

Sandy and Mark

Okay, I'm here on Saturday between Good Friday and Easter with Sandy and Sandy's willing to share a little bit about her journey through life and some of the struggles and challenges she's been able to overcome and recover from. Tell us just a little bit about what you've been through on your journey. Okay, I'm Sandy and I was raised in Kansas with three younger brothers.

I was the oldest of four and there was a lot of violence in our home. By the time I reached a teenager, I was ready to escape the dysfunction and I moved off with a man that I barely knew and ended up in Texas. And by then I had already made a poor choice and my parents basically left me to, you made this decision, you got to live with it.

And so I just kept staying. Anyway, I ended up with two boys. The oldest was Chad and I lost him to suicide in 2013 and the youngest was 10 years younger and I lost him to murder in 2021.

And in the process of that second loss, my husband fell down 13 stairs, broke his left shoulder and right thumb. So I just jumped into caretaker and ended up knowing I was going to have to go back to work. And in that process, I had a heart attack, a stroke and I died.

And I didn't want to live, not that I was a suicidal or anything, but I was just ready to go to heaven where there's no more pain. I wasn't afraid of dying because I had Jesus. And yeah, it was a long journey.

So when did the stroke and the heart attack happen in relation to the suicide and the murder? The murder, well, the suicide was in 2013. The murder was 2021. The dates were together only because of the stroke, but August, no, August 25th was the suicide of 2013.

So about seven years later, when I finally found joy again, the murder happened and I had to start over with the grief. And that was June. Wow, the dates are really running on me.

But just roughly like how, how, how long after the murder, did you experience the, the stroke and heart attack? About a month after I was right after, after, after my son was murdered. And I started thinking, I got to go back to work. How am I going to handle all this? And that day was when I had the heart attack and the stroke.

And thank God my husband knew the signs because I wouldn't die in the bed, but he knew the signs. Well, they say the most important thing with a stroke is, is a quick response. Yeah.

Had they not gotten me to the hospital, it would have, it would, they, when they

transported me, um, my first sign was an arm. I kept thinking my arms hurting, you know, but I thought I poisoned myself because I had been in the yard putting seven dust on the tomatoes. And I was like, I kept smelling this real strong smell of this seven dust.

And I thought I must've inhaled it. And so my husband kept saying, what's wrong? And I was like, I think I poisoned myself. And I said, let me go change my shirt, get that smell off.

But he knew the signs. And so he knew right away something was not right. And then especially when I started throwing up, um, yeah.

One other little clarification, uh, just want to, uh, for the, for the people watching the video, I just want to point, highlight that, that, that marriage that you stayed in, we're talking about, uh, a significantly abusive husband and a violent husband. So. Yeah, well, I was in, I stayed for 12 years.

Um, and there was a lot of fights, a lot of separations. Uh, he wouldn't stop cheating. Um, he basically alienated me from my, my family by moving me here to Georgia.

And, and, um, he ended up, he kept telling me, um, I'd be trailered apart for trash if it weren't for him. And, you know, he convinced me I couldn't do no better. And, um, I just kept asking God to change him.

And finally my prayer changed from, okay, God, he's yours, you know, changed. The, the importance of, um, uh, knowing the signs of when somebody's having a stroke and, and that saved your life. Um, what, what do you think is most important as far as, uh, being prepared to, to listen, to speak up, to take action when somebody is showing signs of thinking of harming themselves or taking their life? I've always been good at lifting people up, letting them see something good in themselves.

Um, but number one and foremost is telling my story. Look, I survived this. If I can survive this, you can survive that.

But I know someone, you know, who's been way through way worse than me. And she has no idea how, how strong she is. And I just love Arnold, you know, any chance I get.

Mostly just, uh, looking back, every trial I went through was where I grew the most. Um, every single trial I got closer and closer to God. Everyone.

And that's in contrast to your anger at God after the suicide chant, is that? I may have been angry at him, but I never stopped loving him. You know, um, never, never stopped loving him. And I believe because of that, uh, you know, I learned very, um, that verse, uh, he will never leave me or forsake me.

So all those lonely, lonely times that I had, I grew the closest to him. You know, I learned,

let God be my father, which I, in the beginning, I thought that was so odd. How can God be my father and my husband? I was like, okay, I get my father and I get, there's people who's angry, um, at God because they don't trust their own father.

So I learned, you know, that through my own, own father. Um, he was abusive. He was trying to do the right thing, but he didn't have his own father.

