

## THE WAYS RELIGION KILLS PEOPLE

*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 75 of the Flying Free Podcast! Today I have with me a repeat guest (and I'm super excited he agreed to come back), Bob Hamp. Welcome, Bob.

BOB: Thanks.

NATALIE: Bob and I have been getting to know each other. Bob and Polly, his wife, work together. He is an author of numerous books. He's a speaker, he's a teacher, and he's the founder of the Think Differently Counseling Consulting and Connecting Center. You must do all three of those things at that center.

BOB: We do that and several other things.

NATALIE: But they had to limit the title. It was just getting too long. I love all the "C's." I'm always impressed when people can do that. I'm not very good at that. Today he's got an amazing thing he's going to teach us. I'm excited for him to get into it. Go Bob!

BOB: Just turn on the jets, huh?

NATALIE: Exactly! Go! We're ready!

BOB: Like I said to you before we got started, Natalie, if I had a single thing to say to any group of people, specifically to believers, but really to any group of people because I think so many people radically misunderstand Christianity, including Christians, it would be this topic we are going to talk about today. It would be super helpful to me if, from time to time, you would stop me and ask questions (I assume you're going to do that), because I tend to roll through this and then I get a lot of wide eyes and confused looks.

Let me start by posing this question: What if the problem that Jesus came to solve made it highly likely that humans would misunderstand the problem that Jesus came to solve?

NATALIE: That doesn't sound like a good situation.

BOB: Right. In other words, very specifically, Jesus came to earth to solve a problem. This problem began in Genesis chapter 3, and theory would be that we the church, we the people who are followers of Jesus and people who are the church that He said, "On this rock, I will build my church," we the church ought also to be solving the same problem that He came to solve. I would say that the dilemma for us all is that literally the problem He came to solve has something very much to do with the way that we think. So we approach the problem thinking about it incorrectly.

As a therapist, we don't actually help people with their problems. We help people who have repeatedly tried to solve their problems and their solutions make the problem worse. I've often used the example of when I tried to change my aunt's tire, but the lug wrench was the wrong size. As a teenage boy, I stripped all the lug nuts because I was trying so hard but using the wrong tool. What happens when people try to solve a problem but have the wrong tool is that they create a greater problem. The idea would be that if Jesus came to solve a problem and we join Him in trying to solve that problem but use the wrong tool, we can actually do harm to people instead of partnering with Jesus in solving the problem He came to earth to solve.

Not only do we use the wrong tool, the reason for that (I'm putting my glasses on as an illustration) is that in the Garden we didn't just lose a connection to God. We lost a way of knowing and a way of seeing. So if I lose my glasses, I have two problems. First, my glasses are lost. Second, I've lost the way that I find lost things. I think it's crucial for us to recognize that the shift that took place in Genesis 3, or rather, the problem that Jesus came to solve, the thing that happened to Adam and Eve and therefore the whole human race in their stead, the thing that happened there didn't just affect their standing. It affected their thought process and their perceptual mechanisms.

That being the case, we often read Genesis 3 with a Genesis 4 mind, and we define the problem incorrectly. Most people think the problem Jesus came to solve was sin. The irony of that is that in Genesis 3 you can't find the word "sin" in there anywhere. You can't find it in English or Hebrew or in any way. What you do find is a story, and that story tells something that I would describe as a shift of source. I think you and several others have referred to this as my analogy about trees. It's interesting because it is part analogy and part literal.

What I want to describe even before we get into the story, if we look at Genesis 2:9, there is an interesting description of the scene in which the story takes place. That description says that God put all kinds of trees into the Garden: trees that were

beautiful, trees that were good to eat, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life were both there. Then it goes on to prepare us for the story of Genesis 3 where Adam and Eve “change their sources” or what we refer to as “the fall of man.” In that chapter we discover the problem that Jesus came to solve.

But in Genesis 2:9, what we see is that there is a description of reality that is quite different from the reality that you and I experience today. That reality describes both trees, which is something you and I are both familiar with, but it also describes fruit on those trees, which is something you and I have never seen with our eyes. It describes knowledge, the knowledge of good and evil, but there are physical trees that grow spiritual fruit. And it describes life as the same thing, a physical tree that grows spiritual fruit.

