

## WHEN YOU ARE BETRAYED BY YOUR CHURCH, FAMILY, AND FRIENDS

*Hi. This is Natalie Hoffman of [Flyingfreenow.com](http://Flyingfreenow.com), and you're listening to the Flying Free Podcast, a support resource for women of faith looking for hope and healing from hidden emotional and spiritual abuse.*

NATALIE: Welcome to Episode 38 of the Flying Free Podcast. Today I am delighted to be talking with Patrick Doyle, a counselor and speaker who some of you may know from the Dove channel's YouTube videos. Patrick has over thirty years of experience working with people from all over in treatment centers, churches, and through his office. His authentic transparency comes from his own story of emotional and physical abuse. As a public speaker and coach, he takes difficult conversations head-on, communicating hard truths with honesty and safety. This episode ended up being an hour long, but it is an incredible interview with many lightbulb moments. I'm excited to present it to you right now. Let's dig in! Welcome to the Flying Free Podcast, Patrick. Thank you so much for coming on here.

PATRICK: I'm excited to be here. I'm grateful for what you are doing.

NATALIE: Back when I was going through my own separation and divorce, I think I watched your Dove TV YouTube videos at least 9,745 times. I would often watch the same ones repeatedly because I was trying to deprogram from all these lies that I had believed my entire life. It really takes a lot of repetition of the truth to replace the lies that you sort of knee-jerk fall into.

PATRICK: You know, I've heard that many times, Natalie, from folks who watch the videos, that they watched them repeatedly. I have a couple of questions. One is, I'd like to know why you thought that was helpful. The other is that when you talk about the lies, in most cases the women that are watching those videos also have those lies that are galvanized or made real by religious lies. It also becomes about God, so to hear someone who also represents God with some level of authority (like I think I do in those videos) to say something other is revolutionary.

NATALIE: You hit the nail on the head! It was the spiritual... I was very steeped in fundamentalism my whole life, and it was the spiritual side of things that had me stuck. I could not break free from some of those because I was told, "Well, the Bible clearly says that this is the way it is." Yet, that didn't always coincide with what I was experiencing in my real life.

PATRICK: Right. I often say if we take the Puritans, for example, they believed that sex was only for procreation. Then after that they slept in separate rooms so as to not tempt themselves. They justified that with the Bible. If you told someone that, they would say, "Well, that's wrong!" Clearly. (They also justified the genocide of the Indians with the Bible, but that's a whole other podcast.) But my point is that the same people who are telling you from the Bible, "This is the truth," will say that the Puritans are wrong, but never think that they could be. They justify their position by twisting scripture, using it as a hammer, or using it as something to cage you rather than free you.

I can tell you from being in the church thirty years, having planted a church, and having been a pastor – I have done that to people. So I understand it from that perspective as well. When I talk about that, there is some spiritual embedding that people get that I understand, because I've been on both sides of it. You're right, Natalie. I see it all the time. The spiritual side is what makes women stay in these bad situations way longer than if they didn't have that.

NATALIE: You were one of the first people who was able to validate my real-life experience but also address my faith. How do I implement my faith and what I believe about God and the Word of God into my real-life experience in such a way that there's not all this cognitive dissonance?

PATRICK: Yes, that is a huge... That, to me, is a doorway for freedom, but it also opens a whole other Pandora's box. When you start to say those things to the people who are trying to give you the dogma to stay, you put relationships at risk.

NATALIE: That is a great segue into our topic for today. Did you do that on purpose?

PATRICK: I did.

NATALIE: Absolutely beautiful! You are a professional, Patrick.

PATRICK: I've done this a time or two.

NATALIE: What I thought we'd talk about in this podcast episode is that betrayal that these women experience when they step forward to act on behalf of themselves. In Christian circles, it is okay if you are acting on behalf of someone else, like your abuser. You can have compassion, love, and forgiveness. But if you try to stand up for yourself and have compassion, love, and forgiveness for yourself, then you are going to get attacked by your church, your family, your friends, your kids if you have older kids, and

of course, more attacks from your abuser. Honestly, the women I've talked to have said this is worse than the original abuse.

PATRICK: Yes. I would say that a little differently. I totally agree with what you are saying, but I don't think it's that a woman stands up for herself. I don't think that's the activating agent of the pushback. I have a belief that in these situations... Let's say a woman is going to stand up against her abuser, set a boundary, and move out and separate. The church family or the people around her have a theological belief that action is wrong. What activates their pushback is the fact that what she's doing makes them uncomfortable, because they can't collate it to their belief structure. As a result of that, they start the abusive blaming. "You're wrong because you're not following the scriptures."

