

ALL THE SCARY LITTLE GODS: MORE INSIDER SCOOP ON MY NEW BOOK!

Hi. This is Natalie Hoffman of [Flyingfreenow.com](https://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 261 of the Flying Free Podcast. A couple of weeks ago I introduced you to the cover of my new book. It's going to be released on February 20th, so in two weeks. It's called All the Scary Little Gods, and two weeks ago I talked about the symbolism that's embedded in the design of that cover. So today, two weeks from its release, I'm going to tell you a little bit more about the book and give you some more inside peeks.

I did this last summer, which I'll remind you about a little bit later, but I'm going to give you some peeks that I have not let you into prior to this day. I've got a team of women right now who are reading advanced copies of my book and they are interacting with me in my private forum in a special book club that's just for them. I only made this opportunity available to active members of Flying Free and Flying Higher. So that's just another perk of being involved in our community.

Anyone can pre-order their Kindle copy, however, on Amazon now. So if you want to get your Kindle copy as soon as it comes out, you can get that all set up on Amazon. I'm going to put the link in the show notes, but you can also find it by going to amazon.com and searching "All the Scary Little Gods by Natalie Hoffman" in the search bar.

Okay, so in the summer of 2023, which, at the time of this recording, was eight months ago, I did four podcast episodes in which I gave you a sneak peek of the book. Now, at that time, all I had was a vomit draft. It had not been edited at all by anybody and several things changed. I actually updated one of those episodes because it changed so much. The chapter numbers were not what they ended up being. So if you wanted to go back, you certainly could. It's Episodes 236, 237, 238, and 239.

There are four parts to my book, which I'll recap in just a minute, but basically, each one of those episodes gave you a little sneak peek into a couple of chapters from each part of the book. Now, when I say chapters, you might be thinking, "Oh my word, that's a lot," but it's not. The chapters are all little vignettes. So each chapter is like two pages long, right? So they're just little vignettes, little snippets, and then they all kind of work together to create this story.

So what I'm going to do today is I'm going to give you a few more snippets, but I'm going to start by reading the preface and the foreword, because that's front material of the book that was obviously not written back then. I wrote the preface, and then Dr. Tiffany Yecke Brooks wrote the foreword. She's the author of *Gaslighted by God*, and she has a new book that's going to come out in April called *Holy Ghosted*. I'm sorry, but she's a genius when it comes to titles of books. And I actually did a podcast episode — I'll link that in the show notes too — where I interviewed Tiffany. But she played a wonderful part in helping me with my book, and she was my writing coach, and she also wrote the foreword. So let's start, first of all, by reading the preface, and then I'll read you the foreword.

“Preface — This story isn't just my story. It belongs to all the little girls who grew up in hyper-conservative homes and were terrorized and threatened, not necessarily by physical violence but by ideas about their origins, their identities, and the God who created them. The danger in writing and releasing our stories to the public is that we bump up against the privacy of other people we care about. In order to mitigate some of the fallout from that, I've chosen to change the names of almost everyone in my story.

This story is also not the *whole* story. It's just the part that has to do with my programming about God, how and why it all unraveled, and what my relationship with God looks like today. I suppose some people will disagree with my experiences, and that's okay. They are still my experiences. I lived them, after all. Someone else may have been in the room with me at any given time and have a completely different perspective about what happened and why. That's okay, too. That is their story, and it belongs to them. But I have learned that contrary to what I was taught, just because someone else has their own story about what happened doesn't make my perspective imaginary or irrelevant.

My story matters just as much as anyone's, and I have a compelling reason to tell my story. *I believe women should be free*. Free to think for themselves. Free to question long-held religious traditions. Free to doubt. Free to grieve. Free to explore. Free to lead. Free to make mistakes. Free to set boundaries. Free to find safety. Free to speak out. Free to be authentically who they were created to be—and to love and enjoy who that unique person is. I believe women have deep within them a *Great and Safe Love*. My story is about finding that Love and changing the world with it.

—Natalie Hoffman

Forward — I first met Natalie a few years ago when she graciously invited me onto her

podcast to talk about one of my books on recovering from religious trauma. Natalie is from Minnesota, as is my entire extended family, so we immediately bonded over a hilarious conversation on the simultaneously charming and absolutely bonkers culture of the North Star State.