There are two important things we can capture from that. Adam and Eve had a way of seeing that you and I do not have. That way of seeing allowed them to perceive the second important point, which is that the Garden of Eden showed that reality is both a material and a spiritual entity integrated together. So in the Garden, what you see is the integration of physical trees with spiritual fruit, physical beings with spiritual nature, and in ongoing relationship with the spiritual Being Who created this physical reality as an integrated reality.

Now the real point is that Adam and Eve could perceive that because of the way that they thought prior to Genesis 3. Their eyes weren't closed because they saw both physical and spiritual reality: trees with knowledge and trees with life. When God assigns them to “not eat the fruit of that one tree because when you do you will surely die,” they not only know which tree it is, but they are familiar visually with what that fruit looks like. You and I have never seen life with our eyes, and we've never seen knowledge with our eyes. What we see is the evidence of those two things, but we never actually see them the way that Adam and Eve saw them.

The point of that is to say that after Genesis 3, Adam and Eve could not see what they previously did see, or more importantly, their way of seeing and their way of knowing was changed. They didn't just lose their glasses. They lost their way of finding what they had lost. It's important to recognize the two trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Adam and Eve really lived day-to-day in a circular relationship with this thing called the tree of life, the breath of life, or the spirit of life: God Himself and His Spirit. Where God initially breathed life into them and they in relationship with Him had this circular relationship where we receive God's breath, we contain God's breath, and we broadcast

God's breath. And so not only their way of being but their way of knowing and their way of perceiving came from the Spirit of God inside them. Paul refers to this when he talks to the Corinthians and says, "We no longer know any man by the flesh, now we know him by the Spirit." What he is saying is exactly what I am describing about Adam and Eve's way of knowing back in the Garden prior to Genesis 3.

Their way of knowing prior to Genesis 3 was the Spirit inside of them that gave them the most important data about reality around them. Their senses did too. Their eyes, their ears, and all their senses gave them data. But the Spirit of God inside of them translated that for them. After Genesis 3, that wasn't the case.

Here's what happens. God says, "If you eat the fruit of that tree you will surely die," and here's how a Genesis 4 mind interprets that, "If you eat from that tree you are doing wrong, the wrong that you do deserves punishment, the punishment you deserve is death, Jesus will someday come to pay that debt, pay the price for it, so that you can have a chance to try again." Whether it is stated that way or not, it becomes this legal exchange between bad behavior, Jesus paying the price, and opening the opportunity for us to "change and do good behavior" so that we don't deserve death anymore.

NATALIE: Right.

BOB: The crazy thing about it, and I've said this for years in other settings, if you look at most people's behavior, they might deserve some punishment but most of them don't deserve death. Does that make sense?

NATALIE: Yeah.

BOB: Natalie, I'm assuming you've probably never murdered anyone before?

NATALIE: I've never murdered anybody? Is that what you said?

BOB: Correct.

NATALIE: No. I have not murdered anyone.

BOB: Good. So if we took the totality of your "bad behavior" or what some people call "sin" (and I'll address that in a couple of minutes), then you don't deserve death. In the legal exchange sense, you have not committed enough sinful acts to deserve death. Even in that sense, this legal transaction idea of the Garden, misbehavior, the state of man, and Jesus paying the penalty by dying on the cross, it doesn't quite make sense. It

doesn't quite add up. The reality is that the exchange that took place in Genesis 3 is the exact opposite of the exchange Jesus offers on the cross, and that is that we gave up life for death. Jesus comes back and offers our death for His life. Does that make sense?

NATALIE: It does. I have a question. When I was growing up, and even in the church that I was in as an adult... I had relatives that were Catholic, but my family of origin taught me that Catholics were all going to go to hell. So it was hard for me to understand. These were good people, like, the best people. I couldn't understand why God would send them to hell.