But really, the whole thing is about them being uncomfortable. What I see all the time is that they care more about their own comfort than they do about the person who is suffering. No one is talking about that because they are hiding behind a cloak of righteousness, helpfulness, goodness, biblical truth, or whatever other words you want to give that they are using. It has nothing to do with the reality of the situation. They are trying to stay within their own belief structure. So those problems and the reason why it gets so vicious is because they believe they are doing what God wants them to do, and that is their own structure of denial that they use to protect themselves from reality.

NATALIE: I was thinking of Saul when you said that. Saul, the one who became Paul, had this great passion for truth and the Bible and all of that, but it led him to persecute Christians.

PATRICK: Yeah, but you see Paul at least was congruent. He thought that the Christians and what they were doing was destroying God's religion, the one given down by the ancestors. There's an interesting thing that we don't talk much about in the church. When God confronted Saul on the road to Damascus, I think it's very interesting what He said. What God said to Saul was, "Saul, why are you persecuting me?" That was a newsflash to Saul, because he thought he was saving God's religion. So what God did was to personalize it. Like, "No, no, no. You're persecuting me. These are my people. Stop it!" That's a great example of these people who are persecuting the woman and God saying, "Why are you persecuting me?"

NATALIE: Yes! Exactly!

PATRICK: In that situation, they are using the same religious denial that Saul used, and

God's confrontation was to get Saul to see that it was about his persecution of God. Look at what that led to. That led to Saul's life as he knew it being completely destroyed, which is what is going to happen to us. That system will not change.

NATALIE: But it has to. In order to advance the true kingdom of God, that old system must change. Do you know what I'm saying?

PATRICK: I do, but what I'm saying is that it's been around for centuries. This problem has existed for centuries. What I want to suggest is instead of you trying to change the system in your current... Let's say a lady who is listening is in this situation. Instead of trying to change the system, save your energy and try to take care of yourself. That's what I would say, because spending energy on the system when you're in this process of coming out – you cannot afford that energy loss. The energy must be focused on yourself and maintaining care for yourself, because everybody around you is trying to destroy you, whether they know that's what they are doing or not.

NATALIE: Right. That's a good point. I did that, and I still see women who tell me they do this. They'll say, "I set up a meeting with my church elders. They already don't agree with my separation or divorce, but I set up a meeting to try to explain to them what they need to see." I tried to do that too. They are not going to see it. Let the Holy Spirit show it to them, because the Holy Spirit has way more power than we do.

PATRICK: Absolutely. But the pathology that is embedded in trying to explain is codependent, which is what we are taught in the church. Think about it. "If I can just get you to believe in Jesus, everything gets better for you." That is embedded in our culture. We're trying to get the elders to believe in Jesus so it will be alright, metaphorically speaking. But my saying is this: "Don't try to understand; take a stand!"

NATALIE: Amen!

PATRICK: When you start focusing your energy on taking a stand instead of trying to get everybody to understand, you start to make more progress. But the idea to get them to understand is also embedded in us, because we want to make other people comfortable. I'm telling you right now – that isn't going to work for you if you want to get out of an abusive relationship in the church.

NATALIE: Right. You must be uncomfortable yourself and also be okay with everybody around you being uncomfortable.

PATRICK: Yes. I believe that you taking a stand and telling the truth is the absolute most

loving thing you can do for the people around you. The lie is that loving people means that everybody is okay. That's a lie. "The truth," as my grandmother used to say, "only hurts when it needs to, and some folks have a whole lot of hurting to do."

NATALIE: Yes. When I mentioned before that the system has to change, I really believe that the way the system is going to change is by women and men rising up and saying, "No more," for themselves. I know tons of women, including me, who don't even go to church anymore. That is a statement that says, "No. We don't support that anymore." Now, I'm not knocking every church. I know there are some listeners who have amazing churches, and praise God for that. If you can find a great church, do it.

But I'm just saying that the more we can stand up and take care of ourselves and take care of one another, the more we are advancing the kingdom of God in this world. That's what Jesus did. He didn't become a member of a synagogue. He was out with the people.

PATRICK: He was out drinking and partying with the disciples.

NATALIE: Yes!

PATRICK: And turning water into wine, and hanging out with women who were...

NATALIE: ...prostitutes.

