

## REFRAMING NASTY THINGS PEOPLE SAY TO VICTIMS

NATALIE: Welcome to Episode 270 of the Flying Free Podcast. Before we get into this episode, I want to ask you a favor. If you have not yet left a rating or review on Apple Podcasts, would you think about doing that? I'm not looking for kudos. That's not why I'm asking. I'm asking because those ratings and reviews are how the algorithms recommend podcasts to others. So if Apple Podcasts sees that a particular podcast is getting love and attention, then they'll show it to other people who are just like you, and that's how you can help spread the word about this podcast. If it's helping you, it's probably going to help other people who are similar to you. No money — we don't ask for money. Keep your sheckles, but help us out and help other women out by sharing this as well as rating it.

One thing I've noticed because I'm a big podcast listener, a lot of podcasts either ask for money — they need to, that's how they support themselves — or they run ads. And we don't do that. I recommend my program and I recommend my books, but otherwise, we don't run a lot of ads on this show and we make it really easy for you just to jump right in, grab the content that you need, and move on with your life. So leaving a rating and review is how you can actually help us out.

Now we're going to talk about what we want to talk about today, and it's this. Recently I posted something on my Flying Free Facebook page. I said, "What are some of the most common shaming phrases that your partner or your ex or your church uses on you to get you to feel terrible about yourself if you should happen to say 'no' to something or to try to protect yourself in some way or to come forward and tell the truth about something?" Oh, my word. In less than twelve hours, women were pouring out their pain and sharing hundreds of egregious, controlling, shaming messages that they have heard over and over again from other people who call themselves Christians.

Now, I want to share some of these harmful messages and then reframe them for you so we can begin to unhook from their poisonous power. But before we do that, I want to show you how I do this on a regular basis when people say things that are designed to shame or control me. Because I still get kickback — I don't really hang out with people like this anymore — but I still hear from people. Some people will send me emails, they'll post a review on my podcast or on my book page, they'll send me a DM on social media, and when they do that, there are parts of me that get triggered, and those parts of me will feel scared, or sad, or even angry.

You'll be able to meet some of those parts if you read my new book, *All the Scary Little Gods*. One of the members of Flying Free suggested that I bring some of my parts on

the podcast and interview them for fun. Should I do that one day? I think that might be kind of fun. My Rude part would be very eager to be interviewed.

So anyway, I got a podcast review that I want to read to you. And I need to say that 99% of the time the reviews that come in for this podcast are overwhelmingly positive and encouraging. We love to read them. It keeps us going. But once in a while, I get one like this one that I'm going to read to you. But first I want to read Matthew chapter 23 to you. Now, bear with me. This will all make sense in a minute.

“Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: ‘The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. Everything they do is done for men to see. They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them “Rabbi.”

But you are not to be called “Rabbi,” for you have only one Master, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth “father,” for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called teacher, for you have one Teacher, the Christ.

The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces.” See, they were the gatekeepers saying, “You get to go to heaven, you don't get to go to heaven.” He's calling them out for that.

“You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert,” — talking about missionaries here — “and when he becomes one, what do you do? You make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.” Wow. “Woe to you, blind guides! You say, “If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.” You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred?

You also say, “If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath.” You blind men! Which is greater, the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by it and

by everything on it. And he who swears by the temple swears by it, and by the one who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by the one who sits on it.

Woe to you, teachers of the law and the Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices — mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law — justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, "If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets." Who did these people kill just a little while later? "So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers! You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town."

Now, there were some Pharisees who weren't like this, okay? Nicodemus was a seeker. Joseph of Arimathea was a seeker. I wonder, why did Jesus call out all of them when some of the individuals were not like that? Hmm. Those are hard words. Jesus was calling out the religious leaders of his day using really hard words. I mean, I've never spoken like that to any of the leaders of my day. I've never spoken like that on my podcast ever.

It wasn't the drunks and the prostitutes that were the problem. It was the church folks who thought they were better than everyone else. Notice that and keep that in mind when I read this review to you:

"Practical information on abusive behavior, but with a negative view on the church. I

loved Natalie's book, 'Is It Me?' That book was very helpful for me in understanding my abusive marriage. She has equally helpful things to say in her podcast. The only thing I don't like about her podcast is how negatively she talks about the church as a whole, implying that church is a toxic place and that most churches are abusive. Abuse is an individual problem, not a group problem." Really? I just can hardly wrap my brain around that statement.

"There are many individuals who are abusive both inside churches and outside of churches, but that doesn't mean that church as a whole is abusive. I think it is a very dangerous thing to claim that the bride of Christ is abusive." Go look everywhere — you will never ever find in anything I've written for the last many years or spoken online that says that I believe the bride of Christ is abusive. Again, I'm just like flabbergasted by this.