But the argument was if you don't have this transaction where you accept Jesus into your heart then you go to hell, so it doesn't matter how good you are. Everyone is evil. Everyone is depraved, born into depravity and evil. The only way out is to say this prayer, and if you don't say that prayer then you go to hell. So how would you talk about that, then, with someone who thinks that it doesn't matter if you murder someone or if you tell a white lie: you deserve death because of your depravity?

BOB: I think I will answer that. Ask me again in about seven minutes.

NATALIE: Okay. I jumped in too soon.

BOB: No, no. That's the question! That's the reason I think people really struggle with this particular teaching because that is so prevalent. It's not 100% wrong. I really struggle with the language of it, "depravity." Here's what I would say. Adam and Eve, both natural and spiritual beings living in a Garden where God says to them, "You are in constant relationship with my breath where My breath comes to you, lives in you, and moves through you." In such, Adam and Eve are the hinge between the heavenly or spiritual realm and the material realm. Adam and Eve as both physical beings and spiritual beings are the conduit by which God enters the physical realm. Even at that point, He comes and walks with them in the Garden, right? So what makes them who they are is that joint nature of material and spiritual.

They are physical bodies with spiritual natures. That comes from the way that they stay connected to God. Staying connected to God is simply that surrender to the receive/contain/broadcast thing I talked about a couple of minutes ago. God looks at them and says, "If you eat the fruit from that tree you'll surely die." What tree is that? That's the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. So a Genesis 4 and after mind actually thinks with a knowledge of good and evil paradigm. A knowledge of good and evil paradigm says this: "What good things should I do to be in connection with God and what bad things should I avoid to stay in connection with God?" Do you see where this

is headed?

NATALIE: Yeah.

BOB: So in that paradigm, the tree, or as I refer to it as source, the tree of life was Adam and Eve's source from creation until this moment in Genesis 2. In Genesis 2 they have changed. They didn't just misbehave. They didn't just violate a rule. They changed sources. Where previously the way they perceived or the way they knew reality was their connection to God, now they/we know reality and perceive reality through the lens called "the knowledge of good and evil." We evaluate everything in terms of what's right and what's wrong, what's good and what's bad, what's good and what's evil. The crazy thing about that, Natalie, is that it sounds so right.

NATALIE: Yeah. It starts to feel a little bit scary then, because you think, "Is there universal truth? Does God define our morality or how do we..." I can just hear what some people are thinking right now because my brain is going there too. How do I know what is right or wrong if I want to know what God says is right and wrong?

BOB: So the dilemma is that that question is part of the paradigm. I get where you are headed, but stay with me a second.

NATALIE: Okay.

BOB: The two options are this: man connected to God where God moves through him, or man connected to his knowledge where he evaluates what's right and wrong and lives based on that. Does that make more sense?

NATALIE: It does.

BOB: Man connected to God where God operates through him isn't even going to think, "Today I'm going to rob a bank," or "Today I think I'm going to abuse my spouse." God connected to man is going to constantly be thinking, "What is God doing on earth today and what's my part in it?"

NATALIE: Yes.

BOB: If evaluating between good and evil sets up dynamics like this: Jesus goes into the synagogue and heals a woman who has been crippled for more than a decade, and the religious people in the room look at Him and say, "He did that on the Sabbath. That's wrong," then it must be a way to disconnect from God. So people who are disconnected

from God and are evaluating things based on the value of good and evil criticize things that flow from the Breath of Life.

NATALIE: That's amazing! You are basically describing why legalism is so dangerous. Legalism is so disconnected from the Holy Spirit and from God.

BOB: Think about this for a second. Why did God give a pillar of cloud in the daytime and a pillar of fire at night instead of just giving the Israelites a map?

NATALIE: He wanted them to stay with them. "Stay with Me. Live in Me." Yes.

BOB: Because His guidance comes from His presence and our connection to Him, not from our interpretation of information. The dilemma with the knowledge of good and evil is that it puts our interpretation in charge of what's right and what's wrong.

NATALIE: Abuse victims can really relate to how that can be abusive.

