

AM I CODEPENDENT JUST BECAUSE I'M CHOOSING TO STAY WITH AN EMOTIONALLY ABUSIVE PARTNER?

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 77 of the Flying Free Podcast! Today I have Becky and Rachel with me. Hello.

RACHEL: Hello.

BECKY: Hello.

NATALIE: We are going to be answering a question from a listener, and here it is: "I've read in your book that most abuse victims aren't actually codependent but have similar characteristics from enduring abuse. How do you tell if you actually are codependent, as a counselor has told me, or if it is a symptom of emotional abuse from my husband? I did grow up in an environment where I was responsible for my mom's feelings, so maybe I am codependent. What is the difference, and what does that mean for my own recovery?" Rachel, you've got a definition. Go ahead.

RACHEL: I could have asked this question because I was responsible for my mom's feelings growing up too. "Codependence" is a term that is thrown around casually I think, and it's not always helpful. I think it's rarely helpful in the circumstances that we are talking about because codependence is defined by excessive emotional or psychological reliance on a partner, typically one who requires support because of illness or addiction.

It was popular in the 70s and 80s, and the twelve-step community adopted it because there were situations where one spouse was reliant on alcohol but the other spouse was also reliant on alcohol even though they weren't drinking it because it helped them take care of the alcoholic. Does that make sense?

BECKY: It does. I think if you asked, depending on anybody's background, what the word (like if you asked them what "narcissism" meant)... They could have come from a background where their dad was an alcoholic, so they say "Yeah, that's the way my mom was when I was growing up." Someone else would say, "Yeah, you are totally codependent because you really worry about what people think about you."

RACHEL: Right. It's so much more.

BECKY: It's such a huge spectrum.

RACHEL: Yes.

BECKY: I was reading a list for this podcast from Natalie's blog on eight different ways to tell if you are codependent. First, I grew up with a mom who was not necessarily diagnosed but had all the qualities of bipolar and was very abusive. I was the scapegoat, not the golden child or the ignored. I was very much the scapegoat. I did see in my childhood always wanting to make people happy, but it was more from the vantage point of survival. It wasn't because that's who I was. So I think the question should be, "Is codependency your personality that can't be changed, or is it just characteristics from coping with whatever situation you find yourself in?"

RACHEL: That is so important to distinguish. I think a lot of times when we hear from counselors, "Oh, you're just codependent," what that actually does is blame the victim as if they love to be treated that way, as if they are attracted to being abused or verbally put-down, etc.

BECKY: I went to a counselor who said that to me: "You're actually responsible for his abuse to you because you are codependent." I tell you, that word "codependent" would make me so angry for several years after I divorced because not only did I have to be responsible for him for twenty years, then all of a sudden getting out of it I couldn't get away from being responsible when I sought help from counselors. Obviously, she was not a good counselor.

I'll read a few from this list and how I used to be versus what the abuse made me. One of them is "difficulty making decisions." When I was eighteen (I married at nineteen, so I'll go back a little before that) I left home and became, within six months, a very different person because suddenly I could be who I was. I didn't have to conform to, "Will my mom hit me? What is she going to do this time?" I wasn't walking on eggshells. I was living on my own, and I became very strong-minded. I made decisions. I didn't have any difficulty.

Fast-forward twenty years, I'm in a marriage where at the beginning I would make a decision, but because of his response (it was physical abuse at the beginning but later it was more of the gaslighting and crazy-making stuff), it made me question my decisions and my ability to make a decision. Yes, I had difficulties making decisions, and one of them was getting out of it because after so many years you are convinced that you are

crazy. You aren't seeing things for what they are. How can you make decisions?

NATALIE: The thing is that it is not that you don't have the ability to make decisions but that you are super conscientious, and you have so much pressure coming from other people, not just your husband but your religious environment, to make decisions or make certain kinds of decisions (whether they are micro decisions or macro decisions). That is what is causing all the anxiety in you. If you didn't have all that pressure and you really believed that you didn't have to make decisions based on what other people think or say... But we've been so brainwashed. You get in these environments and you are so brainwashed to believe that if you turn to the right or to the left that you will fall off a cliff, and you are petrified! You might be innately a person who is totally confident in your ability to make decisions, but not when you are on a tightrope.

BECKY: Would you girls say, now that we are all out of it for several years, that you have difficulty making decisions?

NATALIE: No.

RACHEL: No.