PATRICK: ...and all that stuff. He was completely outside of the cultural norm of His religion. What I want to do is help women appropriately assign the blame. Remember, toxic shame is the result of misplaced blame, and the church is a factory for toxic shame. The healing of toxic shame is the appropriate assigning of blame. When you start doing that, as you come out, people are going to really push back to get you to go to your old role of taking the blame for everyone, being quiet about it, and liking it. As you move through that, it's hard to look at your pastor or your elders and say, "You guys are wrong," even though they are dumping Bible verses on you. How do you argue with that?

That's why I say I don't think arguing with it is the right approach. I think you take a stand and remove yourself from it. When they come knocking and asking, "Why? What's this about? How come...?" I always encourage women to develop a mantra. You say the same thing every time. You can say, "I have decided to leave my husband because of his abuse," or perhaps, "I'm no longer willing to submit to the church's authority because I disagree with it." But do not give details. Every time they ask, it is the same thing, like a

broken record. That keeps you out of that minutiae of people trying to convince you and you having to explain yourself. It's just exhausting.

NATALIE: It is. It's exhausting, and it goes absolutely nowhere. Don't even try it. I know. I did.

PATRICK: I wouldn't say it doesn't go anywhere. It goes somewhere very painful.

NATALIE: Right. There you go.

PATRICK: I know what you're saying, Natalie, that it doesn't resolve anything. But it does make the hole deeper, because those people don't care. They're doing what they believe God wants them to do, and they are saving the world. Meanwhile, you're being crushed.

NATALIE: Exactly. They start thinking of you as being the crazy one, because the more you get defensive and try to explain, the worse they view you. They already have this bias towards women. I really do believe they do. On an even basic, foundational level, they believe that women are the reason there is sin in the world. Since women are the cause of tripping up men into lusting after them or the cause of tripping up men into getting angry — everything is our fault.

PATRICK: God forbid that men take responsibility for their lust.

NATALIE: Right. So they already have this predisposition to think that way, and then here you are dancing around and yelling. (Not really, but figuratively speaking in defending yourself.) They just nod their heads and say, "Yep. I knew that about her."

PATRICK: So do you see how that church environment absolutely duplicates the abusive relationship? They push and they push and they push. Finally, the person loses it, and then everyone points at them and says, "See? Look! They are out of control." But no one is talking about the fact that for six months you've been badgering me about this thing or telling me that I'm a terrible, evil soul because I want to protect myself from being harmed, even though you don't agree with my harm because, obviously, I'm making that up. I want to destroy my life by making this up and coming to the church.

People often ask me, or a woman will ask me something (because I've talked to lots and lots of abused women), and I can finish their sentences. I've heard the story many times, and they often wonder how I can believe them without ever talking to their husband. I'll say, "I've met your husband a thousand times, because he's the same guy."

Same movie; different theater.

This is the other thing I want to point out in this area that I think is important to understand. There's a word I use a lot that people don't always understand, but I keep using it because I want to breathe life into it. That is the word "pathology." These men have pathology. Being under that abuse creates pathology in you, the abused. Here's the crazy part. The church, because of their unhealthy belief structure, has pathology.

What I mean by pathology is if I go to the doctor and he takes my blood and finds I have a blood sugar of 800, we have evidence of my diabetes. Diabetes has a pathology. It is going to go from point A to point B every time no matter what, because that's what diabetes does unless it is interrupted with some sort of medical intervention.

People have emotional and spiritual pathology, and the church has pathology based on its theology. As we talked about before, Natalie, with the Bill Gothard thing, I understand that pathology. I could talk to someone who is steeped in that, and I know what they are going to say before they say it. This may be a little off the subject, but I think it might be valuable. Do you know how many denominations are in America?

NATALIE: No.

PATRICK: There's over 30,000.

NATALIE: Oh my word!

PATRICK: Here's the crazy part. They are all claiming the same thing.

NATALIE: That they are right?

PATRICK: Yes, but more specifically, we're right because we have the truth of God from the Bible. Well, clearly, at 30,000 denominations, that cannot be true. I mean, we're shedding some light on the fact that that cannot happen. The way I explain it is this: You have Coke and Pepsi, right? You basically have the same product with two different brands. There are very nuanced differences, right? What you have with the church is 30,000 brands, variations of a theme. So if I'm a Pentecostal and I go to a Presbyterian church, we're both on the same team, right? We're both Christians. But the Presbyterians are not going to let me into leadership as a Pentecostal. They're not going to let me have influence until I come into conformity with their belief structure.