BOB: Absolutely. So if people in power are in charge of interpretation, then people in power can say "Divorce is against the Bible," "Women should submit to their husbands, meaning that they should be subject to their husbands," and on and on. The interpretation of the map becomes the result of whomever is in power's interpretation, or the interpretation of the people in power. The reason God gives the pillar of fire instead of a map is because it is His presence and our connection to Him, not the data and our interpretation of it.

NATALIE: Right.

BOB: The Bible can be seen the same way. Not that He didn't give us the Bible, but that we use that as a pillar of fire and smoke, i.e, it's His presence with us and our connection to Him, or it's our interpretation of that. It's crucial that we let the Spirit interpret the Bible, not the Bible interpret the Spirit, because if we're not careful we end up with... Notice the number of people who approach Jesus and ask questions that are designed to trap Him. Even the woman at the well who wasn't trying to trap Him says, "My people say we worship here. Your people say we worship there. Which one is right?" Often, they present to Him their knowledge of good, their knowledge of evil, and ask Jesus to make a judgment over which one is right. Jesus never answers a "yes" or "no" question. He never answers a "yes" or "no" question because the knowledge of good and evil sets up right and wrong questions instead of, "Where is God moving and what is His Breath doing through me right now?"



NATALIE: I love that! This takes a lot more wisdom. The other way really doesn't take any wisdom. It's just very rigid. Really, this takes wisdom and love.

BOB: Yes, intentional love.

NATALIE: And the other way takes nothing.

BOB: In my mind, this idea of what happened when a prophet comes to the people and they say, "Go tell God we want a king." The prophet goes back to God and says, "The people say they want a king." God says, "They're not opposing you. They are opposing me." Let's talk about needing a king. This desire to have a king is still present today. Everybody wants someone else to tell them what is right and what is wrong. I remember asking God Himself the question, "Should I leave my marriage?" He never answered that. He told me what was possible. He told me what I could do. He told me outcomes of every choice. But He never enforced on me a "knowledge of good and evil" answer.

NATALIE: Wow! I love that. That's my experience too. Women ask that all the time. "What does God want me to do? Just tell me. I'll do it. I'll walk the path. Just tell me what it is." God doesn't work that way.

BOB: Part of what I always tell people is that God is much more interested in the conversation than the outcome. In other words, we want the answer, and He wants to stay connected to us. We want the destination, and He wants to walk with us along the pathway. So these two trees aren't just metaphorical. There really is a legitimate concept that we have a source of knowing, seeing, and taking in reality that can come from the breath of God to us, in us, and through us. Like you said, that requires awareness. It requires mindfulness. It requires conscious attachment to God as a way of living.

The knowledge of good and evil requires very little. What that does is makes us want someone who has the best knowledge of good. We want to follow the leader who has got it the most right. Then when the leader who has, in our opinion, the most right says something that is hurtful to us or contrary to God we say, "Yeah, but they're the leader who has it right." So if I'm going to take a pill, I'm going to take the whole pill. The blue pill in this case is called the knowledge of good and evil, and it's what went wrong in Genesis 3.

Adam and Eve turned away from this thing called "life" that was constantly their source and their way of being. Now their way of thinking, being, and knowing came from



evaluating what is right and wrong and making a decision. Most people (I don't mean to be critical with this), many people choose what is right and wrong based on what either a specific leader says or what the crowd is doing instead of taking a moment to stop and connect to God for themselves. I think it's one of the reasons the Bible says we are so much like sheep because we would rather just follow than stand up and connect to the boss, to the Father. You know what I'm saying?

NATALIE: Yep.

BOB: In John 10, Jesus stands up and says, "The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy, but I came that you might behave really, really well until I get back." Or, does He say, "The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy, but I came that you might have life, and life abundantly." The knowledge of good and evil mind, even though it knows that verse, operates as if the first thing I said is true. We've got to really hold it together until He gets back.