He was adopted. So he had his own issues. And I can see that now, but I couldn't understand how can God be your father and your husband? I was like, that's just kind of weird.

And so one night through my tears, I'm crying out to him. I said, God, I don't know. Jesus, I know you're here.

I don't have a doubt in my mind. You're here, but I can't feel your arms wrapped around me. So through my tears, I'm staring out the window and there was a light beam from a street light and those beams from the light.

I don't know if you've ever stared at the water with the light and there's beams on. They just, they feel like they're coming through my tears. It was like they were just like in a sunset.

You see those rays and it's just, they were engulfing me. They were surrounding me and I could feel, I could truly feel him loving me through that night. And I will never forget that night.

That was when I finally learned, let God be my husband. I understood. And it wasn't long after that he gave me the real deal.

I can now feel God loving me through my husband. Yeah. We know, especially having spent time in a recovery program, we know, we just never know what somebody else is going through or what they've been through.

We see, we see certain things, but we just never really know. And then the other thing, which for me is kind of key to being able to forgive the really evil people is that almost everybody is doing as good as they can. They're doing the best job they can in the moment, even the abusive sociopath.

And we have to keep that in mind to be able to forgive and free ourselves. And that's why I don't forgive because somebody asked me to, or they deserve it, or they would like to know that I did it. I forgive people because I want to free myself and my mind.

For me, it's like, how can I not forgive me, forgive them when Jesus forgave me? You know, he forgave me for everything I did. Every time I turned my back on him and made my husband, my God, anything, you know, he forgave me. How can I not forgive

somebody else? Even the man that shot my son in the back, you know? Yeah.

I have a good feeling that I did that. I don't mean he's excused from justice because even though the justice system felt us here in that trial, because they never gave us one, he's still going to have to answer to God someday. He's still going to have to.

He can lie to himself. He can lie to us. He can lie to the DA.

He can lie to the public. He can lie to his wife, but one day he's going to have to answer to God and he's going to have to face consequences, you know? Who's to say he's not facing them now? I don't, I don't, I don't know that. So.

But, and that's a, that's a, that you mentioned that that's another major part of the forgiveness is realizing it's not our purpose to inflict revenge or justice. We ran across it in Greek share just last week and it said something about justice is up to Jesus. I don't remember how it was, but it really was powerful.

I said, wow, I needed that. So tell, tell me what you, start over and tell me what you were telling before, before we get started on that. When I, when I went through a step study, it really became very apparent.

I was really mad at God. I kind of knew, but I didn't know how badly I was mad at him when I my oldest son. And so I went on a journey.

I told my husband, I said, I got to go have some quiet time with God. So I took off and I thought I was going to find a place where I could drive up, you know, to a quiet spot on the mountain because I wanted to be able to scream at him and I didn't want to freak everybody else around me out. So I wanted to go total quiet.

Well, I couldn't figure out a place. So I ended up driving back to Henry County and I ended up right. It just, this cemetery just drew me in and there was a big statue of Jesus there.

And so I was like, well, that's perfect. Cause I was really bitter because I couldn't bury him. I had to cremate him because his wife had, you know, the authority to make the decision.

And she said, that's what he wanted. And so when I went to the cemetery, man, that was just perfect. It was just what I needed.

Ended up on my knees at the foot of the cross. And, you know, I did my crying and screaming. And then, then all of a sudden I just took off walking and I saw this bird and he was injured.

And I was just watching. And I'm like, God, are you asking me to follow that bird? And I kept watching and he kept, I was like, something's wrong with me. And I kept watching,

walking and following.

And suddenly I remembered that there's these birds that'll do that to draw you away from their nest. And so when I did, it was just so incredible because I said, are you asking me to save that bird? And he said, no, you don't have that kind of power. So then he said, that's true.

And then I said, God, you know, you have no idea how badly this hurts. You know, he said, I do. I know exactly how you feel.

I watched my son be brutally murdered and suffer and die for you and your voice. And I mean, it was just really powerful, the message that I got that day. And also I realized in that same event, especially for women, we don't have to go to the top of the mountain.

He meets us right where we are. So I was just a neat little journey and it was really, really a spiritual journey in my healing for the, of the pain of the suicide. Well, was that, was that the biggest step was resolving your anger towards God or was there other grief that you had to overcome? It was more, the main thing I had to overcome was I was still blaming myself.