Vice versa, the Pentecostal church invites the Presbyterian, but not until you speak in

tongues and get baptized in the Spirit. If you go to the Presbyterian church, it is not until you get your theology right and you read your dead authors. Then it's okay. So they both have their own way to solve the problem.

That's what I would call the brand of Jesus. Are you with me? So it is brands. If someone comes to me and says, "I come from a Fellowship church," then I understand that church's theology, and I can understand what they are going to say before they say it because I know what their beliefs are. Instead of trying to understand and alter that, recognize it and use it as navigational information.

NATALIE: So describe how you would use that as navigational information on a practical level.

PATRICK: For example, a Pentecostal woman comes to me and I understand the frame of reference that denomination has. When she goes to meet with her pastor, I already understand what he's going to tell her: "You don't have enough faith. You need to pray more. You need to ask the Spirit to move and change your husband, because you know God can do anything. He will radically heal him, and everything will be better," which really hinges on whether you have enough faith, right?

That would be very different than if you went to a Southern Baptist pastor or a Fellowship pastor. There are all these different brands. If we just say it's Christianity we miss the point, because there are variations. That's why I say it must be very context-specific for that woman. Just because you say you are a Christian, that doesn't give me enough information. I need to know the brand, because I must know the context of what theological structure and belief structure that you're living in so that I can help you navigate it.

Fortunately for me, thirty years in the church and having had five or six major theological belief structures (I was a Pentecostal, a Calvinist, an Armenian — I've been a lot of things and I have a lot of knowledge about all of that behind-the-curtain information), that is really helpful to enable a woman to use that information to navigate healthily instead of getting run over by it. What you said earlier I think is a key principle, which is that understanding that because you are woman does not mean you are inferior. I would say this: There is no way that God created half of His creation to be left out.

NATALIE: In our topic of betrayal, how this relates back to that is that... Let's say I'm speaking to a person who is listening to this right now — you as an individual are not being betrayed as an individual personally. When your church rejects you, or like, I was



excommunicated from my church, they were basically... I didn't fit into their theology, so I had to be given the boot.

PATRICK: Right. What you are describing though is something that — and this is a strong belief that I have that comes from lots of experience — the basis for modern Christianity is conformity of belief. When you evangelize someone, what are you doing? You're getting them to believe something. Do you believe in Jesus? That believing in Jesus depends on the brand. But it's about you believing the right things. That's insane! God is going to make His eternal decision on who I am based on what I believe?

Listen, nobody with Jesus understood it right. No one with Jesus that would hang out with Him believed right. No one even understood what He was saying. So I'm pretty sure that didn't matter to God. But we've built a whole modern church system on conformity of belief. The church that you were in (I happen to know which one that is) is one of the glaring examples of religious BS that you have to have this very specific belief structure, and they believe that if you don't, you are apostate or outside of the pale of orthodoxy or whatever term they want to put on it.

As a result of that, that is justification for them to sever fellowship. I wish I could say I've never done that to anyone, but I've behaved just like that. I understand it, and I understand it from a personal perspective of why it's so important to them. So I say it without judgement, but I'm also not going to act like it is not happening. I don't have judgement for that as much as I used to, but I'm working on it.

NATALIE: I've done the same thing, not in a position of leadership, but as a woman working with other women back when I was in my fundamental years. The difference, though, is that you were searching and looking and eventually open to the truth and learning. So there is a difference. I hope those other people, the ones who excommunicated me, will come around someday.

PATRICK: Natalie, I don't know that I was open. I'll tell you the story the way I see it. One of my favorite rap artists has a line in his song that says, "I was a drug baby. Big mamma drug me to church every Sunday."

NATALIE: I like that.

PATRICK: I do too. I feel like I'm where I'm at because I'm a drug baby. God drug me here. I did not have the willingness, and it was profoundly difficult for me to accept what was being revealed to me. When you go all in on a belief structure and are preaching it and then someone looks at you and says, "You're wrong," then you say,

“No, I’m not wrong,” and you give them the 18,000 reasons why you are right.

Eventually, you start to realize you are wrong. I’ve done this on four major theological belief structures where I have had to repent of them. Now I see that as the whole problem, that you must have a conformity of belief instead of a relationship. God reveals Himself as a relational being. It’s not about belief. There are three individual people, if we take the revelation of scripture seriously, living in harmony relationally and in mutuality as one. That’s the example of God revealing Himself.

