

WHAT IF MY CHRISTIAN HUSBAND SAYS MY BODY BELONGS TO HIM?

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 230 of the Flying Free Podcast. Today we are going to talk all about sex — sex and counseling. So buckle up. Here we go.

LISTENER: Hi, Natalie. I've been listening to your podcast for probably over a year, and I have a question: How does one respond to the husband saying, "Well, your body belongs to me and you have no biblical grounds to say 'no' when I ask for sex"? I've heard this statement, and it just makes me cringe inside and it just doesn't feel right. So how can you answer and respond to this statement? Thank you so much.

NATALIE: Okay, so the recording wasn't real high quality. So basically what she's asking is, "How do you respond to a husband who says that 'Your body belongs to me, and you don't have any biblical grounds to say no when I want sex'? How do you answer that?" Well, first of all, our bodies belong to God — they don't belong to another human being. When someone says, "Your body belongs to me," that's called slavery. When someone belongs to another human being, it's called slavery. And when someone forces themselves on another person, in our society we call that rape.

So basically your husband has taken a verse from the Bible and twisted it to say that God has given him a mandate to enslave and rape you. This is a very twisted, Satanic perspective. And it's interesting because when we think about our idea of what the devil is, we think that entity of darkness is all about taking God's words of wisdom and then instead of being something that's supposed to bring us life and love, it turns it into something that's a weapon of destruction. So your husband is a pawn in a very dark game.

Now, I've talked about this exact question before in Episode 170. That episode is called, "Does the Bible Say I Have to Give My Abusive Husband Sex on Demand?" So if you want to hear my answer over there — I'm going to come at it from a different angle in this episode, but — I highly recommend that you head over there. If you want to find an episode of the Flying Free Podcast, a former one, you can either look on your podcast app or, in your browser, you can search flyingfreenow.com/ and then the number of the episode. In this case, it's number 170, so flyingfreenow.com/170, and you will go straight to that episode: "Does the Bible Say I Have to Give My Abusive

Husband Sex on Demand?"

Another past episode that you might want to check out is Episode 117. It's called "Consent in Christian Marriage." And that was an interview that I did with someone who is more knowledgeable about this than I am. And then another episode you might want to check out is Episode 135: "Is the Bible Against Women?" Check out Episode 110: "Untwisting the Bible on Authority and Patriarchy," and then finally, Episode 80: "When God and the Bible are Weaponized Against Christian Women." All of those episodes are going to address different angles of this topic. But I'm going to come at it a little bit different here, because I am kind of in a snarky, sarcastic mood, so here we go.

If your husband is so interested in honoring the Bible and obeying it like it sounds like he really is, I would ask him to consider why he's refusing to obey these verses. "Honeybuns, the Bible actually said my body belongs to God. Consider Psalm 100:3: 'The Lord God made us and we are His.' 1 Corinthians 6:19 - 20 says that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and our bodies belong to God because He created us and because He bought us at a price. So we are to honor God with our bodies. So tell me, sweetums, how are you honoring God with your body when you force your body on someone who's not consenting to have sex with you? That's called rape. Tell me, how are you honoring God with your body when you use it to rape your wife?

Romans 12:1: 'Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. This is your true and proper worship.' Tell me, how is forcing yourself on your wife offering your body as a living sacrifice? How are you sacrificing and laying down your life to honor both God and your wife? What about 1 Corinthians 10:31? 'So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do,' even sex, 'do it all for the glory of God.' How is forcing yourself on your wife bringing glory to God? What about Philippians 1:2? 'I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed but will have sufficient courage, so that now as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.' What are some ways that you could honor both God and your wife when she doesn't want to have sex? How can you best exalt Christ in your body, whether you're getting some or not?

1 Peter 3:7: 'Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way.' Help me understand how you are living with me in an understanding way when you force me to have sex with you on demand? Ephesians 5:25: 'Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.' How are you loving me and giving yourself up for me when you force me to have sex on demand? Ephesians 5:28: 'Love your wife as you love your own body.' Do you want someone to force themselves on you every day without your consent? Then why do you insist on doing that to your wife?

How is that showing her love?