I was blaming myself for staying in a broken marriage and both of those boys watching me in brutal fights with my husband. And he was mean to all of us, but I just kept staying. And I, and it caused a lot of damage to all three of us, but mostly the boys.

So I just couldn't forgive myself for that. And one day at CR, Pastor Jack had talked with me about condemnation, no condemnation in Christ Jesus because he knew what I was struggling with. And I finally understood one night when Natalie Grant came on and the words were, there's nothing too dirty that he can't make worthy.

I am washed in the blood of the sacrifice. I am clean. And I finally forgave myself that night.

And it was like a weight was lifted off of me. Well, how do you, you know, I don't know if you remember that they say here a lot of times that holding bad feelings towards someone else and wanting revenge or those kinds of feelings, it's kind of like taking a vial of poison and taking it yourself, but expecting the other person to die. And we know the importance of forgiveness.

I wonder how would you rank the order? Was it more important to be able to forgive yourself before you could forgive others? And I was really good at forgiving others, but I couldn't forgive myself. I lost the second one to murder. That was a journey.

That was a, that was the opposite. I ended up knowing I finally forgave the person, the two men that shot him in the back. I knew one day that I had forgiven him.

When I, there was a Phil Collins, I was at home and I had sunk into a really dark place. And I was really struggling to leave the house. And I just said, I got to deal with this grief.

And so I went back to grief share. But on that day, three times I heard Phil Collins in the air tonight. And every time, the very first time I said, if they would drown him, would I save him? And I, I'm not a very good swimmer, but every single time I knew the answer was yes, I wouldn't let them die.

And so I knew I had forgiven them because initially I was saying, I don't know that I'll ever forgive them, but I knew that it was something I wanted to do that because of Jesus within me, Christ within me wanted to forgive them, but I didn't know if I ever could. So in your case, really, it was the other way around. It was easier for you to forgive others, even, even the two that, that shot your son in the back and killed him.

It was easier for you to forgive them than it was for you to forgive yourself. Yes. And my husband kept saying with my anger, why don't you put your anger where it belongs on Chad, who was the oldest one who committed the suicide.

And I was like, because I, I know him, you know, I'm not mad at him. I knew everything about that boy. I knew who he was, who he wanted to be, what he struggled with, you know, how much he wanted to be a good dad.

I knew everything about him and I knew the pain was more than he could handle. I was never mad at him. Um, most, a lot of people do feel like that, but I never did not, not with Chad.

I knew that it was more than he could bear. Well, you, well, you, you knew, share, share a little bit about what it was that Chad was going through that made him feel, uh, hopeless and, and, and so much pain that he didn't see another way out. Chad was legally blind when he was, I think fifth grade, I had to make a decision.

Um, the school told me, um, that he had a blind teacher with him at all times and he was in public school. And she said, you know, he needs to go to a, to an academy for the blind because they can teach him what he needs to learn, you know, to get their life. So it was a really brutal decision for me because me and him, we were like this, I mean, we were very attached.

Um, and so she said to me, um, if you don't, well, first she had me put him on Ritalin, which I thought, and when they finally, when I finally agreed, she said, it's almost a form of child abuse not to, well, I didn't want to abuse my children. And so anyway, he went from an A-B, barely making it F student to an A-B student. And so I said, okay, maybe there's one.

Was that, was that from the Ritalin or going to an academy or both? Ritalin. From the Ritalin. Okay.

And then when he got to the academy, eventually he stopped using Ritalin to, um, smoke and pot. And I was like, I don't understand Chad, why? And he, cause I thought he would be like me and say, say no. I said no my whole life.

I never touched it, not even tried. So I just thought he was going to be like me, but I saw the signs and, um, he was really struggling with peer pressure, wanting to fit in. Um, he had a really big connection of friends back here, but he had to live in Macon during the week.

So he felt like I abandoned him, you know, when I had to put him in that school because without all that separation between us, I just don't think I would have survived it. Close. And, but his, his desire was, um, to be a dad.

He just wanted to be a dad and a good dad. You know, he didn't want anything forced on him. You know, but he couldn't drive.

So he had to depend on someone to get him somewhere, wherever he went. And so when he started going through separation, um, he just couldn't find it. Uh, it just broke him.

And I was told he was also, um, going through anger management at that time. Uh, and his wife's parents were, um, transporting, uh, you know, back and forth, but nobody told me about any of that. I didn't know about any of that.