"There are individuals in the church who are abusive, and we have every right to set up boundaries with those individuals, but the bride of Christ is not abusive, and I get offended every time Natalie implies that the church as a whole is a toxic place, especially since Jesus died for His bride. I love Jesus and I love His bride, the church." This is implying that I don't because I'm speaking out about how the church is abusive.

"It's an honor to be a part of the bride of Christ as a child of God. I feel hurt every time Natalie attacks the church because I am a part of the church" — well, I hope she's not a part of the abusive aspect of the church — "and I know that I'm not an abusive or toxic person. Maybe this is a me problem because these are my feelings. But if Natalie's goal is to encourage and help her listeners, then I would encourage her to take this into consideration."

You guys, this is an example of spiritual shaming when someone speaks out about abuse or tells the truth about systemic abuse within an institution. Now I'm going to show you how I reframe these kinds of messages, and I'm going to write this same review as if it were written by someone in Jesus' day who heard Jesus say these mean things to the Pharisees and thought that Jesus should know how He's not being very loving. Here it is:

"I love it when Jesus preaches on the hillside. That sermon on the Mount was very helpful for me in understanding my life. He has equally helpful things to say in the town square. The only thing I don't like about His ministry is how negatively He talks about the Pharisees, implying that they are toxic and most synagogues are abusive. Abuse is an individual problem, not a group problem.

There are many Pharisees who are abusive, both inside synagogues and outside of synagogues, but that doesn't mean that all Pharisees are abusive. I think it's a very dangerous thing to call Pharisees in general 'broods of vipers' and to say that they are all hypocrites. There are individual Pharisees who are abusive, and we have every right to set up boundaries with those individuals, but their religion itself is not abusive, and I get offended every time Jesus implies that Pharisees are wicked, especially since Jesus is going to die for the Pharisees.

I love Jesus and I love the Pharisees. It is an honor to be a part of the synagogue. I feel hurt every time Jesus attacks the Pharisees because I'm a part of them, and I know that I am not an abusive or toxic person. Maybe that is a me problem because these are my feelings, but if Jesus' goal is to encourage and help His listeners, then I would encourage Him to take this into consideration."

Now, there may be listeners who are thinking that it's not very nice of me to call out someone who wrote a review, but keep in mind that reviews are public, and if someone wants to publicly post one, it's fair game to address it publicly as well, especially if it is an example of what my listeners are putting up with every time they have the courage to call out abuse.

A big part of my work — really, the whole scope of my work — is exposing abuse in the Christian home and church, and that includes exposing the toxic programming that says that if we point out hypocrisy or lies, then we're being a naughty girl. I do not attack the Church of Jesus Christ. I go after the fraudulent version of it, the imposter, the scary little god that keeps us from experiencing the big loving God. And I do that because Jesus did that, and I am a Jesus Christ follower. I am not a scary little man follower.

Now we are going to look at some other messages that you have received throughout your lifetime, messages designed to manipulate you and spiritually abuse you into compliance. These are all things that women on Facebook told me they have heard. I'm going to read them in one tone of voice, kind of a whiny baby tone of voice, because I feel like abusers are whiny babies, and then I'm going to answer that message back.

Now, I'm not doing this so that you will have comebacks to say to all the fools in your life who want to manipulate and control you. Arguing with fools is a waste of energy, and I'm not a big fan of doing that. However, their voices are in our heads, and the first step to unhooking from their power is to have comebacks in our own thinking.

So these comebacks that I'm going to give you are not for your abusive church lady

friends or leaders. They aren't for your abusive husbands. These comebacks are for you. They're for your own brain. Because when you give your abusers credibility and you buy into their words and believe them, you give them your power. They can live with you, they can have all of their own toxic beliefs in your presence, but they do not own your brain space or your mind or your heart. Those things belong exclusively to you. So don't give them real estate in your mind. You can take that part of you back. All right, here we go. Are you ready for this?

ABUSER: What? You don't agree with me? When was the last time you read the Bible or spent time with God? You must not be trusting God.

YOUR BRAIN: God spends time with me 24/7 and He is here right now, quite aware that my thoughts are different from yours. I don't have to read the Bible for Him to be near me. He's not this Greek or Roman god who requires me to jump through his hoops. He's bigger than that. Your comment is a perfect example of spiritual abuse and manipulation, and I give it zero credibility.

ABUSER: You can't have boundaries with me. You're my wife.

YOUR BRAIN: All humans have the right to boundaries. My boundaries are not the problem here. Your disrespect of my boundaries is the problem.