1 Corinthians 13:4 - 7: 'Love is patient and kind, love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude, it does not insist on its own way, it is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.' How are you being obedient to God and loving when you insist on your own way and refuse to endure all things? Mark 10:43 - 45: 'Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all, for even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.' How are you serving your wife and giving your life as a ransom for her when you insist on raping her?"

You guys, I could literally go on and on. There are thousands of verses in the Bible about showing kindness, taking responsibility, managing one's mind and body, sacrificing, loving, and on and on and on, and this man is disobeying all of them. And yet he has pulled one verse out of context and used it like a sex whip to get what he wants when he wants it. That is deplorable sexual abuse made worse because he has claimed that God supports it, and made even worse because he is doing it to someone in his own house that he promised to take care of. He baited you and married you so that he could have a sex slave.

Now, can you really go to him armed with a thousand verses and think that he's going to repent in sorrow and desire to love you as Christ does? No, you cannot. For just as they will take one verse out of context to beat you, so they will also refuse to hear or obey a thousand verses speaking directly to them about their behavior. You cannot change a sexual abuser, but you can decide for yourself if you want to be married to one once you've figured out that's what he is.

Now, my ex-husband was abusive in other ways. He was financially and emotionally and spiritually abusive, but he never once forced himself on me. He had at least that much respect for me and for God. He did resent it toward the end when I said, "Okay, no more sex unless you address your issues," but he never used the Bible to guilt trip me about that particular topic.

Now, the elders at our church did. Maybe that was their practice in their own marriages — who knows? But my ex at least didn't. And I only point that out to say that in my own personal opinion, it takes an especially entitled and depraved man to go down that road. And a man like that has zero respect for God or the Bible. His only use for the word of God is to get laid. All right, I want to share a little message that came in from a guy, and it was encouraging, so I want to share it with you right now.

LISTENER: Hi, I'm an avid listener of the podcast. I wanted to comment on the guy that gave the comment about bitter and sarcastic comments and saying what should he do, et cetera, et cetera. I wanted to say your advice was right on. I have been in recovery for eight years for gambling and seven for porn. And I sponsor guys and see this all the time where they come in and, "I want to save my marriage," and I say, "Well, we can work on you, you can work on yourself, but takes two people to save a marriage, and that's her decision depending on the level of abuse, et cetera." So I just wanted to compliment you on what you're doing.

One of the things I work with my guys is to learn empathy. Until there's empathy, there's really no recovery. In my book, it's the start of getting healthy: having true empathy for your victims, people that you've abused — I call them "people that you've impacted with your hand grenades that have been thrown around in your abusive and addictive behaviors." So, thanks again.

NATALIE: I just want to thank that person for leaving that comment, and I wanted to share it because I just think it's important to understand that this podcast is not about bashing men, although it might seem like that to maybe some guys. Although I have to say, I have gotten several emails over the years from men specifically thanking me for this podcast and that they actually get a lot out of it too. And some of them are actually in abusive relationships with women, which does happen, okay? I have had personal experience knowing people like that. So I am not unaware that that goes on — that's just not who my target audience is. So anyway, if you're a man, you can obviously just change the gender and you can apply all the same things that we talk about here in your situation.

But in this case, it's someone who's done his own work and is also trying to encourage other men to do their own work. And I think that is amazing. And there are a handful of guys out there that are doing that, and I think it's so important for us to hear their stories and acknowledge and appreciate their work as well. All right, let's listen to another question. It's another question related to the subject of sex.

LISTENER: Hi, Natalie. I really appreciated your podcast with Dr. Camden on unraveling purity culture's effects on your marriage. My question for you is, how can we continue to do the work of unraveling purity culture's effects if we're not in a healthy marriage — perhaps somebody might be in an abusive marriage, or maybe we're getting divorced or are divorced. I would really appreciate some advice on what to do with all this information when we don't have a safe place or a safe person to explore it with. Thank you.

NATALIE: Well, I think that our own beliefs belong to us in a very safe place, and that is the place of our minds. We may not be able to control our environment or who we're living with or what others choose to believe or how they choose to behave and how they make their own decisions, but we do get to control our own mind. We get to choose what we learn about, we get to choose what we believe and what we act upon, and this is one of the many privileges of being an adult.

