

## INTERPRETING TOXIC TEXTS

NATALIE: Welcome to Episode 294 of the Flying Free Podcast. Today, we are going to look at a text that a woman inside of our Flying Free Kaleidoscope program received from a relative in her life—we'll just say it was from an aunt—and we're going to kind of parse out this.

We have a forum space in the Kaleidoscope called "Toxic Text Interpretations." And if someone gets a toxic text from someone in their life, they can go in and post it and then we can kind of help them parse through it and see what is good about it as well as what is unhealthy about it.

Because sometimes I think when we live in these abusive relationships and we are circling around in these abusive environments, people can say things to us and we actually give them credibility and we buy into what they're saying. We think they're telling the truth. We think they know what they're talking about.

And what they're really just doing is projecting their own issues onto us, and then we take it upon ourselves and then we spin out, and it just goes in bad directions. And it's completely unnecessary because a lot of what is being spoken in these kinds of situations is just extremely abusive and not even true at all.

And so there was a particularly good one that came through that had so many amazing examples of manipulation and twisted thinking that I thought it would be fun to do a podcast about it. And I think many of you will be able to go, "Oh my goodness, people have told me those things also in one way, shape, or form at some point in my life, and I really didn't know what to think about it." So I think it'll be very helpful. But before we begin, someone had left a testimony about her experience inside of the Kaleidoscope, and I wanted to share that with you first.

KALEIDOSCOPE MEMBER: Being a part of the Kaleidoscope has improved my life in so many ways I had no idea was possible. Coming out of a thirty year hidden emotional and spiritual abuse marriage has been a lot of unraveling, and a lot of my healing journey has been listening to the coaching calls.

I've been a Kaleidoscope member since end of March 2023, and although I have never been coached, I have received coaching from listening to the coaching calls. As I listened to someone else getting coached and hearing their circumstance, feelings, and thoughts, I would think of my own feeling and thoughts and the result I was seeing in my life for that circumstance. I would feel a shift and begin a new way of thinking about

my circumstance, which gave me a better result.

I've had so many “aha” moments and have done a lot of crying and laughing. Every emotion has come up. I felt a shift in my body and I've connected more with my younger self. It never crossed my mind that listening to someone else get coached could help me like I was the one getting coached. Natalie, I'm so very grateful that you offer this as part of the Kaleidoscope program. I love the Kaleidoscope community, where I can continue my own healing journey. Thank you.

NATALIE: So if that sounds like something that you would be interested in being part of, you can go to [joinflyingfree.com](http://joinflyingfree.com) and that will give you all of the information you need to make a decision for yourself about whether or not you'd like to be part of this program.

I'll give you guys a little sneak peek into something. I was looking up what a flock of butterflies is called just this week. And you would not believe—I had no idea. I can't believe that I've been doing this work for more than eight years. I don't know why I never looked up what a flock of butterflies is called, because it's an amazing word. And I'm like, this is what we have to call our private membership. We have to call it this word.

You know what it is? “Kaleidoscope.” I know! Who knew? Not me! But a flock of butterflies is sometimes known as a kaleidoscope. And so I want to change the name of our membership group from Flying Free Sisterhood to the Flying Free Kaleidoscope and call our forum the Kaleidoscope.

I'm going to be moving our coursework over into the forum as well so that when people join, they can access everything through an app on their phone, including all of their courses. They can interact with everybody and just all of the resources right there on their phone at their fingertips. So I'm excited about how that's going to play out. And that will probably be all in place by the beginning of or even before 2025. [This is actually in place RIGHT NOW! You can join us at [www.joinflyingfree.com](http://www.joinflyingfree.com) for our new and improved Flying Free Kaleidoscope program.]

Okay, so let's get started with what we want to talk about today. Toward the end of my own abusive marriage, I was learning how to set healthy boundaries. And one of the boundaries I set after over twenty years of marriage was that unless my husband got help on his own and did his own personal work and took responsibility for his bad behaviors toward me—just basic adult responsibilities, right—I would no longer entrust him with my soul and body through sex.

Instead, I would sleep separately from him in the hope that he might see that I was serious and maybe he would want to make some better choices. It didn't work, of course. I mean, he pretended at first, but he didn't ultimately admit to anything or do anything to get help.

And after a year of my sleeping in a separate room from him, he actually moved out of the house and we were physically separated for almost two years before I decided to file for divorce. And you can read all about my story in my memoir called *All the Scary Little Gods*. It's a spiritual memoir, but it does also cover a few of the events and experiences leading up to my decision to divorce, after which my church excommunicated me while offering ongoing love and support to my ex husband in the form of friendships, regular meetings with a pastor and elder there, and counseling.