Oh. So, so really, uh, it was a, a huge change when he physically moved to, to be in the academy and you kind of lost a lot of the connection and the support that you were giving him before, I guess. Uh, but so he would, he had a lot of struggles.

There was the blindness, uh, the Ritalin or not Ritalin. And then, uh, his marriage was in trouble and, and they were going through a separation. Yes.

And he also, um, began to choose marijuana because he said the marijuana did for him what the Ritalin did. I said, I don't understand why not just use the Ritalin. He, he didn't, both of my boys didn't like that feeling because they were really skinny and they didn't like the way it made them lose their appetite.

Oh. So, I just don't understand it. But, but there was a, it was, I saw their, their struggle.

I saw myself through their eyes because I looked back at my own childhood and knew the peer pressure was what was leading them, you know, and the desire to fit in what was leading them to do the things they would do. But, uh, even though you, you kind of lost the, the really strong connection you had when you went to the Academy, there were still warning, uh, warning signs and red flags that you were picking up on, right? Yes. He posted his Facebook.

Um, he posted, it was a rap song. When I saw the words that said, blast yourself, I started calling him and I said, um, I was careful what I said because I'm on his page on Facebook and I didn't want to embarrass him or, you know, just make him feel, anyway, so I started calling him and he wouldn't answer. And finally I said on Facebook, I said, Chad, please tell me this is a song and you're, you're just quoting lyrics.

And he finally said, he wouldn't answer. And he finally said, just, um, it's okay, everyone. It's just a song, just a song, but still everything in me knew something was wrong.

And so I think that was on a Wednesday and by Saturday, um, I found myself, um, I was going to go to work because that was how I was dealing with it, was just throwing myself into work. And he said, my husband said, why don't you go for a ride? It's a pretty day because I, um, had learned to ride a motorcycle and we usually rode together, but he had to work. Go ahead.

If you remember where you were. I think I was, uh, oh, I was on the way to Macon, um, because still everything in me knew something was wrong. And, you know, I was a new rider.

Um, I did fine on riding, but the bike, sometimes I'm so short, I had a hard time parking it. So I knew his heel, I would not be able to park it. So I got down, all the way down to Bass Pro, um, on the way to Macon and I knew you got to go back.

So I got to, um, step back to Stockbridge and I grabbed, went to Zach's piece for lunch. And that's when I got the call from his mother-in-law and I immediately knew something was wrong because they had never called, called me before. So I knew there was either something wrong with the baby or Chad.

So everything in me, I heard, don't answer that until you get home, which was like five minutes away. So I got home and I made the call and that's when I found out and just hit my knees. Yeah.

So, but, uh, so describe a little bit then how you were able to recover from, from the grief and, uh, uh, not blaming yourself and, and forgiving yourself that all of that. That took a long time, a long time. I'd say it took pretty close to eight years before I finally forgave myself.

Um, I did go through grief share. Um, grief share helped a lot. Matter of fact, that's where I learned that I was between grief sharing, celibate recovery, um, step study.

That's where I really spoke to me that I was, I was very angry at God, loved God, but I was angry at Him. So, so, so tell me a little bit about, uh, you know, getting over the grief and, uh, forgiving yourself. Go ahead.

Go ahead. Well, grief share, um, helped a lot. Um, I would find verses throughout the

day.

Um, my sleep was a disaster and I became, work became my, like, only way through it. So I just really threw in the work and I would find verses. Actually, I would put, because I was sleeping so bad, um, my reading was, comprehension was terrible.

So trying to read the Bible was not working because I couldn't comprehend anything. So I just put it on audible Bible all night long and just let the Bible read to me all night long. Um, but then the two things that helped the most was celibate recovery and grief share.

I was wondering, uh, what, what do you think, you know, you were talking about what he was struggling with between the blindness and being separated from you and not having your support, wanting to be a good father. And then I guess the, maybe the straw that broke the camel's back was the, uh, marital problems. It was, and he was, um, having severe addiction.

Um, they had transported him, uh, him and his wife had gotten into a fight and they had, he went to jail. I didn't even know about any of this, nobody told me anything. So he had went to jail and they ordered him to anger management.

And, um, my, my, uh, his wife's parents, uh, mom told me that, uh, while we were going to the anger management, they saw a change, changing of a real withdrawal. And she said it was almost as if he saw his dad in himself as he was going through this and he just couldn't get past it. And so he never finished.