When I was living in my abusive marriage, I never thought that I couldn't do the work of unraveling my relationship dynamic or learn about what emotional and spiritual and financial abuse was all about and how it was impacting me just because I was still living with an unhealthy person. I did all of that work for a couple of years before we even separated, and that work was, in fact, the motivation behind separating and eventually getting out of that marriage.

So there are so many good resources out there that you can learn from on this subject of purity culture. I highly recommend two. One of them is Sheila Wray Gregoire's Bare Marriage website. And she was on our podcast on Episode 108 where I interviewed her on her book "The Great Sex Rescue," which I highly recommend if you're a Christian woman and you're unraveling this whole thing, and then also just recently, Episode 223, where I interviewed her on her newest book called "She Deserves Better." And then of course, the episode that this listener referenced with Dr. Camden, Episode 221 — and she has a lot of resources on her website, and if you go to that episode, you can get all of those links in those show notes, okay?

The reason I like these two resources in particular is because they expose the toxicity of purity culture while still holding respect for the morality that's taught in the Bible. If you do a google search on purity culture or you go on social media and you start looking up platforms where they're talking about this, you're going to find a ton of articles, you're going to find podcasts that are entirely devoted to this, and I think some of those perspectives, even though they're valid, I think some of them overcorrect the problem by completely throwing out sexual morality. And I think there is likely a more balanced opportunity here.

But this is not my area of expertise, and that's why I don't talk about it very much. The focus on this podcast is emotional and spiritual abuse, and of course, we dabble in other types of abuse with guests who are more knowledgeable on those types of abuse than I am.

But as far as the bottom line answer to this question of how we can unravel our own beliefs when it comes to purity culture while we're still in an abusive relationship, the

answer is to just do it. You don't have to wait for ideal circumstances to do your own personal growth work, and, in fact, that personal growth work is going to inform the choices that you make down the road in regards to your current relationship.

Now, of course, if you want to do it with safe people, I'm always going to recommend that you come into the Flying Free support community. There are lots of courses, we have a forum, you get coaching every week, you can get coached in the forum every day if you want to, and there's actually a space in our forum that is specifically geared towards talking about sex and unraveling these things. And there are different people in there and a couple of coaches in there who are happy to talk with you as you try to figure out where you want to land when it comes to this subject.

And I say it's safe because we allow people to have different perspectives. We don't necessarily have to agree with other perspectives, but we definitely allow people to share them and we respect everyone's voice in our forum. And then for people who get triggered by this topic, that's one of the reasons why we have it as a special space. If you are triggered by the topic of sex, you don't have to go to that space, you don't have to read those things. You can opt out of that space and you can hang out in other spaces that feel more comfortable to you and that are more what you're working on currently, okay? All right, we've got one last question related to counseling and then we'll wrap it up.

LISTENER: Hi. I was just curious, what type of counselor should one look for in these types of situations? Is there a certain credential to look for? The couple together in marriage counseling, and also I'm wondering about individual counseling for the woman and then individual counseling for the man — which credentials for each? I hope that makes sense. Thanks.

NATALIE: Yeah, I think this is a great question, because good grief. I actually had to do my own research on this because I'm like, I don't know. There's so many different kinds of counselors out there, and I wonder how many titles there really are. One website was just talking about Licensed Professional Counselors, which is LPC; or Licensed Mental Health Counselor, which is LMHC; or Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor, LCPC; Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor of Mental Health, LPCC; Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor, LCMHC; Licensed Mental Health Practitioner, LMHP. I mean, already are you just going, "Please, could you shut up?"

So as far as for you and individual therapy, I would highly recommend just going over to Psychology Today: Find a Therapist. I'll put the link in the show notes, but if you're listening and you don't want to hop over to the show notes, all you have to do is go to

your browser and google "Psychology Today Find a Therapist" and you'll see — it'll be right on the top of the page there. You can actually look up a therapist or a counselor by where you live, by how much it costs, by the gender of the counselor, by the issue that you happen to be dealing with or that you want to deal with, by whether or not your insurance covers it, and by the type of therapy.

And then when you look at these different counselors, let's say that you find one who matches — let's say you want a female and you want to deal with trauma in Atlanta, okay? Then let's say you find one and you don't know what the letters are behind their name. So I did this with one of them. I found one that was BCDMT, and I'm like, "What the heck is that?" So I googled it. I just googled, "What is BCDMT in counseling?" and I found out that that is a Board Certified Dance and Movement Therapist. Who knew?

