

WHEN YOU ARE REJECTED BY FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND CHURCH

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

NATALIE: Welcome to Episode 75 of the Flying Free Podcast! This is Natalie Hoffman with flyingfreenow.com. It's just you and me today. I've recently been doing a facilitator training on my membership site for anyone who wants to lead a small group going through my book, "Is It Me? Making Sense of Your Confusing Marriage" along with its companion workbook. I've got eighteen women just finishing up today. They went through eleven weeks of training with me and they each led a small group of two to four women. These groups have been phenomenal. I've been getting some amazing feedback.

I'm excited because this training is at no cost. Anyone who wants to lead a small group can go through the training. All you need to do is find some women you'd like to go through the small group with. If you want to be the facilitator, I can hook you up. Just send an email to the Flying Free Community Support Director, Aimee. Her email address is communitysupport@flyingfreenow.com. If you send her an email and let her know you'd like to be a facilitator for an "Is it Me?" small group and you have a couple of people in your group, she will send you a link to get into that training.

The only requirement is that you have a small group to lead through the book. Don't sign up for the training until you have at least two other people besides yourself who want to go through the book with you. It takes eleven weeks to go through the book. You go through one chapter of the book a week. You read the chapter and then work through the companion workbook chapter. At the end of each workbook chapter there is a list of discussion questions. Those are the questions you would use in your small group. The training I have provided is to encourage and help these women as they facilitate. I do a little bit of a teaching in each of the training modules. [Facilitator training is no longer available. However, if you would still like to join a book group, you may do so at flyingfreesisterhood.com/waiting-list]

The one that we did for week six I am going to share with you today on this podcast. The chapter for week six is all about the role of other people in your destructive marriage. Marriages are not built in isolation. We are in community with other people. Even though we keep most of the things that happen in our marriages private, when we do step out and start to share, all these other people in our lives play a role in how they

respond to us.

Some of those people are going to be supportive, will hold space for us, and will give a safe place for us to talk about our pain. Some people are going to be unsafe. They will be very judgmental. They will have their own agenda for our lives. They will have their own manual for how marriage is supposed to look and how women in a dysfunctional marriage are supposed to behave. They will want to impose all their ideas and beliefs onto you. It may or may not be helpful to you at that point in time. This chapter is all about the different types of people who are in your life and how they may or may not respond to you when you disclose that you are being abused.

The word that came to my mind when I think about this chapter is grief, because when it comes to the roles of other people, I think this is where survivors lose big time. This is where they discover the truth that many of the relationships that they had were actually built on the shaky premise that they had to capitulate to the opinions and desires of everyone around them in order to be loved and accepted by other people.

They realize that it wasn't just their partner who defined them in a certain way. It was a lot of the people in their life. What happens is that a survivor sees herself mirrored in the eyes of other people. What she sees is a distortion of who she is because other people don't really know who she is all the time. They have their own ideas, but they don't necessarily know who we are, especially if they are abusive. What abusive people usually do is project their own shortcomings onto other people, mostly onto their intimate partner or children. If they have weaknesses deep down in their own life they are ashamed about, in order to feel better about themselves they will project those exact weaknesses onto their target. Then if she (or he) is highly sensitive, she will take on the shame of their abuser. She will take it on herself and begin to see herself that way even though that is not who she really is in her core.

This is so hard, because when a survivor is finally waking up to her own value and her own worth, she is finally realizing that she is a human being too, that she has her own opinions and ideas and that it's okay to have those ideas and opinions and preferences. She's not an evil person because she prefers certain colors in her home over other colors that are different from what her husband or someone else prefers. When she begins to realize that, she begins to stand up for herself and show up. The enemy of her soul gnashes his teeth because she is not allowed to show up.

Here's the problem. When Christian women begin to show up, they become powerful in this world. The enemy can't have that. He must neutralize a Christian woman so that she is not powerful and her power is taken away. Her power to spread the gospel, to

spread the love of Jesus Christ, and to use her gifts to bring glory to God is stripped from her when she is neutralized. The Bible says that we don't fight against flesh and blood. It's not your church and your abuser and all the dysfunctional people who may be in your life who are neutralizing you. They are just pawns. They are also victims of the enemy and false beliefs about how this world is supposed to work. Collectively, all this comes together to neutralize you and neutralize them as well.