Here's the crazy thing, Natalie. You will know this already. A lot of people will hear this and say, "So you're saying that behavior doesn't matter?" To which I would say, "Of course I'm not saying that behavior doesn't matter. We shouldn't kill people. We shouldn't steal. We shouldn't covet our neighbors good." What I am saying is that source matters. The Pharisees did all the rules from the source of self-management. Or rather, I call them the keepers of the knowledge of good and evil. They did all the right behaviors, but they did it out of their knowledge of good and evil. The dilemma with the knowledge of good and evil is that the end is always death. Why? Because it takes you away from life and puts you into self-sourcing or self-management.

This question of depravity that you asked about a couple of minutes ago... Let me talk about sin from the perspective of what this teaching implies. Even though the word "sin" isn't in that chapter, the concept is throughout the chapter and throughout all the chapters that follow. But the concept of sin changes when we stop evaluating it from the knowledge of good and evil and start looking at it from the perspective of the tree of life. The concept of sin is this: we are empty of the Breath of God. If a person who is empty of the Breath of God steals a piece of gum or murders, they are still empty of the Breath of God and therefore death is in them. But it is the fact that death is in us that leaves us eternally dead, not because we stole the gum or committed a bunch of murders.

Here's the dilemma: that is the branch called the knowledge of evil. Often what we think of discipleship is getting people out of the branch called the knowledge of evil onto the branch called the knowledge of good. The problem is that both branches

come from the same root and that root is an empty soul, or rather, living with knowledge as source. What that means is that not only can I, from the emptiness that people call depravity (let's call it vacancy if you want)... For the unregenerate human, the Breath of God isn't in them. Some of them steal gum, some of them murder a bunch of people, but some of them go into ministry.

NATALIE: Yeah.

BOB: Because the branch called the knowledge of good is just another way to try to fill that emptiness based on knowledge. So I climb up this branch called the knowledge of good and I become proficient at all the right things I think God wants me to do, but I am still empty on the inside. I'm still vacant of the Breath of God. The way I think about sin... The Hebrew word for "sin" literally means "the missing of the mark." You've heard that before. Remember when he talks about the archer and the arrow, and there's a target and we all don't hit the bullseye. What if "missing the mark" isn't about not hitting the target, but about missing the mark? We're missing the presence. We're missing the thing that marks us as the children of God. When we're missing that we can do bad things, but we can also do good things out of that emptiness.

So you can see two important things. First, why is it that people feel so much that Christianity doesn't work for them? Because they are trying to climb a branch called the knowledge of good instead of turning from this branch and this whole tree over to the tree of life. The second thing you see is why so many leaders are so broken and evil. (This is a horrible generalization.) When you become proficient at the knowledge of good but are empty of the Breath of God, you become a dictator for your brand of the knowledge of good. And only those who follow your version of the knowledge of good are doing it right. Hence the reason why one group says another group isn't going to make it to heaven, and that group says the other group isn't going to make it to heaven.

I think we are all going to be shocked when we walk into that place and say, "Oh! A lot of people I thought might be here aren't, and a lot of people I didn't think would be here are." I think when Jesus says there is a narrow way and a broad way, I don't think He is saying not many people will be able to manage their behavior in such a way that they can pass through the narrow way. To me, the narrow way is that there is a change in our way of thinking. In fact, the word "repent" doesn't mean change your behavior or turn around. Literally, the word repent comes from the word "metanoia," which means "change the way that you think." It's not to change what you think, it's change the way you think.

It is essentially a reference to the way you think. You think the knowledge of good and

evil will never apprise you of the thing that Jesus is teaching. He'll say, "You've heard it said don't steal, but I say to you don't covet." He'll say, "You've heard it said don't commit adultery, but I say to you don't even lust after a woman in your heart." Some people, the knowledge of good and evil people, hear that as Jesus saying, "The rules are even harder than you thought."

NATALIE: Yeah.

BOB: But really what He's saying is, "You won't be able to do this out of your knowledge. You've got to come back again to the place where motive, or the source, matters." When the source is the Breath of God to me, the Breath of God in me, and the Breath of God through me, now I don't just not behave badly: I don't have the thoughts and motives inside that Jesus is referring to. So this issue of depravity and everyone is evil... I agree in the sense that I believe everyone comes into the world empty, but I don't necessarily think it is all evil. I think it's empty.