What really stood out to me, however, was her tremendous wisdom and perspective when we transitioned to the much heavier topic of damage wrought by toxic religious teachings. Natalie was clearly a woman with a deep and battle-worn faith who refused to accept pat answers, lazy theology, or abusive practices; what was more, I could see how wholeheartedly she empowered others to demand better, as well.

This is why, when Natalie told me she was working on a memoir about her own experiences deprogramming herself from the harmful religious teachings that had imprisoned her in a life of devastating anxiety, silent suffering, and submissive abuse, I knew that it was going to be powerful—not only as a story but also as a tool for others facing similar challenges.

A memoir is not a self-help book, but it can be incredibly empowering. The most important question a memoir can answer is ‘How?’ Of course, the five Ws—*Who, What, When, Where, Why*—are all important as well. But no matter how engaging the narration, what really makes a memoir dynamic is when it transcends its inward focus on the narrator’s journey and turns outward to inspire readers toward new growth and deeper wisdom themselves.

After nearly twenty years as an author, professor, writing coach, and editor, I have learned that ‘How?’ is, ultimately, a question of agency and empowerment. I have also learned that the best gifts a memoir can offer to its readers are answers to the questions it poses.

How did the author end up in those circumstances?

How did they feel?

How did they change?

How did they find their voice?

How did they move forward?

This is what Natalie gives to her readers in *All the Scary Little Gods*. It is so much more than simply an account of her story (though every person’s story is important and worthy of being heard). It describes her struggle to free herself from the damaging programming that controlled her for most of her life—and, in doing so, provides readers with a real-life example of how they can do the same.

Her writing is vibrant and deeply intimate. The innocence, honesty, and humor (seriously, she is so *funny* sometimes) that Natalie breathes into her storytelling make *All the Scary Little Gods* both deeply personal and remarkably universal. Readers will recognize themselves at many points in Natalie's story, which functions almost like "vicarious therapy for parsing and interrogating the ways that toxic church cultures can swallow people whole. (But also, still go to *actual* therapy, too, if you can.)

If you have struggled with reconciling the harmful ways that twisted theology has entrapped you while simultaneously struggling to embrace the beautiful and freeing parts of your faith, this book will give you guidance.

If you feel isolated, ignored, or abandoned in your quest to reclaim your own body, mind, and soul from the scary little gods of your own life, this book will stand beside you as an empathetic witness.

If you are frustrated with how long it took to open your eyes to the damage being perpetrated by narcissists masquerading as people of God, this book will offer compassion.

If you are angry at the systems that protect abusers, silence victims, and perpetuate their own twisted version of truth—systems that feed and nurture all the scary little gods in your own world—this book will show you how to fight back to liberate yourself. In fact, the Greek word usually translated 'salvation' in the Bible is *sōtēria*, which literally means 'liberation,' 'deliverance,' or 'freedom.'

All the Scary Little Gods delivers a message of salvation—of liberation and deliverance—for anyone who feels trapped in a controlling, manipulative, or abusive culture. For anyone imprisoned by their own scary little gods.

You deserve more. You are worthy of respect, dignity, and love. You deserve to be free.

—Tiffany Yecke Brooks, PhD, Author of *Gaslighted by God: Reconstructing a Disillusioned Faith*

Okay, then I dive into the story, and the first part of my book is written from the perspective of my little self. So it covers the time period between the ages of about five until I'm probably twenty-nine, I think. I'm married by that time and I have one small child at the time that Part One ends. So if you go back to Episode 236, I read Chapter 1, "Bawl Baby," and Chapter 2, "Get Out of Hell Free Card," and Chapter 7, "Lunch Lady." And this time I'm going to just add one more to the mix. I'm going to read to you

Chapter 18. It's called "First Kiss."

"I'm officially an adult living away from home in the dorms of a Christian college, and there are a million opportunities here. Gone are the days of languishing in boredom. Here, I can sing in the choir, act in the theater, volunteer, DJ a late-night campus radio show, date as many boys as I want to, become a resident assistant, go roller-skating until two in the morning, and learn interesting things in my classes.