Well, I was scolded by one of the elders for withholding my body from my husband, as apparently, it's okay for husbands to be abusive towards their wives—in fact, they don't even consider that abusive—but it is not okay for wives to say “no” to sex or “no” to abuse. That is actually considered to be rebellious, bitter, and unforgiving. Now, this double standard for humans with an appendage hanging between their legs and those who have none is outrageously blatant.

As I've worked with thousands of Christian women now over the years, many of them have chosen to set similar boundaries in the loving hope that their husbands would care enough to take some action in his own self-development and Christian growth in the areas of love and respect of one's spouse and just basic Christian love. You know—all those other verses about showing love and kindness to other human beings on the planet. Basic things, okay?

I've noticed that these Christian women will invariably experience kickback from at least one person in their life about this if they do this. And today, that is what we're going to talk about. So again, I mentioned this earlier, but I'm going to actually read a text that one of our members received from this relative in their life—we're just going to say that it is an aunt—and here's what this aunt wrote to her adult niece:

“Your husband told me you slept in a different bedroom last week and you refused to have sex with him when he needed it. I don't know why you would do such a thing, but it's teaching your kids the wrong ideas about Christ and the church. If you are bitter and unforgiving, you need to pray and ask God to help you. You can't trust your feelings as if they were your god. Your emotions will lead you astray. I love you so, so, so, so, so much, and I'm guessing you don't care at all about my advice. But I'm speaking God's advice to you, and that will never change.”

Can you even believe it? I mean, it's funny. It's almost like, is this like a spoof or something? All right, we're going to look at this person's belief system.

Number one, husbands and wives can't sleep in different bedrooms. She doesn't mention why—she just says that she found out that this woman didn't sleep in the same bedroom with her husband one night—why is this her business anyway—and now we've got this whole spiritual lecture going on.

Number two, her belief system, her manual for life, says that husbands need sex when they need sex, and their wives must give it to them on demand.

The third thing she believes is that when women don't give their husbands sex on demand or when women say “no” to their husbands or sleep in a separate bedroom, this teaches their children something wrong about Jesus Christ and the church.

The fourth belief that this woman has revealed through her text is that when a wife doesn't say “yes” to her husband's demands or when she sleeps in a separate bedroom, it automatically follows that the reason is due to bitterness and unforgiveness. We can just make that assumption.

The fifth belief that this woman shows is that the antidote to bitterness and unforgiveness is prayer.

Her sixth belief that she reveals is we cannot trust our feelings. If we do that, it's the same thing as worshiping them.

The seventh belief that she revealed is that feelings are deceitful and will lead you astray.

The eighth belief that she let us know about is that it is loving to tell others what to do and to heap shame upon them if it can get them to change and do what we want them to do.

And the ninth belief that she revealed through her text is that you can't trust your own mind and experience, but the minds of others who tell you what to do are always the mind of Christ, and to not obey them is to not obey God. And that is always true forever and ever, amen. Remember how she said, “That will never change. I'm speaking God's advice to you, and that will never change.”

Wow. That's a lot of fascinating beliefs packed into one text, am I right? Where do her

beliefs come from? Her own childhood programming, her church, books she reads, the people she hangs out with? Maybe she just made some of it up. We don't really know. All we know is that she has made it clear what she believes. But does that mean we all have to believe those things? Good gracious me oh my—I hope not.

She implies that she gets her beliefs from God and that she is speaking God's words, but are these the words of God? What does the Bible say about each of these beliefs? So let's look at each of them one by one. This is going to be so much fun.

Okay, first of all, husbands and wives can't sleep in different bedrooms. Remember, she wrote, "Your husband told me you slept in a different bedroom last week and you refused to have sex with him when he needed it. I don't know why you would do such a thing as sleeping in a different bedroom, but it's teaching your kids the wrong ideas about Christ in the church." So is this in the Bible that this "such a thing" of sleeping together in the same room every night, is this in the Bible?

Nope, it's not. And there are many reasons a married couple might not sleep in the same bedroom all the time. Snoring, health issues, ability to navigate stairs—maybe someone has got some health issues or hip problems and they can't go up and down stairs, and the bedroom's upstairs and so they're sleeping downstairs—the need for one's own space, better ability to sleep, and probably many other reasons I can't even imagine right now.

Where each person chooses to sleep is their business and nobody else's, and God is silent on this trivial issue of the location of where you sleep. So, just saying. We're just going to end it right there because it's so ridiculous.