BECKY: I have no difficulty making decisions. I'm very clear. If there is any question as to what the decision should be, I can just take a day to think about it and then I have a strong decision to make. It is so different. The next one is "difficulty identifying your feelings." Did either of you go through that when you were married to the bad guys?

RACHEL: I did because my ex-husband would tell me what I was feeling, and it didn't match up with what I knew inside. But I trusted him so much and I thought he was just this brilliant person and he knew me so well that it was just really confusing. I remember it was sort of a joke between us. I would say, "Don't tell me how I feel. I know how I feel." Then he would say, "No, I tell you how you feel because that's how you feel." Then I figured that was just our dynamic. No! That was incredibly unhealthy.

BECKY: In mine, I was told even by the church (not this directly but in a roundabout way) that I shouldn't have feelings. I couldn't identify them because I wasn't allowed to recognize them, if that makes sense. There were about eighteen years where I never cried because I couldn't. That wasn't allowed. "Suck it up and do the job" of whatever it was.

NATALIE: You'd be feeling sorry for yourself and self-pity, which is of the devil if you cried. But you were allowed to have positive feelings like love and sexual desire for your

husband.

BECKY: And what a wonderful marriage this is.

RACHEL: Yes. But you weren't allowed to live in truth, which is amazing advice coming from a church.

BECKY: Right.

NATALIE: Exactly. The other thing is that I was always told that I was angry, but I was the most forgiving... I forgave and forgave and forgave over and over again. I was told that I was angry and bitter, so I wasn't allowed to have... Anytime you would say an opinion that was different from their opinion, all of a sudden you were a cantankerous, angry b-i-t-c-h just for expressing a different opinion and thinking that you had the right to have a different opinion. That was the epitome of rebellion.

BECKY: How do you feel today? Would you say you have trouble identifying your feelings?

NATALIE: Not at all.

RACHEL: I'm getting better at it.

BECKY: Same.

RACHEL: I had buried them so deeply. I'm still learning how to get in touch with them and being okay with them. So I'm still healing in that way.

BECKY: Because these are like habits, you must learn to break the habit, especially if you've been in it for decades. This one is probably the hardest one for me. I have to step back, step away. My husband bought me a hammock for my birthday, my good husband, and I'll go lay out in the hammock and think through, "Where am I feeling it?" thanks to Natalie and her course! "What am I feeling? Where is the thought coming from?" I try to figure it out because when you go that many years without crying, you walk around like you are numb.

RACHEL: Right! Oh, the numbness. Yes, that was me all the way. Just so numb.

NATALIE: Your feelings are actually in your body, which is interesting. I always thought feelings were in your head, but they are actually in your body. They are like vibrations

that are triggered by your nervous system which is triggered by your brain synapses. The things that you are thinking, 95% of what you are thinking, are subconscious. You might have a feeling wash over you and you don't really know where it's coming from because you're not conscious of the thoughts your brain is offering. But your brain is usually offering you automatic thoughts that are in a loop depending on what has been downloaded into your brain as a child and even in your marriage.

I think a good way of figuring out what you are feeling is holding still, breathing, and thinking about your body, getting in touch with "What is my body feeling?" and "Where am I feeling it?" That would be the first step, not even necessarily knowing why you feel that or where it's coming from, but just get to know the feeling that is in your body. Just understand the feeling.

BECKY: Right. And you cannot do that in the midst of it. It is literally impossible.

RACHEL: Natalie, I want to expand on what you just said because I think there is a message perpetrated in the church that our bodies are bad, that we can't trust our bodies, and that we are supposed to be in the spirit. That is heresy! God says our bodies are good. He created us fearfully and wonderfully. We were made the way we were for a reason, and we are called to worship God with every dimension of who we are. We can do that with our bodies by listening to our bodies and being still and getting in touch with the Spirit through our bodies. It is so frustrating that there is this idea that our bodies are bad. That idea came along a long time after Jesus from people who were not in touch with the God of the Bible. We must get clear on that.

NATALIE: Preach!

BECKY: Amen!

NATALIE: I think Nancy Pearcey (this is just an aside) has a book. What is it called? Have you guys heard of it? I'll link it in the show notes. In her book she talks about that, the history of where that came from, that idea of the body and the spirit being totally separate and that was very important.

BECKY: Didn't it start as far back as Plato?

NATALIE: With philosophers, yes. Then Christianity started weaving some of that philosophy into their religion.

BECKY: Augustine greatly admired Plato, so he took his philosophy and intertwined it

with the interpretation of the Bible. So all the translations were kind of taking Plato and the original works and meshing them together. That's what we do, though. I don't think it was right, but we do that too. Don't we translate what we hear through what we believe?