There is a passage in the Bible that I want to talk about because I think it offers us incredible insights into our own experience. It's the part where Jesus went out into the wilderness before He started His earthly ministry. He went out into the wilderness for forty days and forty nights, and that's where He was tempted by Satan. Satan was trying to get Jesus to rescue the world in a different way than God's plan. He wanted Jesus to rescue the world by taking over the world. He was tempting Jesus with power over.

"Come on, Jesus. Your plan of sacrificing yourself really sucks. It's so much nicer to think about all the good you could do if you just took power over the world right now. You don't have to go through with this ridiculous plan of being crucified and giving your life as a ransom. Just take power over the world right now. Set everything right by taking power over." Isn't that incredible? That is the temptation that he still uses on Christians, the followers of Christ, today.

"Take power over. If you take power over, you can do so much good. Men, if you take power over women, just think about the good you can do in this world." But Jesus wasn't buying it. By the way, Satan used the Word of God all three times to tempt Jesus to take power over. It's a great insight into understanding how the enemy works. The enemy doesn't tempt us with nasty, evil stuff like that. He tempts us with the Word of God. You can take any scripture that you want to and twist it in any way that you want to in order to make a case for whatever belief system you want to make a case for.

After this time in the wilderness, Jesus goes into town and starts speaking in the synagogues. But when He goes to His hometown of Nazareth and goes to the synagogue there, the Bible says He opened to this passage in Isaiah and read this to everyone in the synagogue: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Then He said something that made everyone angry. He said, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." You know what they said? They said, "Isn't this Joseph's son? What? This is..." and they began to define Him, "...that bastard child of Joseph and

Mary.” They knew that this scripture passage was a prophecy about the coming Messiah. So when Jesus said, “This prophecy has been fulfilled in your hearing,” He was saying, “I am the Messiah. This is about Me.” He was standing up into His true identity in front of these people.

How these people saw Him, as the bastard son of Joseph and Mary and as a poor carpenter... that just didn't fit with how they saw Him. Jesus could have kept viewing Himself through their eyes, how they were mirroring themselves back to Him, but He didn't. Jesus knew who He was, and He stood in His full identity as the Son of the living God. He wasn't afraid to say, “This is who I am.” The Bible says that these people were full of wrath, and they chased Him out of the synagogue. They excommunicated Him. They chased Him to the side of the mountain that this city was built on. They were going to throw Him off the cliff. Their wrath was so full of hate that they were prepared to murder Him right then and there. The Bible says that Jesus walked through that crowd and went on His way.

Try to imagine this. We read things in the Bible and say, “Oh yeah. I've read that a million times.” We don't really think about what this scene must have been like. Imagine being chased out of your church. (I can because that happened to me!) A lot of you can imagine this as well. You are chased out of your church because you stand up for who you really are. You stand up and you speak the truth. They don't want to hear it. They already have defined you how they want to define you, and if you define yourself differently they are going to be full of wrath toward you.

So they chased Him to the edge of this mountain, and He walks through the crowd and just walks away. He had to walk through a crowd that was probably swearing at Him, jeering at Him, pushing and shoving Him, and saying horrible things about Him. The Bible doesn't tell us all the details, but I think we can use our imagination based on what we've seen in our world and in our experience of how He was treated. He walked away. It wasn't His time yet, and He walked through the crowd and through all of that and walked away.

That is what we need to do as well. Our power is going to be in facing this opposition, facing this grief, and facing this identity defamation head on. This is when you truly get set free from the opinions of other people. I have been a card-carrying member of “The People Pleaser's Club” my entire life. This is what set me free. I stopped living for other people and trying to win their love, approval, and acceptance by being who they wanted me to be and finally found who I really was. I now live out of my core values, out of the core of who I am as a human being, in my identity in Jesus Christ.

There are going to be some people who really enjoy me, want to be my friend, and want to have a relationship with me, and we will enjoy that. Then there will be other people who don't. They want a relationship with me that is conditioned on my being someone that I am not, someone who they want me to be. That is power over another person. I will have none of that anymore. It is so painful to walk through this because you lose those relationships, and yet this is where you get your power back.