But, but, uh, there was, it sounds like from what you were saying that, um, really the, the key on him not sharing with you was when he went to the Academy because he kind of felt abandoned. And, and then from that point on, he wasn't telling you about all these things that were going on. So it was like a crazy roller coaster that I couldn't get off of.

Um, two months before he committed suicide, um, I had gotten married. Well, I have been dating this man for over eight years and pretty much gave up that he was ever going to marry me because, you know, he had been hurt too bad, but he was so good to me. And so I was struggling internally with my, my spiritual journey because I was living in sin.

And when they, when he was little, I always wanted Chad to give me away to my dad. And then my dad walked me down the aisle. Well, my husband, um, being who he is, um, drove me all the way to Kansas.

My parents are old now. And so he drove me all the way to Kansas to, um, so my dad could give me away because it was my dream. Well, um, we asked all the kids to come, um, and they all said no.

Looking back, I think, especially Chad said no because him and Betsy were struggling

and they didn't want us to see that because they were fighting so bad, but it was like the highest high in the lowest lows because we got married on June 22nd. And almost exactly two months later, Chad took his life. So it was the highest highs and the lowest lows.

Well, let me back up just before that. Um, I had the motorcycle wreck in the mountains and I had to get flown off the mountain. I had given up on the marriage, but it was up there that my husband got saved on that day when I broke my pelvis and had to get helicoptered off the mountain from a motorcycle crash because I hit a car head on, flipped over the hood of the car, and I had to get flown off the mountain.

But that was the day he decided, you know, he wanted, he didn't want to lose me. And so he was going to ask me to marry him. So that was September of 2012.

Uh, I don't remember exactly when he asked me to marry. It seems like it was like July 4th, July something. And then we got married on June 22nd of 2013.

And exactly two months later, we were married. So it was like the highest high and lowest lows. It was just a literally like a rollercoaster.

But even through like the accident, I still was able to keep a bright light until the suicide. And it took me years to come out of it. Years.

Well, I, I'm sure you would agree. We all have unique journeys. Uh, but it sounds like you've had more than your share of struggles.

They've been hard, but I don't see it that way. My struggles are no harder than anybody else's. I know some who's way worse.

Like, for example, I know some people who just lost little bitty kids that were full of the Lord, um, eight and 11, where I at least had 27, 28 years with my boys. You know, they, I feel like they literally got cheated out of years of life with them. So I just, it's just don't call it how you look at it.

You gotta, you gotta look at it in a different, from a different perspective. And what, what importance would you put on, uh, not only the forgiveness and, and, and the grief recovery, but, uh, being able to put the past in the past, not to forget it, but to, to, to, to, to take, to break the chains and take its hold off of it. It is powerful because, uh, my first experience with that was going through divorce and I journaled a lot and I was, it was very abusive to, to all of us.

And I journaled a lot about it when I began, um, step study and I realized, you know, all, well, first I started just therapy, you know, independent therapy. And that's when I learned the value of that and letting go and turning it over to God. Because I read back through every journal I ever wrote.

And I was like, Oh, I forgot he had did this and this and this and this. So I read back through every single bit of it. And, um, you know, it was just like, wow, why did you stay? And then I, after I did that, I just, I shredded the whole, every single journal, journal that I had.

And it was literally like losing 220 pounds. I mean, like, like I was carrying it because I was constantly struggling, constantly praying for God to change him. Yeah.

So you're, you're, you're talking about the struggles in your first marriage with an abusive husband and, um, you were asking yourself, why did you stay? Why did you stay? And, and I've, I've had a family member that had an abusive husband and, uh, people just assume when they don't have a particular problem, that it's just so easy. Why don't you just leave? Why don't you just leave? But it's not. And, uh, it's not a matter of the person not being intelligent or not wanting to, but, uh, I know in, in, in the case that I'm thinking of, um, there w there's a battle where the abusive spouse wants to isolate and separate the abused spouse from everybody else in family, anybody that could give support.

And, uh, we went through that and, and, and it's a battle and, uh, we were winning for a while, but we lost. And, uh, well, his first step in that was moving me here to Georgia. Cause all my family was in Kansas and that was the main thing he did that had control over me because I had nobody here.

So I kept, you know, I'm like, where am I going to go? You know, I can't go home. It just wasn't that easy. And, um, and he literally told me one time, you were strong, you were stronger than me.