ABUSER: You're too sensitive.

YOUR BRAIN: I am sensitive and I like myself that way. I wish you were more sensitive. We could be so good together.

ABUSER: Why do you keep bringing up the past?

YOUR BRAIN: Why do you keep repeating your behaviors from the past?

ABUSER: You should do what I want you to do and you should feel the way I believe you should feel.

YOUR BRAIN: I should feel exactly the way I feel and I should do exactly what I am doing. I will continue to do what I believe I should do. You are not the boss of the life that God gave to me and you are not a demigod. If you want to do things differently and feel things differently, you can do that. But I will live my life before God, not you.

ABUSER: You're disgusted with me again. You're always disgusted with me.

YOUR BRAIN: There is a part of me who is disgusted with your behavior, yes. I think that you are an adult who can behave better. I wonder why you choose not to.

ABUSER: What you want or what you believe is dumb or unreasonable, but I never told you that you couldn't believe that or do that, so don't blame me.

NATALIE: Did anyone get this? I did. I can relate to this one. But toward the end of my toxic marriage I stopped doing what I thought he wanted or didn't want and I started doing what I believed was best. I stopped trusting him and giving his opinion credibility while throwing myself under the bus and I started giving myself credibility. He could tell me that what I was doing was stupid — this is towards the end — and then I did it anyway. I gave him permission to have his own opinion about me, and I chose to have a different opinion about me.

This is the work that we do inside of Flying Free to help you unhook from their abusive viewpoint. And again, you can read about my story and the whole process that I went through of unhooking from these things in my new book, *All the Scary Little Gods*.

ABUSER: I don't feel safe with you. You're attacking me. You should get help.

YOUR BRAIN: I'm sorry that you don't feel safe with me. I think you should create distance between yourself and me, then, so that you feel safer, and maybe you should be the one to get help. It sounds like you are scared to be in a relationship where both parties give and take input, and I want you to feel safe. Maybe I'm not the one for you.

ABUSER: I can't do anything right for you.

YOUR BRAIN: You can do whatever you want to do. You are an adult. What would you like to do in this situation?

ABUSER: I said I was sorry. You need to accept that. Let's choose to have a good day now.

YOUR BRAIN: I don't accept your apology because you aren't really sorry. If you were, you would understand how your behavior impacted my life. If you want to choose to have a good day after mistreating your wife and offering her a fake apology, that's up to you, but I don't have to make that same choice.

ABUSER: So you're telling me that I'm a horrible dad or I'm a horrible husband?

YOUR BRAIN: No, but your behaviors can be horrible. What would you like to do about that?

CHURCH: You need to forgive your abuser.

YOUR BRAIN: I'll work on that. But in the meantime, I'm also going to protect myself from abuse moving forward, and that means stepping away. I trust that since forgiveness is something that's important to you, that you will forgive me for not doing whatever it is you think I should do.

CHURCH: There are three sides to every story. His side, her side, and the truth.

YOUR BRAIN: I'm going to go with my side, but you feel free to believe your side.

NATALIE: Do you see how we're letting go of their beliefs? Their beliefs belong to them, their thoughts belong to them, and they have nothing to do with us unless we take them in to our own brain space and make them about us. This is where we have all the power.

ABUSER: You're so negative bringing up stuff from the past.

YOUR BRAIN: When you do negative things, I will have a negative response or I may point it out and it might not be positive. If you would like me to be positive about your negative behavior, start behaving in positive ways in our relationship. Also, one second ago is considered the past. So if we are to have a rational conversation about anything, it's going to involve talking about the past.

ABUSER: Well, we remember things differently.

YOUR BRAIN: We certainly do.

CHURCH: It's not like you were in a concentration camp. Others have had it much worse.

YOUR BRAIN: Are you telling me that your standard of behavior in a relationship is just above providing a concentration camp type of experience? That's concerning. How are you addressing that standard in your life and in your relationships?

CHURCH: You are bitter.



YOUR BRAIN: No more than Jesus was when He called the Pharisees a brood of vipers.

CHURCH: Your husband hates you, and that's your fault. I blame you.

YOUR BRAIN: My husband's choice to be like Christ and love or to be like the adversary and hate is his choice. We can't control the choices of others. I wonder why you want to put my husband's adult responsibility and privilege to choose on my shoulders. Do you not respect my husband as an adult with choices?

ABUSER: You're no longer under my umbrella.

YOUR BRAIN: That is correct. I'm under the umbrella of Jesus Christ.

ABUSER: I withhold affection because you don't do enough around the house.