I am finally free to make my own choices without anyone judging me for listening to Amy Grant sing 'Old Man's Rubble.' I rebelliously listen to Michael W. Smith, the Imperials, White Heart, DeGarmo and Key, Glad, Farrell and Farrell, and my favorite, Steven Curtis Chapman. All with super fun satanic beats. I'm secretly worried about myself, but I'm also sick of the Bill Gaither Trio and Evie Tornquist, and nobody around me seems possessed by demons for all their listening.

In fact, most of my friends listen to *secular* radio! Now, *there* is a line I see clearly. I try to help them see how this is putting sexual thoughts inside their heads and making them want to be married, but they only laugh at me and crack jokes about how I will marry a pastor and be the perfect pastor's wife. I'm not so sure because now I have to admit I secretly love listening to the radio with them. They weren't kidding about that slippery slope. If I'm honest, I have had sexual thoughts and wanted to be married even before I listened to Debbie Gibson, Phil Collins, Billy Joel, and Whitney Houston. I guess I just gave up. I mean, not on virginity. I'd never give up on that.

My first college crush is on the president of the student body, Kyle. Go for the top dog because, well, why not? He is tall, hilariously funny, and plays basketball. My roommate, Melissa, and I bring him muffins in hopes of winning his heart. It works. For Melissa. I forgive her because that's what Christians do, and then I promptly fall in love with Ted. Ted is not funny like Kyle, nor is he destined to be a pastor, but he is interesting to talk with. He likes books and music, and he ends up being the first boy to kiss me.

Well, that's not technically true. I play the role of Ruth in the spring comedy, *Dear Ruth*, and in that production, I kiss two boys on stage. But does that count? I don't think so. It's like kissing your puppy. I feel nothing except mild repulsion, but since those stage kisses are, officially, my first, I never hear the end of it from my friends. But I always think of my first real kiss as being with Ted. We are taking a walk on campus one night, and he politely asks if he can kiss me. I politely say yes, and he bends into my face and sticks his tongue in my mouth. I step back in horror. 'WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

'That's called a French kiss.' He explains in his philosophical voice. 'Oh.' How was I

supposed to know? Besides my acting gig, I have never kissed anyone, French or otherwise. I guess Ted could be my teacher. He teaches me for a couple of minutes, and then we both get bored and finish our walk.

We have some great conversations, but we also have a couple of uncomfortable arguments about music and alcohol. He believes all music is fine, and the idea that beats are satanic is ludicrous to him. He also thinks it's silly to believe drinking is a sin. Jesus turned the water into wine, for crying out loud. I point out that this was actually grape juice, but he doesn't buy it.

In the end, he writes me the sweetest letter telling me that he really likes me, but he cannot see himself with anyone who has such antiquated views on music and alcohol. He says I have a prohibitive conscience. He is sorry to break up with me for these reasons, as they seem insignificant in the grand scheme of things, but he's afraid we may not see eye to eye on other things in the future as well. I'm crushed, but I have to admit, he's right. I figure he's on the slippery slope to becoming an alcoholic who might hole up in a dark place listening to satanic head-banging music until he shrivels up and dies of demon possession. I don't want to be part of that. It's a shame, too, because he's such a smart guy otherwise.

You fill my heart with so much joy, Little Natalie. I love to experience your journey of discovery with you, and Love covers you and your college friends and this college boy you enjoyed getting to know for a time. Here's a little secret. That boy won't end up languishing in dark places in drunken stupors but will one day marry another precious girl, and together they will raise a family in Love. You will choose a different path, but both paths lead inevitably in wider concentric circles to a Greater Love and Knowing. And this is why I experience and accept all your choices with joy."

Okay, so that's the end of that chapter. I forgot to mention that Part One has, at the very end of every single little vignette that little Natalie is telling you, she's telling you a little story each time — obviously this one, she wasn't that little — but there is the voice of God or the voice of Love sharing thoughts to little Natalie about God's love for little Natalie. So that's what that last little section was.

All right, so that's Part One. That's all I'm going to give you as far as sneak peeks into Part One. Today I'm going to do one more little vignette from Part Two. So Part Two is written from the perspective of different parts of my psyche, and then in two weeks — next week there's a different episode — but in two weeks, the week of the launch, I'm actually going to read some of the endorsements that came in from different authors and advocates of my book — I'll read you their endorsements. And then I'm also going

to give you one more little vignette from Part Three and one more little vignette from Part Four, and then that will be it. That will be all you get. You have to buy the book to get the rest of it.