I had to break you down. He literally told me that. Wow.

So, uh, how long into the marriage was it before he actually separated you physically by moving you to Georgia? Oh, immediately before you got married. Oh yeah. I made a very bad choice cause I was, I wanted out of the dysfunction in my own home so badly that I barely knew him.

So when I moved off, I was 17 or 18 when I moved off with him, I barely knew him. Um, we had only been seeing each other maybe, maybe six months. So I didn't know him.

I didn't know anything about him at all. What a journey, what a journey that was. So once that gave me a passion for the young girls, uh, the new moms, you know, when I can see the pattern, my neighborhood has the girls, I can see the pattern starting already.

So I'm trying to... It's really hard to break through though. It's really hard. And it's a battle.

And, uh, you know, in the case I'm thinking of, we're talking about a sociopath that has no empathy, no feelings, no guilt, no shame. Nope. It's all about you.

Exactly. He was the victim. I was the abuser in his eyes.

Now I wasn't innocent by any means, uh, but most of the time I was pretty forgiving. But man, could he push my buttons and turn me into a totally different person? I never, I've never known anybody in my life that could do, do me like he did. Well, they're, they're master manipulators and brainwashers.

He did. He did. He, he had me convinced I could not do it on my own.

He had you convinced I'm sure that you needed him. Yes. And that you, uh, tell me, uh, cause I'm, again, I'm thinking of a case I know about, but did he convince you that like, uh, you weren't worth anybody better? You couldn't find anybody better.

That was part of it, right? That's part of the brainwashing. Yes. He told me I'd be trailer park trash if it weren't for him.

He truly told me that. And to then, even still, I had never touched pot ever in my whole entire life. And he had told me when we started dating that he had never smoked pot.

Well, come to find out when, when I get all the way to Texas, not only did he smoke pot, but he sold it too. Oh, oh, I was so devastated. By then I had done made a very bad decision.

And I even called my mom and dad and I said, I think I might need to come home. And my mom said, well, we can find you a place at Topeka. So that told me you made this decision.

You got to make it work. You know? So I stayed. Well, thinking, thinking back, uh, of, of the suicide of your son, um, what would you say, uh, that you should have done that you didn't, or is, is it really more a matter of the fact that you weren't being informed and didn't really know, uh, exactly some of the that was going on? I would say the hardest part for me was because of my experience with letting go with my ex-husband, I, I felt like my boys would have the same choices I had and I didn't want to enable them.

So as, as a codependent, I learned, I'd say with the two boys, I went too far. Codependents either go too far this way or too far this way. They either completely cut it off and don't help nobody or they continue enabling going too far.

So with Chad, I believe I went too far in placing him in God's hands thinking that he was okay and that God's got him. When Daniel come along, um, they were 10 years apart. When, when he started going through it, the day at the cemetery, one of the things God said to me, if this wouldn't have happened to Chad, you would still be running after

Daniel trying to save him.

You've got to let me have him. I've got him. And, but I learned better how to love.

I, I can still help him, but I left the choice up to him. You know, when he called me, I would go, but I didn't go running after him all the time trying to save him. I, I, you know, when he'd say, mama, I want to go to CR tonight, you know, I would go get him and take him, but I didn't go running after him to save him.

And I didn't just leave it in God's hands. You know, I still reached out to him. So I learned.

You said you tried to do the best route in between the two extremes. Yes. Yeah.

And I think that's why I struggled with so much guilt with Chad and my parents did the same with me. And I thought, well, I turned out okay. So, you know, they, they, you know, once I made the move to move, you know, they left me, you know, I was on my own.

And of course I stayed in an abusive marriage for 12 years, but I don't have no regret for that. I don't, not anymore. I said the whole time, I don't have no regret because I wouldn't have had my boys wouldn't be who I am because my boys changed me.

Everything they went through, I could see myself through their eyes. And I literally got on my knees and said, God, I want to be a better person for my boys. I want to be a better example so they can see, you know, how they have the same choices.

And I just wanted to be a better example for them. And I'm grateful to that because I am a good person. You know, I don't, I don't have a regret for that.

Well, if I understood you right for a long time, you did blame yourself for not leaving for, for, for staying with the abusive husband all those years. But you were able to forgive yourself finally. I was, and that was, finally, Pastor Jack had taught me there is no, and I don't know, remember what the verse is, but there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus.