YOUR BRAIN: Does this mean that I can withhold affection from you when you don't do enough around the house? Is that the rule in our relationship? And who gets to decide what is enough? Should we put together a chore chart? Alternatively, what if we both work together as partners to keep up with household chores?

CHURCH: You have a hard heart.

YOUR BRAIN: What you are referring to as a hard heart is me trying to tell the truth and not back down from that. Do you not believe in telling the truth? Do you want me to lie like Anne of Green Gables when her Aunt Marilla insisted that she was lying when she was telling the truth? Is this what the Bible teaches?

CHURCH: Look at your own sin and stop looking at his.

YOUR BRAIN: Are you saying only my sin is the issue here? Are you okay with breaking the Ten Commandments if your partner does? Because that's what you're saying. My husband's sin isn't an issue unless I am sinless. Is that true? Why wouldn't you be okay with rape then? Is a rape victim sinless? Why wouldn't we be okay with cussing someone out or withholding medical attention or food because everyone is sinful? So are you saying that perpetrators have an excuse to hurt others?

CHURCH: If you were a better person, he wouldn't be the way he is.

YOUR BRAIN: Are you saying my husband has not been given by his Creator the privilege and opportunity to make his own choices, but he is rather a victim of another

adult's choices? Are you saying that it's a victim's fault if someone perpetrates evil upon them? Are you usually a victim blamer? Is that your philosophy?

CHURCH: We can't help you if you won't submit and forgive.

YOUR BRAIN: So are you saying that your love is conditioned on my doing what you want me to do? Are you telling me that you are unable to respect me as an adult, but you would prefer to control me like a child? I wonder why.

CHURCH: I will pray for you.

YOUR BRAIN: Thank you.

CHURCH: You're making bad choices.

YOUR BRAIN: According to whom? You? With 8 billion people in the world, I bet you aren't the only one who thinks I'm making bad choices, but with 8 billion people in the world, I also bet a lot of them think I'm making amazing choices. At the end of the day, I'm the only one who has to like my choices. And I do. I love my choices. Bad to you. Good to me.

CHURCH: You say your husband hit you, but would he agree with your statement?

YOUR BRAIN: If he's a truth teller. But since he's a Proverbs fool, he will cover up his abuse. I'm curious if you will agree with a victim or a Proverbs fool? Your answer will tell me a lot about your character.

ABUSER: You think you're so perfect.

YOUR BRAIN: People who believe they are perfect never apologize. You are the one in our relationship who never apologizes, so your statement is a projection of what you believe about yourself. Fascinating.

ABUSER: I can't ever do enough for you.

YOUR BRAIN: The bar is set super low, and you can't even meet the minimum requirements for a halfway decent relationship. I need to think hard about why I stay in a relationship like that.

ABUSER: You should have said it a different way. You need to learn how to

communicate with a better tone.

YOUR BRAIN: It takes two people to create good communication. If I say it exactly as you want me to, will you answer me then? If I get my phone and have you record you saying it, then I can go practice and come back and say it exactly in the same way. I will do the perfect tone of your choosing if you promise to give me an authentic answer.

NATALIE: Now, you'd have to play this out, but they wouldn't like this because the issue is not that you said it wrong or had the wrong tone. The issue is the content of what you said and that they don't want to address their issue. So they're putting it back on you, and so your job is just to put it back on them. The next time he complains about your tone, you can just say, "My tone is what it is. But do you understand the words that I said? That's the issue here."

A lot of times these guys or even other people, they don't like an adult tone, even the way I'm talking in my adult voice. They don't like that tone because then they feel like a child. They want to have the upper hand, they want to be controlling. So when you talk like an adult, you are in control of yourself, and they hate that. So they're going to say, "I don't like your tone." And especially if they believe that they are over you in a power-over position and you come into the conversation as an adult, they're not going to like that because that doesn't make them feel like they're in a power-over position. They want to put you in a child role, so when you come across like an adult, they don't like that tone.

I just want you to understand that's actually the real underlying issue. So again, you could say, "My tone is what it is. Do you understand the words I said? That is the issue here: Your level of understanding and ability to comprehend the words that I have assembled into a sentence." And of course he's going to want to argue. There's no way that you are ever going to be able to get around or have a reasonable conversation with people like this.

That's why I'm saying, I'm just reminding you again, these comebacks are not for them. They are for you. You can say them because it will help you feel like you are in your power and in your truth, but then walk away. Don't allow yourself to get caught up into their vortex.

ABUSER: You're asking for something I can't give.

NATALIE: Ladies, if he says this to you, believe him. He can't give you what you want. He's a duck. He's not a kitty cat. Do you want to be with a duck?

