

The Flying Free Podcast with Natalie Hoffman, Episode 344 - Two Hotel Rooms: One Rescue Mission

Heads up, friend: What you're about to read is a raw, unedited transcript straight from the robots. That means you'll find some weird words, funky punctuation, and moments that make you go, "Huh?" If you want the real experience (and to actually know what's going on), I recommend reading the polished article, listening to the full episode, or watching it on 1.5x speed with captions on. Your brain will thank you.

Natalie: I was nine months pregnant in a hotel room wondering if I wanted to keep living. Everyone told me, submit harder, pray more, die to myself. But what if the God I was trying to please looked exactly like my abuser? In this video, I'm gonna share how I broke free from an emotionally and spiritually abusive marriage and the toxic version of God that kept me stuck in it.

If you've ever felt like your suffering was holy, or that your silence was somehow proof of your faith, this is gonna be your wake up call. Let me show you what it looks like to stop surviving and start Flying Free.

The room was quiet but not peaceful. Just that thick, suffocating kind of quiet that feels like a held breath that you can't exhale. The hotel bedspread was stiff and over bleached the lamp in the corner, flickered once in a while like it couldn't decide whether to help me or give up. I was nine months pregnant with my ninth child, but I felt hollow, like a ghost carrying a ghost.

I hadn't come to that hotel for a nice little retreat. I came because I wasn't sure I wanted to live anymore. After years of begging for help from pastors, counselors, friends, anyone who might see what was happening in my marriage, I had been handed shame instead of support, submit harder, don't air your husband's dirty laundry.

It's not abuse, it's just marriage. Every time I reached out, I was handed another book, another rebuke, another reminder that this was somehow my fault. That I wasn't trying hard enough that I was the problem. I followed every rule I had sacrificed. I had obeyed, and I was dying inside that night in the hotel, I did not feel brave or spiritual.

I felt like I was losing myself one breath at a time. But the next morning I made a decision. I drove to a bookstore with no plan and no shower, just desperation. I got out my laptop and I started Googling things like passive aggressive man, painful Christian marriage. My Christian husband never says he's sorry, and when you've tried everything and your Christian marriage is still falling apart.

I didn't really find anything that I could grab a hold of that day, but that those Google searches did start me down some rabbit holes. That led me to a book eventually called *Who's Pushing Your Buttons* by Dr. Henry Cloud and John Townsend. And that led me to another book called *Fool Proofing Your Life* by Jan Sylvia.

And that led me to. You get my point. Each new resource was like a tall glass of icy cold water in a desert that offered both shock and tremendous relief. Now, these resources described my marriage to a t. The way scripture was used as a weapon to control me, the passive aggressive, covert emotional abuse tactics that were used to manipulate and gaslight me.

It named everything that I had been drowning in for years. And that was when I stopped asking for permission to believe my own pain. I bought every book I could carry. I found a coach. I started learning what emotional and spiritual abuse actually is and what it isn't, and I began to see clearly, and once I could see it, I couldn't unsee it four years later.

After working on my own boundaries, practicing my own voice, making my own adult decisions, and experiencing the contempt and anger of my husband for waking up and being me again, well. That's when I found myself in another hotel room, but this time I had stacks of journals from my entire marriage, and I read through every single one of them, like a woman studying crime scene evidence.

The deeper I read, the more I realized my abuse wasn't just coming from my husband. It was baked into the God that I had been taught to worship. The God I was taught about, demanded my silence, my suffering, and my submission. He was always disappointed, always just out of reach, critical rule with rules and regulations and expectations for me, while offering grace and acceptance and overlooking faults for my husband and everyone else around me that had been using me for so long that God, small g.

Looked a lot like the man I was married to, and that's when I knew I had to leave both my abusive marriage and my abusive image of God behind. I had to walk away from the entire system that taught me my worth was found in

disappearing, that my emotional and physical death were required in order for me to be loved and accepted.

Now my decision to leave blew up everything. It blew up my access to community, my reputation as a godly woman, my access to my church, my acceptability to my family of origin. But it also blew open a doorway to freedom because on the other side of that false God that I had been worshiping, I found the real one.

The creator God, who never once asked me to abandon myself to prove my faith, the creator God who had been with me all along, watching and weeping, witnessing and loving me unconditionally. And that's when I stopped surviving. That's when I left behind victimhood and a theology of death and suffering and sacrifice to the gods of my pastors and husband and family of origin.