So relationship is the core reality of spiritual life, not belief. That’s what has changed for me. It’s no longer about belief. So if you believe that Jesus was a lion and that He gave Moses a ride on His back and that’s how you get saved, I would think, “Okay. Let’s have a relationship. I don’t care what you believe.” We will get to that later. But if you make belief the fulcrum, all we can do is divide, which is why there are 30,000 denominations.

NATALIE: Well, praise God that you are a drug baby!

PATRICK: Amen, sista!

NATALIE: Because look at the ministry that you have now and the way that you are able to understand all the nuances. Abuse is a very complex, very multi-layered thing. Because of your experience and your history (even as a child), God has really put together in you someone who is able to, like a surgeon, go right to where you need to go in order to get to the heart of the pathology that is going on in someone’s life.

PATRICK: It’s so true. The other thing I would encourage the ladies with is that I used to look back at my life... The first church I went to as a seventeen year old was a non-denomination offshoot of Chuck Smith Calvary Chapel. I went all in. I was an abused kid, and these people loved me. I was all in, so I just drank down everything they said, and I didn’t question anything. Years later, I started to do my own research, started to read theology books, and started to read the Bible more. I started to realize that the guy who was teaching was giving a very narrow slice of what history says is true.

So I got disturbed about it and eventually left the church, which was a really difficult thing to do because everyone thought I was... They say, “Oh, it’s fine. You can go to another church,” but then when you do, you are a persona non grata as if you are doing the wrong thing and you are believing wrong.

Years later, I looked back on that. I used to be all mad. “God, why did you put me in that church where they didn’t teach the truth? Now I know the truth.” The revelation from

God to me spiritually was, “Don’t despise what I used to bring you to where you are at.” The fact is, I believe that God knew the reason I was at that church was because it was the only one at that time in my life that I wouldn’t run from.

The church there had been this thing that theologians call the “progressive revelation,” which is that God continually reveals Himself because you can’t understand it all anyway. If you move from theological belief structure as the fulcrum to relationship... Which is the example I think you see in Jesus, because He didn’t have theological discussions with people. I don’t remember the exact numbers, but I think Jesus was asked one-hundred and eighty-five questions in the New Testament, and He answered five of them directly.

NATALIE: Interesting!

PATRICK: It wasn’t about truth the way we think of it today. It was about relationship. It was about connection. It was about Immanuel, God with us — not God teaching us the truth so we can have eternal security.

NATALIE: Right. The golden rule is to love God and to love people. That’s all about relationship. Sometimes I will have conversations with my kids about salvation and stuff...

PATRICK: That must be interesting with the journey you’ve been on.

NATALIE: Well, it has changed over the years, because back when they would say, “Am I really a Christian?” I would go over the steps again. “You must make sure you do this and this and this.” Those older kids now — I’ve repented, and we’ve had conversations that have changed what I originally taught them. But they grew up just fearful about their salvation and fearful about whether God was going to save them.

With my younger kids, when they bring that up and they are scared, all I tell them is, “Jesus loves you so much. You don’t need to be scared. When it comes to Jesus, He’s got His arms around you, and you don’t need to be scared. You can trust Him.” I’m trying to teach them to trust Jesus instead of being scared.

PATRICK: Yeah. How do you make relationship theologically make sense?

NATALIE: Right. You can’t, because there are so many things that come up in relationships that have no rules.

PATRICK: Right. So here's something I want the ladies to understand as they are moving through this process. Why is religion so appealing throughout the centuries? Why do humans gravitate to religion? Well, my belief is that they gravitate to religion because it offers a promise of certainty. If I do X, then I will definitely get Y. It's a guarantee, right? The religion is then my doorway to having exactly what I want the way I want it, and it's a system that I can operate in and get where I need to go.

Well, it doesn't take you long to live to realize that's not true. I've talked to many families who went to church, took their kids to Sunday School, prayed, and read the Bible, but their kids still ended up gay, or someone got molested, or somebody walked away from the faith, or someone got a divorce. Something terrible would still happen even though they did it all right. So the promise of a guaranteed outcome is a lie. What Jesus promises is not a guaranteed outcome.

What He promises is "withness." "I'm going to be with you. I'm not going to leave you." To me, what I've learned is that that is a heck of a lot more valuable than having it right, because that's not even possible. I don't understand the universe. The fact that we as a church are arguing about the age of the universe is ridiculous to me. Let's just face it — nobody knows! Not the greatest theologian, not the greatest scientist — it's a mystery. No one was there. God isn't giving out that information.