All right, number two. Husbands need sex when they need sex, and their wives must give it to them on demand. Remember, she wrote, "You refused to have sex with him when he needed it." Poor man. "I don't know why you would do such a thing, but it's teaching your kids the wrong ideas about Christ and the church." Again, this isn't in the Bible. The Bible does talk about mutually choosing—that means both partners are saying, "Yeah, let's do it"—mutually choosing to come together and not depriving each other, but this is assuming a healthy, normal relationship. Not one in which one person is using the other one for free sex as a sex slave.

All throughout history, we see examples of men marrying women and even child brides. Why? So they can have free sex, free maid service, and free child care. And that is not Christian marriage. That is physical, emotional, financial, and sexual abuse. And the Bible never encourages physical, emotional, financial, and sexual abuse because

abuse is rooted in hatred, and God is love. Can we agree that God is love, that the Bible teaches God is love? Okay, so enough said about that.

Number three, when women don't give their husbands sex on demand or say "no" or sleep in a separate bedroom, this tells their children something wrong about Jesus and the church. Really? When we look at the relationship between Jesus and the church, what does the Bible actually teach? Does it teach that Jesus demands whatever He wants when He wants it, and the church better give it to Him or He will abuse her and she deserves it? Nope, I don't see that.

Ephesians 5 says, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves the Church. Walk in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us." Christ nourishes and cherishes the church. Ephesians introduces the idea of everything being under Christ's feet, but as linguist Christy Hemphill points out in her article, "How Things Go Wrong with Metaphorical Reasoning in Ephesians 5," (and I'll put a link to that in the show notes) she says this:

"Notice that the church is not under his feet (an authority image). The church, as the body of Christ, is suffused with 'the fullness of him who fills everything in every way,' an image of unity and inseparability (Ephesians 1:22).

Paul goes on to teach that Jews and Gentiles are united in Christ to form the church in chapter 2, and he expands on this revealed mystery of the unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ in chapter 3. Chapter 4 explains how keeping 'the unity of the Spirit' (4:3) is the groundwork for growing into a mature body whose head is Christ (Ephesians 4:15), and then chapter 4 and the first part of chapter 5 lay out the ways in which Christians should and should not behave as a unified and mature body."

You got to read this article. It's so enlightening. But basically she shows us how the Bible teaches unity between husband and wife, just as there is unity between Christ and the church. It's not a power-over situation. It is a mutual partnership. It's moving together as one in the same direction, hand in hand. And that is not what we have in a relationship in which one partner is petulantly demanding sex and even forcing sex on his wife.

Now, this little auntie who texted her niece is saying that the victim is telling a lie about Jesus. But do you see what's happening here? Little Auntie is the one telling the lie about Jesus. It is blasphemous to impose upon Jesus Christ the selfish demands of a sex-hungry man.

Number four, when a wife doesn't say "yes" to her husband's demands or sleeps in a

separate bedroom, it automatically follows that the reason is due to bitterness and unforgiveness. That was one of her beliefs. I think if we put 100 women in a room together who have chosen not to sleep with their husbands, there could be 100 different reasons why, and bitterness and unforgiveness might not be reasons for any of them.

I wasn't bitter or unforgiving when I said, "No, I don't want to sleep with you anymore because you're mistreating me." I was just done playing games, and I began to expect my husband to keep his vows to love and cherish me. I decided, "You know what? It's time for a come to Jesus moment." I had already forgiven him far more than 70 times in our two decades of marriage. And if I was bitter, I wouldn't be giving him so many chances. I loved him with all my heart and I wanted to stay married to him.

Now, maybe this woman writing the text, this little auntie, is projecting her own struggles with bitterness and unforgiveness on this victim. But most victims I know are not bitter or unforgiving. They are hurting, they have symptoms of C-PTSD, and yet they are also, most of them, are filled with hope that their husband will turn from his sin and change.

Bitter women don't present that way, but exhausted, wiped-out, depleted women do. And loving people, people who are like Jesus Christ as far as loving the people around them, they are going to see these kinds of women and support them in making the hard choices if they choose to leave, if that's what they want to do.

All right, number five, the antidote to bitterness and unforgiveness is prayer. And we get this from her text where she writes, "If you are bitter and unforgiving, you need to pray and ask God to help you," like that's going to solve everything. That's not true. If prayer could solve bitterness and unforgiveness just like that, our world would be heavenly. I know thousands of women who have prayed their little hearts out, and yet God still allows humans to make their own choices. Choices to be cruel, choices to be controlling, choices to take revenge, choices to betray, choices to send nasty little texts like this.

When Christians say, "Just pray about it," to other people, it's because they don't have the time or emotional capacity to listen and hold space for the other person. They just want to slap a quick bandaid on the problem and make you go away. Also, if you're having problems, that terrifies them. Oofofda, what if they have problems someday? Maybe if they just keep pretending that sending up a prayer is going to fix everything, it'll work when it's their turn to be in pain.