NATALIE: So if someone is listening who is actually feeling empty and feeling... Maybe there is someone who was raised in a Christian home and because of all the things that have happened to them, a lot of hypocrisy and a lot of whatever, they are trying to figure it out. "Do I even believe what I...?" How would you help them to connect with God again?

BOB: I love that question. That is why I wanted you to interject. Because first, it is important to recognize the futility of what we have been given. Like I said when we first started, counselors don't always have to help people with problems. We often help them with solutions that make things worse. So we've been told things like this: "To connect to God you should have a quiet time every morning. You should pray and read the Bible." I'm not opposed to any of that activity. But what I am opposed to is that activity coming out of knowledge instead of out of connection.

The first thing I would say is that it's important to recognize that we aren't throwing out the whole of what you learned. God is still the Source of all life. Jesus is still the way that we get to Him. But our methods matter less than we think. His nearness is the most important aspect of that. When we stop and get still... I like to make a distinction between our choice to follow Jesus versus our surrendering to His presence. We surrender to His Lordship because following is something that takes our initiative. Surrendering is something, even though it is something we initiate, it surrenders to His initiative. When it comes to connecting to Him, one of the first things I tell people is to take some time off from the methods that you think would have worked in the past. You can imagine, Natalie, that makes some religious people nervous?

NATALIE: Yes.

BOB: Again, I am not devaluing prayer and I'm not devaluing time in the scriptures. I'm not devaluing meditation. What I am saying is that those things done as an exercise out of the knowledge of good will always eventually lead to dryness. When you take time off of those, we can just be still and practice surrender. To be still and practice surrender, I recommend that people ask Him questions and then be still and wait for the answers. Ask Him, "Hey, are You here? How do You see me? What are You doing right now in my life?" The key is that the waiting for the answers, not just... The stillness can become a rule too, and asking questions can become a rule. But it is the shift of source that Jesus called repentance or changing the way that we think.

Part of it means letting go of an old way of thinking. "If I do enough Bible reading, I'll finally become holy." It didn't really work that way for the Pharisees, and it probably won't work for us if reading is our source of identity, even reading the Bible. But if reading the Bible points us to and connects us to the living and active breath and person of God, then that means we are turning now to this tree called the tree of life.

The tree of life is a constant conversation where He reaches out to us, and if He's not saying something to us, He is at least moving towards us and in us. If we can tune our awareness to that movement, to His voice toward us, and to His speaking... He may well use scripture. But sometimes if we are so familiar with a King James mindset, or any translation for that matter, if we know a verse so well, we can begin repeating it because we want God to speak to us instead of waiting in the discomfort of our own frailty.

NATALIE: Yeah. Can I jump in here and share something? I did that. I had to get away. I was one of those people who prayed every morning, paced the floor, read my Bible every day, very rigid, ever since I was a little girl. I had to get away from that. I'm starting to get back into it again but from a different motive. But I had to take a break from that simply to find out, "Will God still love me and connect with me even if I don't have those things?" I wanted to find out.

What I came to is that God gave me this word picture, this visualization, of a dad in a beautiful forest with lots of things to explore, and he is with his little girl. He's not telling her, "Don't go over there! Whoops, watch out, you're going to fall! Oh no, avoid that!" He's not doing that. He's actually laughing and always staying close to her and letting her, in freedom, explore, fall down and skin her knee, and come back to him to have him hold her, to go out but be free to learn, grow, and explore his beautiful world knowing that she is always being watched and she is always safe in him. Sometimes

things will hurt, but he is always there. I had to picture myself as being that little girl, that God loved me no matter what, and that I was connected with Him no matter what. That is what transformed my relationship with God.

BOB: That is so beautiful, because that's exactly what I am talking about. In other words, you found yourself... There are two things. First, you found yourself in an active relationship with Him. What He wasn't doing was forbidding you of a bunch of things.

NATALIE: Right.