Also, you won't be able to build new relationships based on who you really are, you won't be able to show up as your authentic self in your relationships, unless you make this break and you complete this hard process of walking through the crowd and walking out on the other side. You must see it through to the end. You know what's on the other side? Freedom. That was at the beginning of Jesus's ministry and He spent three more years walking in freedom, being His authentic self, and showing up. Many people believed Him. He had fellowship and relationship with them that started right there at that point in history and is still lasting to this day. These are eternal relationships.

I want to encourage you that you may lose relationships with people you really love and care about. Yet, I've been learning recently that connection isn't just about our relationships and interactions with other people. We can have connection with people who don't want to talk to us, people we love and care about but who have rejected us because we aren't being who they want us to be. We can have connection with those people inside our minds.

I'm trying to do this myself. I'm working on this with my own family of origin. I don't see any of them anymore. But I want to love them. I want to feel good toward them. I want to feel forgiveness for them. I want to feel connected to them even though there is no physical or verbal connection between us right now. How I'm doing that is in my mind and in my thoughts towards them. I've spent time having to go through a lot of grief in losing them. Part of that grief process has included processing some of the painful things that were done to me and were said about me and that have continued. It's not just a one-time thing, but it's an on-going thing. It's attitudes and behaviors that are chronic and are not changing, yet I've had to come to terms with that.

Everyone gets to make their own choices. Everyone gets to live the life they want to live. Everyone gets to behave the way they want to behave. Everyone gets to have the relationships that they want to have. Everyone gets to feel close to the people they want to feel close to or not feel close to the people they don't want to feel close to. There is nothing that we can do about the decisions of other people and the choices they make. We can only take power over our own decisions, our own choices, and our

own thoughts in our own minds. That's what will create the emotions we have in our minds toward other people.

I decided I don't want to feel a lot of anger and bitterness towards people who have hurt me in the past. I want to feel love and forgiveness for them. That means I need to let go of trying to control them and how they show up for me, and I also need to let go of nurturing my own hard feelings toward them. It doesn't mean that I excuse their behavior, because I absolutely do not. In fact, for me to have physical contact again with someone who has chronically hurt me in the past... Now my perspective is that I would need that person to acknowledge that I am hurt. They don't have to acknowledge that they did anything wrong, because their manual for life might be quite different from my manual. In their manual for life, what I would call their poor behavior might be great behavior for them. They might think that the role they play in the family is the perfect way to play that role.

But my manual for life is different. I would play that role differently and show up in my relationships in a different way. I can't change their manual. Looking back, I wouldn't try to change their manual. But I think it's important that we stand up and say, "This is who I am. In my manual, I don't tolerate that kind of behavior. You can do it, but I won't be hanging around you if you continue that kind of behavior because for me, that doesn't align with my core values. It is destructive in my life and it doesn't serve me. But I love you and I wish you the best. If you ever change your mind and want to show up in a more respectful way, then I would love to spend time with you again." That's how I would probably approach things now, but it's taken me a long time to get here. I've had to go through a lot of anger and indignation, because it's been years and years of me being treated a certain way and just tolerating it. I've also had to take responsibility for my tolerating that because of my fear, my tremendous fear, of not being liked. So I threw myself under the bus.

I have a much more trusting relationship with myself now than I used to have. I didn't trust myself to take care of myself, so there was so much guilt and shame on many different levels. I've been able to let go of a lot of that. Here's the awesome thing: when you start to let go of that shame in yourself, when you start to accept yourself just the way you are, then you start to say, "I actually really like my manual for life and if there's anything in my manual that I'm not comfortable with or I think I need to tweak, I'm totally okay with tweaking that. It's no big deal."

Is our manual perfect? No, it's never going to be perfect and it doesn't have to be perfect. We've got to stop being so judgmental of ourselves, and that will free us up from being so judgmental of other people who also have imperfect manuals and are

showing up in imperfect ways as well. Again, this does not mean that we excuse abuse or that we submit ourselves to abusive behavior. It just means that we take care of ourselves in the same way that we would take care of our children, a good friend, or anyone that we love and care for.

We will defend ourselves in the same way. Not in a panicked, screaming, yelling, and freaked out kind of way, but in a very calm, adult way just like Jesus did. "This is who I am. I am the Son of God. If you hate Me for that, then I guess you hate Me for that. But I will be who I am, and nothing is going to take that power away from me."

That's all I have for you today. Go out and be who you are. Find out who you are and then be that woman. Show up. Be compassionate to yourself. Your life will change. It starts with you. Fly free!