Just live in the mystery. Instead of trying to divide from each other, let's just talk about it. You can have a belief that it's a bazillion years old. Fine! I don't have to get all freaked out because I don't have to protect God or the Bible. He's completely capable of doing that Himself. I don't need to make sure that you see it as the inherent word of God. I don't really care. I care about you. Where are you at? I'll trust God to reveal to you whatever He needs to reveal to you instead of me being the one that must do it.

NATALIE: Here's the beautiful thing about that. It also answers the problem of pain, because when you pray to God, "Take away this bad thing," or "Make sure that none of my kids die in a car accident," or "Jesus, please help me not to have bad dreams tonight," or whatever... Then if it doesn't happen and your child is killed in a car accident or you do have a bad dream that night, you don't have to think, "Well, God's not there. Where are you, God? You didn't come through for me." Like you said, He hasn't promised a specific outcome. He's promised to be with you.

In the same way, when other people are suffering, we don't try to solve their problems by telling them, "If you do X, Y, and Z, then this great thing will happen." We walk through life with them. If the church was doing that, these women would not be rejected. The churches would be doing the will of God — they would be behaving in a

Christ-like manner. The world, which craves connection, love, and acceptance, would be running a million miles per hour in the direction of the church instead of what it is right now, which is running a million miles per hour in the opposite direction.

PATRICK: Agreed. You catch a lot more flies with honey than vinegar.

NATALIE: You know what though, Patrick, we have completely gone off topic.

PATRICK: That's my specialty.

NATALIE: This can be a longer podcast episode. Are you okay going for another fifteen minutes?

PATRICK: Yeah.

NATALIE: I really do want to address the whole betrayal thing, because I know this is an issue that women deal with. Let's talk about the practicalities of betrayal. When you are being betrayed by everybody in your life (you may have a person here or there who's really amazing, but for the most part, everyone is disagreeing with you), some of them will just write you off and say, "I don't want to have anything to do with you anymore. Your kids can't play with my kids. Go home." But the other people will say, "I just love you so much. Let's go out for dinner so I can tell you all the things that you could maybe do differently so that your life is better."

PATRICK: That's not love, by the way.

NATALIE: No! But what do these women do? They are scrambling, trying to save their relationships. What should they be doing instead?

PATRICK: Practically speaking, there are two guiding principles I would really encourage. One is to work at being willing to appropriately assign responsibility, first and foremost. When you do that, it will usher you right into the process of grief. It is saying, "This relationship is untenable. That person doesn't have the capacity to care for me. They've turned on me. They've rejected me. They've abandoned me. They've said I'm wrong. They are unhealthily trying to help me, and I don't want that."

So as you appropriately assign the blame, which is going to heal you, you also then must do the work of grief. I'm saying this, and I will keep saying this because I strongly believe it: Grief is the doorway to freedom. When you don't grieve the loss, it continues to have power over you because you keep trying to make it work. When you let it go

and you grieve it, it can't touch you like it did before.

NATALIE: What does that grief process look like?

PATRICK: The person in your church who used to be your friend (and I can give you multiple examples of this in my own life), who you had a deep relationship with and deeply trusted... You make a decision to separate from your husband, make a decision to divorce or to deal with this abuse, and suddenly they believe you are wrong, and nothing that you did prior to that decision seems to matter. You go from a trusted friend to a persona non grata over one decision.

Now, in that scenario, who is at fault? What happens is the person who is deciding to deal with the abuse, they've been trained for years by an abuser to take responsibility. So very quickly, when their friend who they trusted and felt trusted by starts to blame them, it's a really difficult reality to not take that on. But instead of trying to understand, take a stand. If that person starts to go down that road... I believe that sometimes with boundary setting, the pendulum has to swing a little far. A lot of people who don't necessarily deserve a boundary get one, because that's the only way I can handle it.

So give yourself space on that. You're not going to do this appropriately. It's not going to be clean. You're not going to do it right. Don't worry about that — just do it! Once you make the decision to make that boundary, then if the person who you cared about and cared about you turns on you, you have to let that be their responsibility, and you have to start grieving the loss of the relationship. "I'm sad that person turned on me, and I'm going to let the tears out." Again, one of my favorite quotes is, "Tears are the blood of the soul." You must start to let that out.

In an abusive relationship, you are trained to be emotionally suppressed. "Don't let the emotions out. Don't deal with them. Pretend they don't exist. What you perceive is wrong anyhow, so it's your fault." You have all that training, so any level of grieving over the people that you boulder is a healthy thing. But I want to remind everyone that these things happen in percentages — it's not either/or. If I grieve .05%, I'm going to have a radical life change. I'm not going to do it 100%. That's not even possible. So get rid of the expectation that you are going to do it right or do it 100%. Like I say all the time, if you take one out of ten chances and grieve, we're moving in the right direction. It's about progress, not perfection.