BOB: What He was doing was walking with you. The other thing He was doing was giving you a great deal of freedom to find out on your own. It's amazing to me how we'll proclaim all these limitations that people must adhere to in order to be safe and follow God when God Himself said to Adam and Eve, "Hey, don't eat from the fruit of that tree," and then He left. He didn't hover. He didn't put signs around the tree. He didn't put a fence around the tree. He just said, "If you eat from that..." In fact, He didn't actually say, "Don't eat from it." He said, "If you eat from it, you'll die." I tell people that far more often than God makes rules, He simply describes reality and gives us an opportunity to interact with it. It's the knowledge of good and evil mind that turns that into rules.

NATALIE: Right! He didn't abandon them. He didn't let them go when that happened. He was still their Father. He still loved them. Here's the other connection that is amazing about this. When you live from that rigid, rule-based mindset, you get judgmental of yourself and other people. Your "love" for other people is very conditional and dependent on whether or not they are doing what you think they ought to do.

This is why when I separated from my ex-husband, a really close friend of mine wouldn't let her daughter play with my daughter anymore because they had a rule. They were willing to throw out love and connection in order to adhere to a specific rule that would supposedly protect them from evil, our evil family. There's no love in that. I think the more that we are freed up to enjoy our connection to God and to be that little girl in the forest exploring, knowing that our Daddy is with us, the more we will love other people.

Let me give you one more example that just came to mind. I remember when I was back in my super conservative days, do you remember that movie that came out about the girl who was bitten by a shark and her arm got chopped off by the shark? They made a movie about it. I can't remember what it was about.

BOB: "Soul Surfer" or something "Surfer"?

NATALIE: Yeah, it was something like that. Anyway, obviously it's a surfer movie, so the women are wearing bikinis, right? This girl was wearing a bikini. So I wouldn't let my kids go to see that movie because I didn't want my boys to see girls in bikinis. You're getting a little glimpse of where I lived and who I was back then. I always thought if Christians were wearing bikinis... "What kind of a Christian is that? They are just flaunting their bodies in front of everyone on the beach." It made me feel icky about them, and it came from this place of tight, judgmental, yucky, icky darkness. Where I'm at now, I have absolutely... I'm not going to go out in a bikini because I'm fifty-three years old, but if I see other people in bikinis there is absolutely zero judgment. I don't know where they are at in their relationship with God, but it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. Jesus loves them and I love them. What they are wearing is irrelevant. It's who they are as a human being that is relevant.

BOB: This concept changes the way we evaluate not only ourselves but everybody and everything.

NATALIE: Yes!

BOB: Notice how much of Christianity, and taught Christianity specifically, talks about ways to manage our sin.

NATALIE: Yes! It's so oppressive.

BOB: So much of it is designed to help people behave better and to help them stop behaving badly, when in reality the tree of life helps people become who they are created to be. People who become who they are created to be don't behave in harmful ways. Now, they might pick wheat on the Sabbath. They might hang out with prostitutes and wine bibbers as Jesus was accused of, whatever a wine bibber is. It makes me think of someone drinking so much they need a bib when they spill on themselves. Or they might even heal people on the Sabbath.

The reality is that everyone who was judging Jesus Himself was looking through the lens of good and evil and saying, "The Sabbath is a rule, it's being violated, He's a bad person." Talking about the Son of God Himself. Now tell me people aren't still doing that. The framework that is evaluating people... More importantly, the framework behind that is the belief that Christianity is about helping bad people become good instead of helping dead people come to life.

NATALIE: Yeah. That's beautiful. This really is the key. I wrote down the name of what we're going to call this. One of your subtitles was "Why Religion Kills People." That's it

right there.

BOB: It literally takes people to the tree that killed the human race that Jesus came to take us away from. So much of religion is built on the foundation of the knowledge of good, the knowledge of evil, and trying to get people out of the branch of the knowledge of evil and into the branch called the knowledge of good. Both branches are lethal.

NATALIE: Yeah. Wow! So good! I think we need to wrap this up. Did you have anything else you wanted to say? I feel like we came to a close.