RACHEL: Through our culture, through our lived experiences, etc. Yeah.

BECKY: But if you go back, same thing. Isn't that interesting? "You can't trust your feelings. You can't trust your body. You can't trust your thought life. You are one messed up person," according to the church.

NATALIE: I know. It leaves you feeling so hopeless to ever be able to pull your life together.

BECKY: That might be a great place to say that it's okay to stop going to church for a while. It's okay to back up out of the abusive relationship and out of the abusive and toxic spiritual relationship to rethink, "Who is God? What is truth?" I know I couldn't identify my feelings when I still believed all the garbage about don't trust your body. Right?

NATALIE: Yeah.

RACHEL: I think that book, Natalie, is "Finding Truth: Five Principles for Unmasking Atheism, Secularism, and Other God Substitutes" by Nancy Pearcey. Is that the one you are thinking?

NATALIE: It's not. I think it's an earlier one. That one I've never heard of.

BECKY: I know. That sounds really fascinating.

RACHEL: I know.

NATALIE: But maybe that's a newer book. I'm not sure. Maybe that's a newer book where she focused in on just that subject. But hey, we'll just go with that. Get that book.

BECKY: Do you want to go back to codependency? Because I'm so interested to hear what y'all think. Number three is "having difficulty communicating in a relationship." The reason I laugh is because, are you kidding? How do you communicate with an abuser?

NATALIE: Exactly! It's impossible. It's like communicating with a brick wall. I think of all three of us. We're all remarried. We all had huge communication problems with our former husbands. Do any of us have communication issues with our current husbands?

BECKY: No!

RACHEL: Nope!

NATALIE: No. Not at all!

BECKY: It's not only no communication problems. It's easy.

NATALIE: It's totally easy!

BECKY: In the former marriage, it was like pulling teeth to try to have a conversation that didn't have word salad or circular reasoning or flying monkey stuff coming in. Now it's just kind of simple.

NATALIE: It is. I think we should move on to the next one because that one I think is so self-explanatory. If you are in an abusive relationship and someone says... I heard this! I heard this over and over again. Every time I would try to get help they would say, "Well, you guys have communication problems." My ex-husband used to say, "We just have communication problems." I was like, "Ya think?!" But that's not the problem! The problem is not communication problems, because if you remove the actual problem, no more communication problems. So let's dig in and figure out what the actual problem is. So just because you have communication problems with your abusive partner it doesn't mean you are codependent.

BECKY: Right. The next five on the list are, to me, just two things because I think, Natalie, you have a list that has more of the religious bent. But the next one is "valuing the approval of others more than valuing yourself." There's another point that says "having an unhealthy dependency on relationship even at your own cost and having an exaggerated sense of responsibility for the actions of others." To me, although they are very distinct, they kind of are meshed together.

NATALIE: When I think about my childhood, for four years in late grade school and middle school I went through severe peer oppression: physical bullying, emotional bullying, verbal bullying. When you go through something like that, it really does erode your sense of identity and who you are. Then, of course, you come out of that and you want to be liked. I got into high school and I had tons of friends. I got into college and I

was voted Miss Northwestern my senior year. I had lots of friends and was very popular. But still, deep inside of me was this tremendous fear that people were not going to like me if I didn't show up the way they wanted me to. It was because of a lot of that bullying, years of bullying, during my formative years. But that doesn't mean that I am a codependent person. Do you see what I'm saying?

BECKY: Right. It was the situation.

NATALIE: Exactly! It is situational. I talk about going from a caterpillar to a butterfly. One of the things I simply limped and crawled through life in is being a card-holding member of the People Pleasers Club. That's what I was. I'm not anymore. There are a lot of people I don't please anymore. I still can have Facebook conversations with people where they get nasty and mean and I can just show up and be an adult and not be nasty and mean to them. I stick to the points, stay calm, and totally feel calm, cool, and collected while they completely get their panties in a wad.

I feel bad for them because they are probably losing sleep and getting so anxiety-riddled. But I don't feel that way anymore. Okay, maybe occasionally I might feel that way. But for the most part I don't feel that way. I'm okay if they unfriend me. I'm okay if they call me names because I understand now that it's not about me. It's actually about them and their issues. I can feel bad for them that they are so caught up in having to control the universe that they are losing relationships.