NATALIE: Amen.

PATRICK: But in the church system, in an abusive system, perfection from whatever

angle the person is using it is the goal. If you fail, then it justifies their abuse of you. So to grieve is to let go of the expectations, to let go of the dream you had about that relationship, to let go of the desire to fix it. It's to let it be dead and grieve the pain of it. I'm just telling you that if you don't grieve, those folks will have a higher level of control and you will do more internal spinning, because you will have all this conflict. Once you start to see the abuse and set a boundary, conflict is what is going to happen. That conflict is actually good, contrary to how it feels.

NATALIE: I had read once that if you... I lost my train of thought. I'll have to edit that part out. I had it and then it was gone.

PATRICK: I wish I'd never had that happen to me.

NATALIE: Maybe we'll leave this in.

PATRICK: I think it's exactly what we're talking about. You're not going to do it perfectly. That doesn't exist.

NATALIE: Exactly!

PATRICK: I'm telling you from my own perspective, in the mess of failure is where I have found the face of God the most.

NATALIE: Yes. And don't you learn? I feel like I have to have a lot of failed opportunities before I finally get it right. I feel like every time I made a mistake in a relationship that was rejecting me -- I did everything you said. I took responsibility. I would say I was sorry. I would try to figure out what I did wrong in all my relationships. Every single time I did that, I would see the mistake that I made and then correct it the next time a little bit more.

I got good at it until eventually, I realized I had to let go of the relationships. They did lose their power once I decided to not pursue that person anymore. I thought it was my responsibility to pursue them because that's what Christians do. They pursue. Relationships are really important, but it takes two people pursuing one another in a relationship. It can't be just one person or one person saying, "I'll be in relationship with you as long as you believe what I believe, do what I do, think what I think..."

PATRICK: That's not a relationship; that's a contract.

NATALIE: Right. So I've lost (and a lot of these women have gone through the same

thing) my oldest son. I lost my family of origin. I lost some very good friends of mine that were at the church that I was excommunicated from. There are a lot of people I didn't lose, but those were the relationships that were devastating that I have had to grieve over. But you get better at it. It's sad, but you get better at realizing, "I love this person with all my heart, but I can't do this anymore, and I'm going to say goodbye." You could even do a ritual. You could buy a special thing that represents them and bury it in your backyard or in a beautiful place in nature. Some kind of ritual to help you symbolize that that relationship is over now, and go through the grieving process.

PATRICK: Right. I'd like to reiterate that you letting those relationships go is actually very loving to those people. It's the best way to love them.

NATALIE: I viewed it as respecting their right and their choice to believe the way they want to believe and respecting that I don't fit into that, and that's okay. I'm okay for not fitting into that, and they're okay. I mean, it hurts, and I personally think that what they are doing is wrong, but I'm okay with their right to make that choice if they want to.

PATRICK: Yes. Like I said, that is respectful and loving. The breach of the relationship and the pain of it may be the very thing that the Spirit uses to reveal to them the truth about what's happened. But chasing them certainly won't. That goes against all our training, right? "We're not supposed to let people go — we're supposed to save everyone." But that's not the example I see Jesus giving us.

NATALIE: Yes, and if you don't hold up those boundaries and set that expectation on yourself, they are going to continue to behave in their normal ways, too. What this does is put up a wall in front of them that they can't get past anymore. Then they need to sit back and think, "Either I need to change my behavior and the way I'm looking at this, or I guess I'm not going to have a relationship with that person." Then they get to make their choice.

PATRICK: It creates an opportunity for them to look at it in another way, which is the hope. There is no guarantee, but that's the hope. Again, it's difficult ground, which is why I think it's really important that we have people around us that are safe enough to tell the truth to about how we feel about that. Some of the ladies listening might not have that safe person, but I would say you do in a blank sheet of paper.

NATALIE: Oh, so true! The power of writing things down is amazing!

PATRICK: I think it's a crucial part of the grieving process, because when you start writing that stuff down, it does a couple of things. It honors its reality. It honors the pain



of it. It also values you. Grief is a way to value yourself, because what you are saying is that “I am valuable enough that I’m not going to say that this doesn’t hurt.” Instead of the old training of, “How I feel doesn’t matter; what I feel doesn’t matter; what happened to me doesn’t matter,” no! What happens to you matters a lot!