There are dozens and dozens of different kinds of therapists. So some types of therapy that they offer that you'll be able to find on there is CBT therapy, which is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy; DBT therapy, which is Dialectical Behavior Therapy; EMDR, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing; MBCT, which is Mindfulness Based Therapy; IFS, Internal Family Systems Therapy, which we've talked about a lot on this podcast; Play Therapy for kids; Hypnotherapy; Somatic Therapy, which is therapy with your body and different sensations in your body; Trauma-Focused Therapy; NLP, which stands for Neurolinguistic Therapy; and so much more.

And your husband can do the same thing that you're doing. It's not your responsibility to find a therapist for your husband. He's an adult. If he is interested in an abuser program, he could google those words and then your state or city to find something near you. But also, if you're interested, Andrew Bauman, he is someone I've had on the podcast a couple of times, he works with abusive and/or porn addicted Christian men, and you can look up his programs by going to andrewjbauman.com — and again, I'll put the link in the show notes.

And we've had him on the podcast a couple times. Episode 41, kind of way back at the beginning, he did an episode called "The Intersection Between Abuse and Pornography," and then at the end of last year, or actually, it was last fall, I think, he did one called "How Not to Be an Ass," which is based off of his book, "How Not to Be an Ass," which is written to men. That's a helpful book, right?

And then as far as marriage counseling, only indicated if your relationship is not abusive. So if you're listening to this podcast and you're wondering, "I wonder if my marriage is abusive," it's probably abusive, and here's why. I guarantee that people who are not in an abusive marriage, they could be listening to this podcast for sure, but it's

probably because they're either a therapist or they're trying to help someone and they're trying to understand what's going on in maybe a friend's life or someone they're trying to help in their life or maybe a family member — they think a family member's in an abusive relationship. But for the most part, people who are listening to this and binge-listening to it and are thirsting for it, they're thirsting for a reason.

For example, right now I'm in a healthy relationship. Tom and I have been married for five and a half years, we have an amazing relationship, there are no problems other than just everyday annoyances or whatever that every relationship has. But it's not abusive by a long shot. Let's say I married Tom from the very beginning. I would never in a million years... It would never cross my mind, "I wonder if I'm in an abusive relationship?" It would never cross my mind because I'm not, all right? So if you're wondering if you are, that's because there's something definitely wrong in your relationship and you're feeling yanked around for some reason.

So when I talk about marriage counseling with you guys, I don't recommend it. But if you did go to marriage counseling, you would want to see an LMFT, which is a Marriage and Family Therapist. And individual state requirements are different, but in general, they have a Master's and sometimes a Ph.D. in Marriage and Family Therapy or some related field. They have completed anywhere between two and four thousand hours, depending on what their state requirements are, of supervised clinical experience. They have passed their licensing exams, and they are completing ongoing education every year in their field of work. They are held accountable by the state that licensed them.

The important takeaway is that to become a licensed therapist, you need to spend several years in school and training and supervised experience. Like I said, there's accountability, and what you get as a client of one of these people is you get a therapist that's been educated with an education that's backed by decades of research, data, and collective experience.

Now, to be a Bible counselor, which is what a lot of us thought we had to go see, you need to take a few online classes. There is no accountability, and I have heard literally hundreds of stories of victims being traumatically re-abused by Christian counselors. They call themselves Bible counselors or Christian counselors.

Now, that is not to say that a licensed therapist may not be a Christian. I had a licensed therapist who was a Christian who did therapy with my children for several years until my ex pulled the plug on that. And then I also got EMDR therapy, and the person that I got EMDR therapy from happened to be a Christian. So she brought her faith into her practice, but she was also respectful of people who didn't share the same faith, and it

wasn't all about, "Well, did you sin? I mean, if you sinned, then you might have deserved it," okay? It wasn't like that. So one of the particularly traumatic encounters that I had with a Christian therapist, I actually had to have EMDR therapy to process through that experience.

So there is an episode on the Flying Free Podcast, Episode 123, called "The Big Problem with Christian Marriage Counseling." So if you want to go and hear more about that, you can do that. I did an interview with Cindy Burrell. She actually wrote a little booklet about that, and her interview is really good.

