but I'm not going to deep-dive into those on the public Flying Free Podcast because really, a lot of the women that are listening aren't going that direction anyways, and it wouldn't necessarily apply to them. And so that's why we actually don't have too many episodes on this subject. Mostly we just deal with what is emotional abuse, how to identify it in your own relationship, strategies for dealing with it in your parenting and in your personal life and in your relationship with God. Those are kind of the main topics of this podcast that we do here on the outside.

However, once again, if you get on the back end and you want to dig into the nitty-gritty with me, that is what I do with the women inside the Flying Free program. So I'll direct you there again — you can go learn all about it. There are lots of reviews as well as all of the details that you need to know to make a good decision for yourself if this is something that you want to be part of. Just go to [joinflyingfree.com](http://joinflyingfree.com). There is an application process because we want to make sure that we're keeping everybody safe.

And I think that's it for today. I just wanted to answer those questions. I would love to get some more questions. I did have a bunch. I've answered most of them, now. I think I only have a couple left, and I would love to get some more questions. So go to the link that's in the show notes and ask me all the things. Make sure you don't leave your name or any identifying information in your question because as you can hear, we do put these on the podcast. So if you don't want to be heard or whatever, then don't ask a question there.

And also know that once you join Flying Free, you have my ear every single day. All you have to do is get into the forum and tag me. Everyone who tags me, I answer them, and I also answer a whole bunch of women who don't tag me. That's what I do. That's what I spend a lot of my days doing. I'm also writing another book right now. But other than that, I'm in the forum hanging out with the women in Flying Free, and I would love to

hang out with you as well — [joinflyingfree.com](http://joinflyingfree.com), and I hope to see you on the inside.

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.