Job's friends are examples of what this little auntie did. They assume that God is judging the hurting person, they lay more heavy burdens on the already burdened person, but they do not do as Christ taught us to do, which is to mourn with those who mourn.

If you wanna read an incredible book about forgiveness after trauma, I highly recommend Susannah Griffith's book. It's called *Forgiveness After Trauma*. I recently did an interview with her in Episode 281, so if you go to [flyingfreenow.com/281](http://flyingfreenow.com/281), you can listen to that interview. It's an amazing interview and people in the Flying Free Kaleidoscope membership on the back end got to have a Q&A with her, and it was just an incredibly amazing hour of even going deeper. So when you join, you can have access to that.

Number six, don't trust your feelings because that's the same as worshiping them—very interesting—and number seven, feelings are deceitful and will lead you astray. And we get this from her text when she writes, “You can't trust your feelings as if they were your God. Your emotions will lead you astray.”

Now, this person doesn't understand what feelings are. Feelings aren't right or wrong. They're just simply part of being a human being. They are vibrations in our body that come automatically. They automatically come. Our brain and our body is connected. When our brain has thoughts or beliefs about what is happening to us, then it releases hormones in our body and chemicals in our body that cause our body to have certain vibrations and feelings. All of these are God-given.

Our thoughts come from our programming from the time we were children and programming that we get just by the books we read and the people we hang out with. We are constantly being programmed with ideas. You're being programmed right now by listening to this podcast.

So that's where our programming comes from, and then we get feelings in our body related to those thoughts that happen on autopilot, and we have thousands and thousands and thousands of thoughts every day, and they are creating lots of different emotions in our bodies.

And guess what? God made it that way. That's all God's doing. It's all God's fault. The Bible talks a lot about emotions and even shows us how the Creator experiences the full gamut of emotions. Now, maybe this woman should send up a prayer to God and let God know that when God experiences emotions, God shouldn't trust them. God's emotions are deceitful.



But this little auntie would probably not agree with that, and yet, this little auntie also has emotions. Based on what she wrote, the auntie who wrote the text saying not to trust feelings is experiencing emotions of her very own right now. I would even venture to say she's experiencing emotions like anxiety, disapproval, dismay, disrespect, insecurity, criticism, irritation, suspicion, skepticism, and disappointment. Should she trust her emotions? Is she worshipping her emotions? Maybe she should focus on her own issues instead of projecting her confusion about emotions onto her niece.

Feelings are like indicator lights on a car dashboard. They give us information about what's going on inside of us. And when we become more self-aware, which is something that we hugely work on inside of the Kaleidoscope, they become incredibly helpful tools to guide us in our personal work.

Just like if we didn't experience pain in our body when we touch a hot stove, we would get a much more severe and perhaps life-threatening burn, the same thing applies to emotions. If we don't experience emotions as we go through life, then we may not be able to grow in our awareness of what is taking place within us, in our thoughts, in our beliefs, in our programming, so that we can address those things and even change them if we choose to do so.

Feelings actually do the opposite of leading us astray. Feelings reveal the truth about what is going on inside of us. If this auntie took a look at what is going on inside of her own self and how her own emotions are causing her to show up in a negative, destructive way toward her niece, she might be able to see how sad that is and how it's actually bringing more hate and ugliness into the world. And maybe, I like to think that she might try to change her beliefs.

Number eight, it is loving to tell others what to do and to heap shame upon them. And I get this from her text where she writes, "I love you so much, and I'm guessing you don't care at all about my advice." Her belief about love is interesting. Maybe that is how she was loved growing up. Maybe all she has ever known about love is when someone who says they love you, they also are the one who controls you, and that's what love is: making someone do what you want them to do. And when they do it, then that means they love you.

She also puts words in her niece's mouth when she says, "You probably don't care at all about my advice." Now, this reveals her own insecurity and belief that she is only worthwhile if others will listen to her advice and then obey it. And if they don't, then they must not love her or care about her. Now, that makes sense if she grew up thinking that's what love is, but is she right? Is this actually true?

I don't believe so. I don't see Jesus Christ acting out like this or teaching this. This statement that she makes is simply a revelation of her own programming, likely downloaded into her as a small child, and she never had the opportunity to gain any self-awareness around this or grow in this area and so now she is projecting it on her niece in this text.

And then number nine, she writes, "I am speaking God's advice to you, and that will never change." Translation, "You can't trust your own mind and experience, but the minds of others, like me, for example, who tell you what to do, are always God's advice, and to not obey what I say is to not obey God. And that is always true forever and ever, amen."