ABUSER: You're a prodigal wife. You've broken marriage covenant. You can't be in a close relationship with the Lord because of the way you're living.

YOUR BRAIN: Says the man who broke the marriage covenant with his abuse without repercussions or accountability.

CHURCH: Why are you so angry?

NATALIE: So if it's someone at church who says this, you can say, "Well, why aren't you angry about abuse? Please study Matthew chapter 23." If it's your husband who says this, the answer is, "Why don't you know?"

ABUSER: Well, I'm not going to be the one filing for divorce because I'm not going to hell.

YOUR BRAIN: It must be scary to worship a vindictive little god who would send you to hell for filing for divorce. The God I worship isn't like that, so I'll file. Hopefully that will help you stay in cahoots with your scary little god and you'll get to go to his heaven.

ABUSER: I'm the man and you need to submit.

YOUR BRAIN: When was the last time you listened to yourself? You don't sound like a Christ follower. You sound like a little dictator. I submit to God, and certainly not to a selfish, demanding man. See the book of Acts chapter 5 for more help with this.

NATALIE: If a pastor says, "So you're not getting your way in marriage, and now you want to call that abuse?" that was an abusive thing to say. "What you just did is called reabuse. You obviously have no training or experience with abuse dynamics. Before you try to counsel marriages where abuse is present, I suggest that you get some education and training around this issue. I will no longer be speaking with you about this. My priority is my own safety, and you have just shown me that you are not a safe person. Do you treat your wife this way as well? I find it interesting that you identify with my abuser."

CHURCH: If you want to receive love, you must give respect.

YOUR BRAIN: Oh, is that what Jesus taught His followers? "Don't love anyone unless they respect you." That's an interesting version of Christianity, but I'm afraid I don't buy into that.

CHURCH: God can redeem anything.

YOUR BRAIN: He can eradicate war and starvation too, but history shows us that He hasn't done that yet. Why? Because He's not a control freak. He gives us all free choice, and right now, my husband is making some poor choices. Do you want to address that reality, or are we going to exchange cliches and precious promises?

ABUSER: My dad was much worse, so be lucky.

MY BRAIN: I'm supposed to be impressed by that low standard? I'm not. And I don't feel lucky at all if that's all you've got to give in a relationship.

ABUSER: It's mean for you to say "no" to me.

YOUR BRAIN: Hey, the kids say that too. When I tell them "no," I'm one of those mean adults with boundaries and standards.

ABUSER: If you won't give me sex like a godly wife is supposed to, you must be having an affair or you're a lesbian.

YOUR BRAIN: Are those really the only two options you could come up with? Trust me, there are dozens of other reasons a woman might not want to have sex with you.

ABUSER: Nobody likes you.

YOUR BRAIN: I like me, God likes me, and my friends like me. The ones who don't like me don't really know me, and I'm good with that.

ABUSER: You can't take a joke.

YOUR BRAIN: I love funny jokes. Yours aren't funny, so they're hard to take.

ABUSER: How dare you accuse me of that?

YOUR BRAIN: How dare I accuse you of what you just did? It's not that hard.

CHURCH: It takes two to tango.

YOUR BRAIN: Ah, but this isn't a tango.

ABUSER: So you've read a few books and now you're an expert on narcissists and abusive behavior. I'm not the narcissist. You are.

YOUR BRAIN: Says every narcissist ever.

ABUSER: You're a Jezebel.

YOUR BRAIN: A game. Oh, fun. You can call me Jezzie and I'll call you Ahab.

NATALIE: Okay, that's all I've got for now. We could have literally gone on for hours, but I think this gives you enough of an idea. If you find yourself thinking, "Well, I can't think on my feet that fast," remember that you don't have to. You don't have to say anything back to whoever is saying these dumb things to you. But when you get alone, write it down and answer it in your journal.

I used to be terrible at this, but as I worked on rewiring my own brain, I was able to more clearly see how the minds of abusers are stuck on the same old lines that have worked for them in the past to gain control over their targets, especially when it comes to in our religious circles. They know all they have to do is drop a specific Bible verse bomb and they know based on their experience that the woman or whoever will capitulate, that they'll just like, "Oh, you got me there." And once I unhooked from these ridiculous pickup lines, that's when I unhooked from their abuse.

You can read all about this in *All the Scary Little Gods*. It's available on Amazon in Kindle, paperback, and Audible formats. After that, you can come into the Flying Free program so we can work together on rewiring your mind and setting you free from the verbal poison that you get exposed to on a regular basis. You can learn more about Flying Free and complete an application by going to [www.joinflyingfree.com](http://www.joinflyingfree.com).