BECKY: I felt the need for approval. Obviously as a child I wanted it because I wanted to be loved. When I got married, we started going to church. This was a very fundamentalist type of church, and the undertones of what was being taught led me to believe that there's a level of Christianity, there's a level of commitment, and that is your value. So you're always doing these things to try to get approval, especially when your marriage is in shambles and you're trying to be a good Christian. But being a good Christian doesn't work because your marriage is still crappy. As soon as I got out of all that mess, I still think I want others to value me. I think there's a part of that that is good because if I didn't care that they valued me, I think that would be narcissistic.

NATALIE: That's true.

BECKY: Not because it's going to make me happy but because I just want the relationship. I want my good, new husband to value me, but it's not in the sense of the worry and the anxiety. If somebody doesn't like me, I'm sorry. I'll tell a quick story. Something happened this week. A competitor sent out an email to the clients that I serve and in the email said, "I'd like to replicate this website." And it was one of my

websites. So this person is wanting to copy me. In times past, I would have let that fly. I wouldn't have said anything, I just would have buried myself. I sent the guy an email and started a conversation. I was very blunt and very honest. I was kind. I didn't care about what he thought about me. I just cared about the facts here and the truth here, and what he was doing was essentially stealing. So I showed up. I didn't hide. I showed up.

NATALIE: Yes. You had clear boundaries, and it was okay if he walked away in a big huge huff.

BECKY: And he did, so that's okay.

RACHEL: Some women are especially vulnerable to being targeted by a narcissist. What makes them vulnerable is positive characteristics like being a really caring person, being really agreeable, easy-going, and nurturing. I identify with that. I think that is my base personality. Then I grew up with a mother who had conditional love, so those are the standards of love that I was given. When that was starting to be shown by my husband, that's what I accepted. But those positive traits could be misinterpreted by someone who wants to label someone as codependent with negative traits. Like, "You just let people walk all over you." So you must reframe it and have true understanding of the roots in order to identify what is going on.

NATALIE: I'll piggyback off that. For those of you listening, if you want to know those eight codependent... What were they called?

BECKY: The eight signs of codependency.

NATALIE: Thank you, the signs of codependency. If you want to find out about a study that Sandra Brown did that talks about the two super personality traits that many abuse victims have, you can go to my website. My website is flyingfreenow.com just in case you don't know. But the article is called "Why You're Probably Not Coependent (And You've Got Super-Powers Instead!)." The date on this is March 9, 2020. It was a more recent article. You can read about that and find out about the two main superpowers that you probably actually have.

I found this article this morning that fascinated me. She is talking about being a caregiver, which is what I think most of us if we were in a healthy relationship... We would probably be more of a caregiver. But she talks about the difference between a caregiver and a codependent caretaker. I want to get your take on some of these things. Here is what she describes as a codependent caretaker. I'm going to read these

fourteen things, and then we're going to talk about them. Those of you listening, think about if you know anybody like this. Maybe you're like me, as I could see some of myself in some of these. Not now, but the person that I was when I lived in my abusive relationship. I could see myself going in these directions, and I don't go those directions at all anymore. I'd like to explore why.

Here we go. "A codependent caretaker sacrifices self; is self-righteous about opinions; feels compelled to help; feels responsible for others before self; is judgmental; knows what is best for others; gives with strings attached or expectations; feels exhausted, irritated, anxious; feels betrayed when advice isn't followed; discourages others from independent thinking; is pushy, not assertive; tries to control others; crosses boundaries; and give unsolicited advice." Tell me what you guys think.

RACHEL: I hate to say it. This was me too, because this was the environment I was in, not that my own behavior wasn't my own responsibility. But that was the standard for behavior in my former family, my ex's family.

NATALIE: This picture is not a pretty picture though. Do you ever sit there and think, "Who am I?"

BECKY: Or "Who was I?"

NATALIE: "Who was I," yeah!

RACHEL: It's embarrassing. I'm embarrassed about it. That's not who I am.

BECKY: I would say this was me after I bought 100% into the conservative church movement. This was the outcome. What are you taught first? You sacrifice yourself. That's the first thing you are taught in church. You are self-righteous about your opinions because your church has taught you what they believe is truth, and everything else is a lie. What does that get...? In reality, no one absolutely knows the truth. None of us are God. That means if we are to love others as ourselves, we need to respect others' opinions, right?