When you start writing it down and getting honest about it... When you do those writings, one of the rules I have is no editing. If it’s expletive after expletive, then fine. Just put it down, because the goal of documentation isn’t for you to figure it out or understand it. It’s for you to break the pattern of suppression, to see what is happening, and then to look at it honestly. When you write it down, in two weeks it’s exactly the same as when you wrote it down; but in your head, it is never the same. So you start to gain context. But it is hard because it does bring reality into focus, and that usually leads to more grief. But I’m telling you from experience, if you do that, on the other side you have a chance at living free.

NATALIE: Yes. This is a great segue into two things. First, I’m going to do a shameless plug for my book and workbook. Then after that, Patrick, I want you to tell us what you are doing and putting together to help survivors as well. First, many of you are familiar with my book, “Is It Me? Making Sense of Your Confusing Marriage.”

But I just finished creating a workbook with eleven chapters that asks you questions to help you do exactly what Patrick just described. It gets you writing things down. So when you answer these questions, you will have incredible insights into what you are going through, into how you think, into how the people around you are thinking, and you will have a lot of “ah-ha” breakthrough moments when you go through this workbook. It’s not ready yet, but it will be ready in November. [The “Is It Me?” workbook is now published and available to the public!] As far as what you are doing, Patrick, why don’t you tell us what your vision is and where you are headed? You’re not with Dove TV anymore, are you?

PATRICK: It’s not that I’m not with them, I just haven’t gone on. I’ll probably go on in the next couple three months and do a couple of shows with them. What I have been working on is rebranding myself. You can go to my new website, [www.patrickdoyle.life](http://www.patrickdoyle.life). If you want to, there’s a place to sign up for email to keep up to date with what’s happening. Also, you can follow me on Facebook and Instagram. Those platforms are all a little different. You get a little different content based on the platform. The other thing that I’m working on is that I’m going to be doing an emotional abuse membership site.

NATALIE: Okay, tell us more about that.

PATRICK: I've been putting together lots of videos of my content remade from the Dove and remade in my way and not with someone else's platform.

NATALIE: Oh, so that guy is not going to be interviewing you anymore? Why do I never remember his name?

PATRICK: Perry. Did you like Perry?

NATALIE: Actually I did, because he made me laugh. He made me laugh because he sort of represented the typical Christian response for things, so it was perfect. It was the perfect setup for you.

PATRICK: Yeah, he was. Perry is a beautiful man. I love him deeply. He's a good soul. Anyway, in my membership site, I'm going to give you a pathway from the beginning all the way through to the end to freedom. It's going to be through video, mostly. There will be a community site where you can interact. I'm going to be managing that, which is something I think will be valuable in the long run for ladies to come to a place that has some oversight and some interaction.

It's not just the ladies trying to figure it out. For years I was involved in self-help support like AA and NA. Those meetings are great and wonderful, but each meeting only has the strength of the people who are in it because everyone is trying to recover. It is self-help support. So this membership site is going to have management, people who are coaches who understand me and looking at it so that we keep the forums and the interactions in a therapeutic movement instead of it getting difficult and bogged down. That's coming probably by the end of the year. [Pathway to Hope is now open and available to the public!]

NATALIE: Okay. So everyone who is interested in that needs to really get on your mailing list so that they can hear about that.

PATRICK: Exactly. In the not too distant future I would like for you to return the favor and come do some stuff with me for that.

NATALIE: I would love to. That would be totally my honor. By the way, for those of you listening, I will be sure to include the links that Patrick just mentioned in the show notes so you can find those. If you are listening to this on your phone or your iPad, all you have to do is go to [flyingfreenow.com/38](http://flyingfreenow.com/38). That will have the show notes. There will be a transcript you can download to read and underline. You can also click on the links and go directly to all the places Patrick just told you about.

PATRICK: So good. I want to say that I am really grateful, Natalie, that you are doing this. I see the value of it, and I hear about the value of it from other women that I am involved with. I just want to validate what you are doing, and hope that you will continue to be a light and a safe place for a lot of women who are hurting.

NATALIE: Well, thank you. I love doing this. It's my passion. I'm so excited, and I'm really excited to work with you, actually.

PATRICK: Now we have to do a conference.

NATALIE: Oh, my gosh! That would be so awesome! That would be amazing! All right, we've got to let these people go. Anyway, thank you to all of you who are joining us today. Thank you, Patrick.

PATRICK: You're welcome.

NATALIE: Until next time, fly free!