That is when I walked into the light of life and resurrection power and grace and adulthood and freedom. Now, what I learned through all of this, and what I want you to know is this. You are not crazy. You're not failing, and God is not asking you to stay in bondage to prove your faith to him. Healing from emotional and spiritual abuse does not come from trying, trying, trying harder.

Staying quieter for reading another marriage book. It comes from learning how to think clearly, feel safely, and make adult choices that are in alignment with your core values and the God who lives within you. A kaleidoscope is a flock of butterflies. But what is a butterfly? I'm gonna answer that question next, and while I'm telling you what a butterfly is, I want you to be considering whether or not you want to be a butterfly, because you don't have to be.

The creator is enraptured by all of his children and all of his creatures, from the stars in the sky to the amoeba, in a muddy pond. They are all miraculous and beautiful, and they all hold meaning and destiny, and he gives us free will to choose who we want to be and what we want to do with this one beautiful life that he gifted to us.

Your choice is yours alone and nobody. Has a right to choose for you or to judge you for your choice. Your choice is a precious gift from God. Your choice is your power that God has given to you and you alone, and one of your choices is to be a butterfly. I wanna tell you what a butterfly is so you can see if this resonates deep within you.

Maybe you will sense a deep and profound calling when you hear this description, and if you do, don't ignore it, because that means this is your

destiny. And find hope in that colony calling. So here, here's what a butterfly is. A butterfly is someone who once lived in the shadows of silence and shame and sacrifice and smallness and fear, but.

She courageously chose to rise into the light of truth, authenticity, confidence, and freedom. She is a woman who stopped waiting for permission from someone else to believe her own experiences and her own pain, and started believing herself. A butterfly no longer sacrifices her soul on the altar of someone else's beliefs or emotional comfort.

She no longer bows to a false God, a small God, a fraudulent God, a scary abusive God who demands her disappearance to prove her devo devotion. She has wrestled through the wilderness of betrayal, confusion, and spiritual gaslighting, and she has come out on the other side with eyes wide open and wings fully spread.

She is not naive. She's discerning and wise. She's not rebellious. She's courageous. She's not a victim. She is victorious. A butterfly has learned to think clearly, feel safely, and make adult choices rooted in dignity, wisdom and grace. She doesn't apologize for seeking peace. She does not explain away her need for safety and her desire to create safe spaces for her children and her friends.

She is no longer afraid of her own voice and her own God-given power. She is rewriting her story with the ink of courage and the breath of resurrection power. She flies free, not because life is easy, but because she is no longer bound by false beliefs in a false God. She's proof that healing is possible.

She is living evidence that God never asks his daughters to stay in bondage to prove their faith. She is an example to her children and her suffering sisters, of what is possible in this life. When we put our hope and our allegiance in a bigger, loving creator instead of fake men and religious systems, she is a butterfly.

Born not just to eek out a survival face down on the ground, but to soar. If you are stuck in guilt, fear, or confusion. If you've been told your suffering and sacrifice is your sanctification, if you're ready to stop apologizing for needing safety and peace, well, that's why I created the Flying Free Kaleidoscope.

Because spiritually grounded trauma-informed education community, and coaching is the most effective way for Christian women to recover from emotional and spiritual abuse and start making confident, empowered adult

choices for their lives. This is your invitation. You don't need permission to begin. You just need a safe place to start, and I've built one for you and for all butterflies everywhere, come join me inside by going to [join Flying Free dot com](http://joinFlyingFree.com).

There is an application process for safety reasons if you want to be admitted entrance, but once you are inside, your life will never be the same again. Jesus made your freedom possible with his sacrifice. Nothing else is needed, but for you to accept this free gift and fly into your freedom, and that's what I wanna help you do.

Now, if you can't join us right now for whatever reason, but you wanna know more about this process of becoming a Butterfly, I wrote about it in a book called *All the Scary Little Gods*. It's gonna tell you the whole story of how I found hope and freedom on the other side of a lifetime of emotional and spiritual abuse.

You can find all the scary little gods on Amazon in paperback, Kindle, and audible formats, and I'll put a link in the show notes, but you can also just go to Amazon and search all the scary little Gods. Otherwise, if you would like to join me and hundreds of other beautiful butterflies in the kaleidoscope, go to [join Flying Free dot com](http://joinFlyingFree.com) where you can learn more and complete your application.

Until next time, my hope and prayer for you, always beautiful butterfly. Is that you would fly free.