NATALIE: Can I jump in here? At the time of this recording, the whole George Floyd thing is going on and all the riots. It is so fascinating on Facebook to see Christians be completely and totally divided about this. Some of them... Well, I don't want to get into it too much or I will have everybody unsubscribe. (Who knows, maybe I'll get new subscribers.) I think it's fascinating to see how people get so bossy and self-righteous about whatever side they are on. They start condemning. They call the other side

names. Instead of trying to listen to both sides, doing their own research and studying and being a curious investigator...

BECKY: Understanding that someone else's perspective is built upon their experiences and you will never have those experiences or that perspective, because none of our lives will ever match each other. This list, "judgmental, knows what's best for others..." I don't know about you girls, but I wasn't that way until I went into the conservative church movement. Natalie, this is basically that power-over structure.

RACHEL: It is.

BECKY: I'm glad I'm not that way. I'm glad I can sit and listen to someone else have a completely different opinion. I have a new employee, and I'm always fascinated to listen, and this person has some very, very conservative ideas. He kind of fits this pattern but in a kind way, if I could say that. We might have been all this, but people would probably say, "Yeah, but you were kind." But I listen and say, "That's an interesting perspective." Then I will give my perspective, but I will make sure I'm not trying to push it on him. I'd say, "Yeah, but have you ever thought...?" One time I said, "But you know, there are thirty-three thousand denominations in the U.S. under Christianity, so I'm not sure who has it right." Just leaving little things to make this person think.

NATALIE: Right. Planting little tiny seeds. That's really what it is. It involves being a thinker rather than being a baby bird that just takes whatever mom brings and shoves down your throat versus being a bird that goes out there and searches for your own worms.

BECKY: Right. Wouldn't you say that today... I am truly kind. I don't feel like I am manipulatively kind. I'm ashamed of being those fourteen things for years and years. I remember walking through Walmart and looking at other women and in my mind, I had these judgmental opinions. If their child was misbehaving, "You don't know how to raise children because you're not following the biblical principles, "Raising Kids God's Way" or whatever."

RACHEL: Now you think, "Oh, I've been there. Bless your heart."

BECKY: Yeah. "I wonder if I can help her."

NATALIE: "Can I buy your child a sucker? Would that help?"

BECKY: Isn't it interesting that the three of us and the women, Natalie, that you so graciously help, we can fall into both lists? First, because of the religion that has been in our lives, and the other because of the abusive relationship in our marriage. When you put those two lists together, think about it. "Feels compelled to help but is judgmental. Feels exhausted, irritated, and anxious but needs the approval of others." It is such a cauldron of the worst kind of mess possible.

RACHEL: Right. That comes from different factors. Not all of them are internal. I had this thought that comes down to when you are codependent you are helping someone not take responsibility for themselves, versus when you are an abuse victim you keep asking over and over for someone to take responsibility and then you pay the price for it from the abuser. What happens is that you learn that if you want any semblance of peace in your home, you don't rock the boat. You don't ask them to take responsibility because they won't.

NATALIE: This is it! This is why there is so much confusion. Women come to me and they don't know who they are. They don't know what they believe. On the one hand they can see themselves over here, and on the other hand they can see themselves over here. So ladies, I'm curious. What is the answer? What did you guys finally figure out?

BECKY: I'll go first.

NATALIE: Good! I thought we were going to say, "We don't know. Thanks for joining us. Fly Free."

BECKY: Mine was getting away from it. For me, it was divorce. It was leaving church. It was time. Unfortunately, I had to shed most of what I believed as a Christian, from the religion of Christianity, in order to become a much healthier person. You know what's missing from all of this? Common sense. Common sense didn't come back into my life until I got away from toxic. I'm not saying I'm anti-Christian or anti-church. What I'm saying is that if you are in these very conservative, fundamental movements... There can still be some unhealthy things taught at a traditional church, but no one has it right. Again, thirty-three thousand denominations.

But for me, in the depths of how much I believed, how brainwashed I was, it was getting away and having the time to process. I will tell you it's been five years. The first couple of years it was an epiphany after an epiphany. "Oh my gosh! I can't believe I believed that." For me, that was the solution. I don't think it was something I needed to go change about myself. I think I needed time for common sense to come back to the

surface.

RACHEL: Yes. Same for me. I needed to stop trying to find the answer in the same way I had for fourteen years, which was "It's my fault. This is under my control." I had to start seeing the situation for what it was. My husband was not who I thought he was. He was pretty high on the narcissistic spectrum. That's my analysis of the patterns of behavior I saw over time. There is nothing I could have done to get him to not behave that way, because I tried over and over and over again. Obviously, I had a role to play in that. But that's not helpful when I was trying to get out. I needed to see things for what they were.