I love this one, and we hear it all the time. Controllers who don't want you to listen to your own common sense or hear your own inner screams for help will tell you that your common sense and your inner screams for help are just the devil deceiving you or your own mind deceiving you so that they can maintain control over your mind. It's a brainwashing technique.

But what most victims don't stop to consider is that if we are going to use that verse in that way in that type of context—and by the way, that verse is found in Jeremiah, and I'm going to get to that in a second—but if we're going to use that verse like that, it applies across the board. If your heart is always deceitful, well, then so is theirs. So you can't trust them either. In fact, you can't trust anything or anyone, so now we're really in a pickle.

So like I said, that verse comes from an Old Testament prophet, Jeremiah, in the context of how wicked the nation of Judah was behaving. It's not a verse that tells us what the heart of a Christian is. Would you like to hear some verses about the hearts of Christians? And when I say "Christian," I use that term carefully because how people present as Christians to this day and age is like, I am not that kind of Christian.

Have you ever felt like that? Like, "I do not want to tell anyone that I'm a Christian because they're going to automatically assume it means certain things that look nothing like Jesus Christ." So when I say the hearts of Christians, I'm talking about real followers of Jesus Christ, people who are emulating the teachings and the life of Christ.

All right, so here's some of them. Matthew 5:14—put this up to "Your heart is deceitful." Actually, Jesus said, "You are the light of the world." 1 Corinthians 2:16, we have the mind of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17, we are a new creation. Ephesians 2:10, we are His workmanship. 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,

a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

Beautiful butterflies, there are always ways to use scripture to stand for the truth, and there are always ways to use scripture to twist others up in knots and force them to do what we want them to do. One is using scripture to reveal truth and reality, and it sets people free to follow their own conscience and their own path before their Creator. It does not seek to manipulate and control others, and you can 100% use scripture to do this.

And yes, the other type of using scripture will also be used, and there are many people who are adept at using the Bible to control you. We want to use scripture like a hammer that pounds nails into wood and builds a structure, and this aunt is using scripture to hit other people and hurt them, and I think there is a big difference.

So I wrote a pretend response to this aunt. So let's just read again what she wrote, and then I'm going to read what you could say to respond. And it's not that I'm saying, “Oh, we should always write responses to people like this,” but if you're in a good place and you feel like you can manage it, speaking the truth out loud, as long as it's more helpful for you... It's not going to be helpful for them. It's usually not going to change anyone's mind.

You can speak truth in the most loving, caring, holding space for someone way possible and they will interpret it however they choose to interpret it, and it's usually not in a good way. And so it's not going to be helpful for them. It's like throwing pearls before swine. They're not going to value that truth. They're going to stamp all over it.

And so if you are going to write a response to a text like this, do it for you. Don't do it for them. Maybe do it to speak truth into the world because that's what we're called to do, but don't do it because, “Oh, if I say this, it's going to change their mind or they're going to be put in their place or they're going to get it and have this epiphany,” or whatever, because they are not. They're not. Maybe one in a thousand might, but most of the time they're not, so don't expect that.

So here's the original text: “Your husband told me you slept in a different bedroom last week and you refused to have sex with him when he needed it. I don't know why you would do such a thing, but it's teaching your kids the wrong ideas about Christ and the church. If you're bitter and unforgiving, you need to pray and ask God to help you. You can't trust your feelings as if they were your god. Your emotions will lead you astray. I love you so, so much, and I'm guessing you don't care at all about my advice. But I'm

speaking God's advice to you, and that will never change.”

So here would be my response: “Does God want us to live lies before our children? Is modeling an abusive marriage where one of the partners is mistreating and disrespecting the other one chronically for many years, is that healthy for children to watch? Are we really valuing the sanctity of marriage when we cover these things up and pretend they're not happening, when we tell a lie about Christ and the church through an abusive marriage?”

Christ is not abusive. I want my kids to grow up knowing and believing that. I want them to grow up knowing how to set healthy boundaries and how to steward their lives well, which means they will not endorse or encourage or cover up abuse in their own lives or in the lives of others. I appreciate that your own beliefs may differ from mine, and that is your life to live. I am responsible before God for my life, and when others make attempts to violate my conscience before my God, I will need to ask them to please stop.”

So there you have it. That is just a little example of some of the things we do inside of the Kaleidoscope when we dig into some of the toxic texts that people get. And I hope that was helpful to you. If you want to be part of our Kaleidoscope and part of our program, again, you can do that. You can learn more about it and join by going to [joinflyingfree.com](http://joinflyingfree.com). I would love to see you over there.