At the time of this recording, I have not started doing the Audible version. We're still in the final editing process. There's a proofreader going through it right now. I'm recording this in December. But that should be all done by the end of December, and then in January, I will be recording the Audible version. I don't know if that's going to be up by the time the book is released, but I'm hoping that it is so that you can read the book either in Kindle or paperback or in Audible version where I'm going to read the book to you. [The Audible version will be released on February 20th along with the other formats!]

I'm going to read a little vignette from Part Two. Now, last summer of 2023, I already read the introduction to Part Two and I read Chapter 33 called "Forks." I think it was Chapter Six at the time, but all of the chapters are together now. So Chapter 33, "Forks," and I read Chapter 43 called "Visionary Woman." That was in Episode 237. So today I'm going to give you one more little sneak peek of Part Two, and I'm going to read Chapter 36 called "Crying Out," and this little vignette will give us a little picture of what it looks like to be immersed in the whole Bill Gothard thing. And if you don't know that name, just thank your lucky stars. All right, Chapter 36, "Crying Out."

"Spiritualizer: I haven't been to a Bill Gothard seminar since high school, but now, here I am attending the Institute in Basic Life Principles with my husband. I forget how simple the Christian life can be by following biblical principles. College and freedom and rock music might have distracted me from the truth I once knew in high school, but now I have repented and committed my life to God to do as He pleases. My heart is teachable now, so God has given me the insights and truths I so desperately need to conquer the rage inside my heart.

Freaked: I'm still worried that the only way God may be able to get through to John is by taking a child! *One of my kids is going to die!*

Spiritualizer: But I've committed them to God, and I'm determined to trust His plan. My one heart's desire is that all my children will know and love Jesus and serve Him with all their hearts. This means I will need to have His steady flow of power pouring out from me to my children all day long. To get this, I have committed the first part of my day to the Lord to read the Scriptures and pray. I have a prayer notebook, and I pace my kitchen floor for thirty to sixty minutes every morning before the kids wake up, begging God out loud to pour out His Spirit on my children and make them strong and mighty in

spirit.

Melancholy: The only thing standing in the way of my vision for my kids is my parenting. I'm not sure if praying can override all my mistakes and failures. My adorable, dimpled son was diagnosed with Tourette's syndrome. My mom says tics come from watching too much TV and playing video games. My cousin's child has Tourette's syndrome, too, and he plays a lot of video games.

Rude: Seriously? My son is only six, and the extent of his screen time is playing Reader Rabbit for thirty minutes a day, which is fun and educational.

Freaked: But maybe this diagnosis is a punishment for allowing our children to learn the lazy way with a computer!

Melancholy: My heart is breaking into a million pieces watching him struggle with his facial twitches. Right now, he is licking his upper lip so much he has a red mustache. I want to hold him and bawl, but that might scare him, so I pretend everything is okay and tics are just part of life. I feel devastated that he has to suffer the consequences for my laziness as a mother.

Rosie: But then again, having Tourette's doesn't have to stand in the way of becoming a world changer, right? When I was a little girl, I always thought I might grow up and be a world changer like Corrie Ten Boom. I remember reading the Psalms, especially Psalm 71, and feeling such a powerful stirring in my heart. I knew somehow that it was my life Psalm. But now I see that it is not my mouth that will tell of God's righteous deeds and saving acts, but the mouths of my children. I will be like Susanna Wesley, John and Charles Wesley's mother, quietly raising mighty warriors for the glory of God, and my offspring will be the ones who declare God's power to the next generation!

Melancholy: Even though I've committed to praying every morning, I've been sorely tested. I've been sick almost nonstop since I started, and I'm still struggling with insomnia. The kids have been sick as well and often wake up as early as I do, with wet beds, unable to go back to sleep, thus interrupting my prayer and reading. I must admit, I am tempted to give it up. Sometimes my rebellious heart rears its ugly head and whispers, *"If God wanted to spend time with you, wouldn't He make it a little easier?"*

Spiritualizer: But I know this is only the voice of the devil who does not want me to do this, and God is only testing me to see if I meant what I said. Will I fight to spend this time with Him? Will I guard it with my very life? How important is God to me? I am resolved to show that I love Him, and He is worthy of my time and effort.