And I finally understood if God can forgive me, who am I that I can't forgive him? Why, why should I have more power? I mean, God is, you know, everything. So why could I not forgive myself if God could not, could forgive me? It's like, if he could forgive me, it's time to finally forgive myself. And then that's when I really honed in on the words to clean by Natalie Grant.

Well, I can identify with that because I had many years of guilt and shame from some childhood abuse I went through. And, um, I guess, uh, through various steps and, um, uh, it wasn't just, it was recovery and counselors and everything else. But I would kind of sum up me getting over that as having to realize, well, first of all, I have to forgive myself before I can forgive others.

But the forgiveness comes from, and the ability to forgive comes from recognizing the love and forgiveness of God. Yeah. If, um, if we don't forgive, I mean, look what Jesus did for us.

How can you not look, I will never forget. See the passion and they just kept beating him and I was screaming at the TV, stop hitting him. And every time I was just crying, you know, cause he was getting hit for what I did, you know, what I did.

I'll never forget that. Well, it's, it's interesting. You bring that up because we're sitting here on Saturday in between good Friday and Easter.

Yeah. And, uh, uh, you know, you know, like I said, I, I spent 10 years in Spain and I had a hobby of photographing the different fiestas and stuff, but one of the most important celebrations in Spain is what they call holy week, which is Easter week. And, uh, what's interesting is not being Catholic.

I was surprised when I went there that they have all these different Christs and all these different virgins, the Christ of this and the virgin of that. But in, in Southern Spain, in both, uh, in both Sevilla and Malaga, uh, one of the major Christ is they have the Christ of the Buena Muerte, the Christ of the good death. And I can remember, uh, a conversation I had with one of my best friends.

Uh, I guess he would call himself Catholic, but he said, he's not a believer. He doesn't believe in God, doesn't believe in the Bible. And we had this discussion.

Well, gee, what do you think good death is? Well, obviously I can come up with five or six different reasons why there would be a Christ of the good death. But the most important is his death provided eternal life for us. If we would accept it salvation.

Uh, but what was funny was, uh, to him, good death means, and he's, he's basing this on a family member that suffered with cancer for years. And so for him, uh, he hopes he has a good death and that would be, uh, dying in his sleep or instantaneously in an accident rather than spending years in terrible pain suffering. I can see that because I myself grew up Catholic and, uh, I never understood why they called it good Friday when he died that day.

Right. You know, as you grow in your faith, you can see that, you know, you can see that his death was good for us. Right.

So you finally understand why they call it good Friday. Right. It's the same idea.

Uh, you know, his good is thinking about, you know, his death. And, uh, we think it's bad that Christ died, but yet that was, uh, uh, provision for us, something you did for us. And so we got good Friday and the Christ of the good death.

Yeah, very true. And it just all boils down to faith. And I'm grateful to, you know, the Catholic religion, cause that's what I grew up.

A lot of people bash it, but they teach the Trinity. They teach the father, the son, the Holy ghost. And those were the principles that I, I held on to as an adult, even through the abusive marriage.

You know, um, I know I'm the one who turned away from him during my marriage, but when it got to the point where I got to the final divorce, that's when my faith really began to soar. Um, because I literally poured myself into the church and I ended up finding what was missing, which was the relationship. Um, I believed in Jesus, but that was the only difference in Catholic religion was I only knew repetitious prayers.

I didn't have to go through the father. I could go directly to God. And so no longer did I have that separation, uh, between me and Jesus, you know, that was, that was powerful.

That's when I was saved and born again. So when you say you found, you didn't, you realized you didn't have to go through the father. You mean you didn't have to go through the priest? Yeah.

For confession. Yeah. You could just go directly to God.

God opened up that door for me. I really believe that that was a way, it was a way for me to heal this time without that second time, uh, without, um, pouring myself into work. And he was like, well, no, you're going to deal with it this time.

Because I was mad. I was like, you know, after eight years, I'm finally getting to the point where I see joy again and can hold my head up and then, um, bam. Yeah.

A lot, a lot of people don't realize they don't think about all the different ways we have to escape our pain and our struggles. And, uh, that was, it can be good. It can be bad.

Even the good can be bad. Yeah. Yeah.

My father, uh, uh, he, he, his favorite escape was to be in a workaholic and I ended up adopting that myself. Ditto. Yeah, me too.

I see the value in telling your story where something else can relate to your experience. If you can get through that, I can get through this. Exactly.

Exactly.