If you are a victim of something, of course you are not sinless. You aren't a perfect person. But it is not helpful to start thinking, "I could have done something different. I should have known. This was my responsibility." No! You got conned! You married someone who misrepresented who he was. Coming to terms with that is really hard, but it is also really freeing. It's important to do that. That's why I don't think reading about being codependent is helpful or trying to take that on as a label for yourself, even if a counselor says that's what you are. The counselor probably doesn't know what they are talking about. If you are a victim of narcissistic abuse, they might not understand the difference in those dynamics.

BECKY: How many counselors could put the two pieces together? A narcissistic husband and a toxic religious belief system that creates this. The dynamic is almost inescapable.

NATALIE: This is definitely a niche. I think what you guys are saying is that... I'm going to say it the way I teach people in the Flying Higher group. We have this brain, our universe, between our ears. When you are in a narcissistic relationship or are in a relationship with an abusive person, or even when you were growing up you were kind of sharing your universe between your ears with your mom and dad's universes and your siblings' universes and you don't differentiate yourself, you gradually grow up and part of your development is differentiating your universe from their universe. That's why my sisters and I, we have a different experience of childhood because we have our own universe. I was told for so many years, "Your experience isn't true. It never happened that way because it didn't happen to me that way." I always thought I must be totally crazy because I could have sworn I experienced it the way I remembered it.

Then I had to realize (this can go back to the debates you can have on Facebook) we have our own experience. The way to figure all of this out is to figure out who you are in your universe. When God gave you your universe, He gave it to you and wanted you to take stewardship of it. He wanted you to nurture it. He wanted you to make it a good

place for you to grow healthy and strong so that you could be a giver of unconditional love in your world, so that you could be creative, so there would be this overflow of healthy, beautiful stuff coming out of your universe.

The problem is when you start to share... I'm picturing two cells coming together and morphing into each other. When your universe starts doing that with your abusive partner or maybe you are still enmeshed with your mother or your dad or someone else in your life, you no longer are differentiated. That's when the pathology starts coming in. That's when you start behaving in ways that are not true to your core identity. That's why you start wondering, "Who am I? I don't even know who I am." The key is, like you girls were saying, to separate, to stop enmeshing yourself with your religious environment, stop enmeshing yourself with your partner, even your healthy partner. We don't want their world to be our world and our world to be their world. We want to have two separate worlds that come together and enjoy each other. Out of my world spills this unconditional love and enjoyment of you, and then we share all that good stuff with each other. But we still have our own identity.

My husband and I have different ideas about lots of different things and it's totally okay because we respect each other's different ideas. We don't have to agree on everything. We don't have to buy into each other's universes. We totally agree that your universe is beautiful just the way it is, and my universe is... It's really a lot of self-care. Now Christians will say, "That's so selfish. You shouldn't even be thinking about your universe."

BECKY: I would say one of the big misconceptions is that you must become one, and becoming one means you have to lose your identity as yourself. Some women might be listening to this and thinking, "No, no. We have to be one." I think there is a whole other podcast on that idea. But no, you need to be yourself.

NATALIE: Right. Being one flesh, is that even what that really means, that you become morphed into another person? I don't think that is what God is saying. Think about the fact that we are supposed to be one with Christ too. But if we were to be one with Christ and if we were to have an identity like He had, we would be able to stand alone without... I mean, was He ever morphed into anybody else's identity? Did it affect Him when people called Him names and tried to push Him over the cliff and kill Him? Did He say, "Oh no!" and crumple up into a heap on the ground and freak out because everyone hated His guts? No.

BECKY: No.

RACHEL: That's so interesting, because the discussion of one flesh is about how you don't mistreat your own flesh, so don't mistreat your wife.

NATALIE: Right! The irony.

BECKY: At the end of the day, there are many labels out there. We always feel more comfortable when we can put a label on it. But be careful about the labels, because you can get into a new system of feeling responsible for things that aren't really there. Those things are there because of the situation. So remove yourself from the situation if you can and just don't worry about labels. Worry about becoming yourself, who God created you to be.

RACHEL: Yes! Live out the self-control, the fruit of the Spirit of self-control. That is what we are called to do. That's what is evidence of the Holy Spirit's influence in our life.

BECKY: Amen.

NATALIE: Amen. I can hear the angels singing right now. We're going to close with that. Thank you guys so much for joining me on this episode of Flying Free. For the rest of you listening, until next time, fly free!