BOB: Yeah, I do. One of the things that's important about this is that it changes the way that we help people. Because everybody asks us to be a king: "What should I do?" What we do is point people to options and empower them to be choosers, because free people make choices. People who need to be dictated to can never be free. As helpers, both you and I (and I know you do this, so I'm not in any way correcting you,) as helpers what we do... I'm a licensed counselor. I'm a Think Differently coach. I do all this stuff. People want me to give them answers. I give them descriptions and choices and I want them to choose. Sometimes it really frustrates them. I want them to choose and I want them to be free.

NATALIE: Yes. I feel like my coaching has turned more into helping people see what's going through their brains, why they believe the things they believe, and how that's working out for them so that they can then decide, "Do I want to keep thinking those things? Are there different things? If I want a different result in my life, I'm going to need to change some of the ways I'm thinking and some of my belief systems." I totally agree with you. It frees you up to love them wherever they are at.

In my group, we have women who want to stay with their abuser, we have women who want to leave their abuser, we have women who don't know what they want to do. And it's all okay. I tell them it is all okay. You get to decide for yourself. This is your journey. It's not anybody's job to tell you what you should or shouldn't do because this is your journey. This is your life. You are the one. I have no skin in the game. Nobody else has any skin in the game. You are the one who's got all the skin in the game.

BOB: Your knowledge of good isn't the operating paradigm.

NATALIE: Right.

BOB: It's their freedom to choose. You said this: "Most of my coaching has become



helping people see..." and then you paused. I wanted to say, "You could stop right there, and that's the key." Help people see. Then they can make choices and become powerful.

NATALIE: Yes. One of the things I appreciate about you, Bob... And if any of you listening has never heard of Bob, you really need to go check out his stuff. As you can see from this particular episode, he does have a really different way of seeing things. Bob, I've been steeped in religion my entire life. Like, steeped in it. You helped me think about all the things that I already know. I've got all the knowledge up here. You help me think about them in new ways that open up... It's almost like my brain just does not want to go there because our brains are so efficient, and they want us to loop on the same thoughts. Then you introduce these things and I think, "Yes!" You almost have to write them down so that you can go over them again later and try to shift the way your brain is thinking.

That's probably why you call your business and ministry "Think Differently." It really is a challenge to learn how to think differently about these things, but Jesus did that too. When Jesus was on earth, He told lots of stories. He tried to get people to think differently and it transformed people's lives.

BOB: Thoughts are easy to change. Paradigms, your mind will resist change. When we have a paradigm that is destructive like the knowledge of good and evil, we feel resistance when something true comes towards us, but when it is contrary to our paradigm... We can change a thought easily, but when something challenges our paradigm we feel great resistance to it. Jesus was crucified for challenging the paradigm of His day. Now, we understand there are powers of darkness behind that, but at a human level He was trying to get people out of the tree called the knowledge of good and evil and into a whole new way of thinking. So yeah, dead on. Thank you.

NATALIE: Thank you so much for giving us some of your time.

BOB: Should I mention the Academy?

NATALIE: Yes, you should! I was just going to go there.

BOB: Beautiful. Think Differently Academy is our website. TDAcad.com. I know Natalie will put a link up. Think Differently Academy is our website where we deal with everything from issues of abuse to relationship and communication, but also spirituality, freedom, and restoration of the soul. All those things are there. A lot of it is free. We've put a lot of material out there that is free. There is a subscription

component to that, but you can read all that there. The whole idea is first, get off social media onto our own landing platform, but provide resources to help people just like Natalie was saying. Change the way that you think, and everything else changes. Think Differently Academy is where all that stuff lives.

NATALIE: Yes. Go check it out! He's got lots of good stuff, he and his wife, Polly. He's also done (I think this might be your third time) other podcasts. I'll put links to other podcast episodes with us. Polly, his wife, did a podcast episode with us as well. I'll put links to those as well and you can meet Polly because she is amazing.

BOB: She is amazing.

NATALIE: She is. Thank you so much, Bob. Until next time, the rest of you, fly free!