Rosie: One of the things we learn about in the Institute for Basic Life Principles is the power of crying out to God when we need Him most. Bill Gothard shares several stories of people who cried out to God for various miracles and answers, and God honored their crying out and answered accordingly. So, I'm determined to try this out for myself. I'm big on prayer, but crying out? I have never tried that. One morning, John mails over \$200 worth of rebate forms he carefully collects during the holiday season. John is careful with money, and every dollar counts in our house. I look out the window about an hour later and see a beat-up car drive up to our mailbox. A man takes out all our rebates and drives away.

Freaked: I run out the door, *screaming* at them to stop before returning to the house bawling like a baby!

Rosie: Then it hits me. This is the perfect time to cry out!

Rude: But first I call the police.

Melancholy: I don't know, maybe that's a mistake. Maybe that's why the crying out part doesn't ultimately work.

Rosie: But what if God wants to use the police to catch them? The police come over and take down a description of the car and then leave to go drive around and look for it. While they are doing that, I cry out.

Freaked: And by crying out, I mean, I literally yell, 'DEAR GOD ALMIGHTY, HAVE MERCY ON OUR FAMILY! WE REALLY NEED THAT MONEY! CATCH THOSE THIEVES! MAKE THEM CHANGE THEIR MINDS AND COME BACK AND PUT THE REBATE FORMS BACK IN OUR MAILBOX! MAKE THEM MAIL THE FORMS IN THEMSELVES! MAKE THEM DROP THEM ON THE GROUND FOR THE POLICE TO FIND! GIVE US BACK OUR \$200 DOLLARS FOR I ASK THIS IN THE POWERFUL NAME OF THE BLESSED LORD JESUS CHRIST, AMEN!'

Rosie: And then I'm quiet, half expecting the doorbell to ring and the thieves to hand me the forms and apologize. I mean, God can do anything right? I truly believe. I have the faith. But we never see hide nor hair of the thieves, the forms, or the money again. God can do anything, but maybe He doesn't always want to. And that's why we need to have faith.

Freaked: I can't help this nagging fear that if God doesn't pay attention to my crying out for the money the thieves stole, maybe He won't pay attention to the hours of prayer I'm putting in every week for my children! I mean, money is one thing, but what if one

day someone *steals* a child? How can I bear up under that?! Where will my faith stand in that case? I'm afraid I might *fling my faith and my body out the window* and be done with it!

Rude: Why should I cry out again if it makes no difference? It's better to say, 'God's will be done,' since no matter what happens, I can always say, 'God's will was done.'

Melancholy: I want to be a more faith-filled follower. I'll never get this right.

"Rosie: I am comforted by this verse from Isaiah 49:23, 25, *"Those who hope in me will not be disappointed. I will contend with those who contend with you, and your children I will save"* (NIV).

Spiritualizer: God does not bring our money back, but He does seem to be leading our lives through the Institute in Basic Life Principles, and we've dodged a bullet as far as bringing evil toys into our home. Our kids want some Star Wars Legos, but why would we bring anything questionable into our home when there are thousands of other options? Other families may play with Pokémon cards, but we may not. God sets certain people apart to be holy. That's our family. Set apart to be holy.

Melancholy: The only thing standing in the way is my petulant heart, especially regarding my marriage.

Rosie: So, while I pace the floor to pray for my children, I am also . . .

Melancholy: . . . desperately . . .

Spiritualizer: . . . praying God will make me a wife who guards and heeds her husband. That God will help me cover John's offenses with love when he sins against me or the children. That I will be a channel of forgiveness and teach my children forgiveness and overlooking faults.

Melancholy: How many times do I do the opposite and interfere with shock and indignation? I bring attention to my husband's sin and give my children a reason to do the same. I tear down my own home, and I feel remorse and sorrow over my own sin of pride and self-righteousness.

Spiritualizer: I want to walk in God's agape love and let it flow through me like a meek, humble, quiet stream of healing to my children and my husband."

And that's it. That's Chapter 36. So, If you want to pre-order the Kindle version of the book, you can go to Amazon, as I said earlier, and just look up "All the Scary Little Gods by Natalie Hoffman," or you can use the direct link in the show notes. And that's it for today.

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.