I will say this: Finding a good fit is going to take your time, okay? And I recommend that when you try out a new therapist that you listen to your gut. A lot of us, we have these personalities that we don't really want to hurt anyone's feelings, and we want the other person to feel like they're really being helpful for us and they're really helping us. So we kind of pretend. No. You might be seeing a good therapist, but for whatever reason, their different personality styles, different experiences and perspectives, it might get in the way of that particular person being a good fit for you. That's nothing against you or against them — it's just not a good fit personally.

As soon as you figure that out — "You know what? I don't think this is a good fit..." Like, you'll know when it's a good fit, okay? So if you're not sure and you have doubts, it's probably because it's not. But as soon as you know that, there is no shame at all in discontinuing therapy with that person, and you don't have to write this long breakup email — I did that once — this long, "I'm so sorry. You've really been super helpful and I just really appreciate all of everything you've done, and I just can't believe how much you helped me, but I really just need to move on." And maybe you lie and say, "I'm all better now," but really, you're going to go find someone else. You don't have to do any of that.

You know what all you do? You just don't schedule another meeting, another session. Or if you have one on the books, you call up the company and you say, "I'm going to cancel that session," and then you just never schedule again. It's as easy as that, and then you go try someone else. The sooner that you pivot and try again, the sooner you're going to be able to find the right fit for you.

So in my experience, I found the most help and healing for me personally through EMDR Therapy and IFS Therapy and also the CBT Model, which I teach in my program, and I coach using that model. I do a lot of coaching with that model. So many of our members that are members of Flying Free were actually referred into the program by their therapists. And then they take the work that they do in Flying Free and they take it

to their therapy session or their therapy appointment to process it with the professional. And this can 10x their healing benefits.

Now, if you can't afford therapy right now but you still want to do some serious personal work, Flying Free is only \$29 a month or \$290 for an entire year — \$290. That's the average cost of two hours of private therapy. And I keep it at that low cost not because it's not valuable, but because I want to be able to help as many women as possible. And I'm going to read you a couple of reviews of people who actually addressed this issue of counseling versus Flying Free or how they can work together.

One woman said, "I was worried that it wouldn't be worth the money since finances are a major struggle right now. It turns out it has saved me money since I can do the lessons on my time and I don't have to pay a babysitter so that I can see a counselor. I have received more emotional help through Flying Free than two years of weekly counseling." Now, I don't know what that counseling was like. Hopefully, after two years, you've gotten some amazing help, but if you haven't, this is just another reason to maybe quit that counseling and try to find a better counselor. But we do hear that quite a bit, that people say that Flying Free has helped them in a very short amount of time and they've been able to get unstuck in areas that have kept them stuck for years.

Another woman said, "I was afraid that if I joined Flying Free I wouldn't do the work, that I wouldn't be brave enough to use the forum, and that I wouldn't benefit from the group sessions. But how wrong I was. Hearing the Q&A's," — we do it a live Q&A once a month — "I learned something from each session I can relate to. I have found that the forum is very encouraging and everyone meets me where I am, not where they think I should be. There isn't any shame for being in my stage at my time. The monthly courses have been so helpful in my thinking that I'm using them with my children. I am by no means an expert, but just identifying the feelings, the lies, and the truth, makes a huge difference. And the best part? I can afford it. I have struggled finding a therapist that understands emotional abuse, and I certainly can't afford all that therapy. This has been a wonderful, positive step in self-care when I was doing nothing outside of reading before."

And I just want to point out that as well. Reading books... I'm a huge reader. I read lots of books every year, dozens of books a year, and I read over two-hundred books during the two years that I was figuring out "What's going on in my relationship," right? But reading books, while helpful, doesn't help you actually dig in and process, which is one of the reasons why my own book, "Is It Me? Making Sense of Your Confusing Marriage" has a companion workbook because I don't want you to just skim through the book and not really dig into applying what you've learned to your life. You're taking the things

you're learning step-by-step in each chapter and then taking it over to the workbook and answering specific questions that will get you to dig into your own personal experience, because way more light bulbs are going to go off when you do that than when you just read a book, I promise you.

So anyway, if you're interested in learning more about how this program can help you, you can visit joinflyingfree.com and get all the details. I would love 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, and until next time, fly free.