

# Ep\_80\_Barb\_Steffens

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS


faith community, betrayal trauma, safe space, trauma informed, first responder, emotional support, spiritual crisis, community resources, personal authority, healing process, partner support, faith questions, spiritual guidance, community care, trauma sensitivity


## SPEAKERS


Lyschel, Pam B.

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 00:00  
Music.

 Lyschel 00:09  
Hi, I'm Pam Blizzard from recovered peace, and I'm Michelle Burkett with hope redefined. And


 00:15  
I'm Bonnie burns of strong wives. We're so glad you're joining us. You

 Lyschel 00:36  
music, welcome to another episode of hope for wives today, we are approaching a betrayal that we hear far too often from women navigating their healing journey. Today, we're going to unpack the concept or the experience of being missed when going to your faith community after betrayal. We thought that we would try to approach this conversation a little differently and encourage faith communities and those who lead them in how to meet women who are hurting. Many of us don't know what we don't know, and we recognize that going into this conversation, but we do know that when we know better, we do better, and so that's what our goal is and hope for this conversation today around the faith community. So we have somebody sitting in Bonnie's seat today, and that is Dr Barbara Steffens. She is joining us today and helping us understand how a faith community can be a safe and responsive community to betrayed partners, because the reality is we do believe that faith communities can be safe and they can learn and they can do better when they know better. So thank you, Dr Barbara Stephens, for being here. Let me read your I want to read your intro real quick, your little, not

little. It's big. It's big, but okay. Dr Barbara Steffens has specialized in the area of sexual addiction and providing help for partners of sex addicts since 1999 I wasn't even born yet. Oh, cool before.

 Pam B. 02:19


Yeah, had to add that you had to rub that in. I

 Lyschel 02:23

know. Okay. She's now accepting speaking engagements for churches and professional organizations, and she's joining people like us to continue speaking on such an important topic of betrayal trauma, she is the co author of your sexually addicted spouse, how partners can cope and heal, and she's also been a small group leader. She's in pastoral care. She is the founder of absat, the Association of partners of sex addicts, trauma specialists, and she's an incredible mentor for so many of us. So thank you, Barb for being here.

 03:08

Thank you. I'm looking forward to this. I

 Lyschel 03:12

know Me too. Me too. All right. You're Are you drinking coffee? Because I am. Mm, hmm. Pam, all right, yeah, I like it. I like it. Okay. How do you take your coffee bar?

 03:26


Um, I used to just put sugar in my coffee, and now I do it just black coffee, wow, but it has to be a bold grant grind of coffee. So I want to be able to almost feel it crunch in my body.

 03:46

Yeah, very adult coffee. I know. I know William. What about you?


 03:53

Your taste buds go away. So, yeah, um,

 Pam B. 03:57

little half and half. Mm, hmm, split and a half of sugar, but it's a pig mug. Mm, hmm, right. This


is a big one that's hysterical.

 Lyschel 04:05

I drink it with creamer, and I do oat milk creamer, and my favorite is sweet cream. So it's just coffee and sweet cream, creamer, but it's low sugar, like, try not to have myself in a sugar coma by 11, yeah. Okay, well, we've just learned something new about each other. I love it. Barb. I wanted to feel I want to crunch in my body. Oh, all right, okay, so we're going to dive into this topic of the faith community and how they can be a support system and consider being a safe place for women who are experiencing betrayal. So where I'd love to start is for us to maybe share some common experiences for women being missed by the faith community, right? They've essentially, they've. Stepped out, they've gone to somebody, whoever that somebody might be within their community, and it's been missed. So we'll love for either of you just to hop in and just share an experience or two. If you've heard anything,

 05:15

I've heard so many, probably the one I hear the most is not so much something someone says, but it's that they don't say anything, that maybe they'll they'll have a conversation and say, Oh, I'm sorry that happened, and then nothing else. So no follow up, no diving deeper into what happened, or a real quick, well, let me pray for you real quick, and then they pray, and then they drop it. So that's that's like a total mess. Um, but the others tend to be things like, well, how often are you having sex? Because obviously, if your spouse is sexually betraying you, it must be you are not doing something you should be doing. So that comes up pretty frequently. Yeah, I think those are the first two that I think of the most in terms of initial response. Sometimes pastors have also brought in the spouse, and the spouse is not in a place of recovery, and so She's overreacting. She's a mess. She's angry at me all the time. And then it turns into it's about how she's responding, rather than the betrayal and what just happened. And then it becomes you need to calm down or cool off because he said he sorry. And so they start to do that kind of attempt to counsel a couple after betrayal, and what she needs is is to be heard and cared for and cared about, rather than told she's too much or too little or not enough. So those are the compliments. The other thing that I hear sometimes from partners is once they realize that there's something going on in the marriage, then they make decisions for the partner, like removing them from a role that they have in their faith community. Yes, people say they're taken off worship team, if they're on worship team, or out of Sunday school or whatever. And so because this has happened to them, something, in addition, is taken away. So those are the ones I've heard. How about you?

 Pam B. 07:42

Oh, the one that I've heard more often is I've been told to do things. For example, the 40 day love bear. Oh, right. Pray for him. And we know that the problematic behavior and the betrayals aren't just sexual. We know that the that there's relational things going on when you when the betrayer has that mindset, there's a lot of denial and gaslighting and blame and so that's really relational harm. And you're told to love him unconditionally and pray for him, and your prayers will change his heart. Wow, that she has that power. And then when it doesn't happen in all cases that she feels somehow she has failed or her faith isn't strong enough, and they really

put it on another way to put it on her shoulders and that. But then you're also asking someone to provide unconditional love, acceptance and presence for someone who's relationally harming you.

L

Lyschel 08:55

Yeah, I think the you both gave such beautiful examples, but it's ultimately from a big picture. Instead of talking about like using a shattered plate on the floor as an example, right? The marriage is now a shattered plate. We walk in, we have these these pieces of glass. We're sitting before somebody in our faith community, whether it's a small group leader or a pastor or whatever, and he's like, like, Barb said he's apologizing for breaking the plate, and she is devastated that the plate has been broken. But nobody wants to talk about the devastation, right? They're ready to talk about how to fix the plate. And so that's I see that as a huge mess, consistently, is understanding that there is a grief that is happening right in front of you that you may not be tending to because the other person does not appear to be grieving, just one person does, and it really does create such a fracture in the relationship. Relationship with our faith community, and it creates a fracture in the relationship. All the things you guys did, the great I have a I have a partner right now that I'm working with that is a a pastor's wife, and yeah, to hear the things that have been removed from her in the name of and the thing that is so disturbing is that they've taken so much from her, like you were saying Barb with her roles and positions, as if she's incapable of still carrying out her roles and responsibilities because of the betrayal, but it's taken from her, but they've also not given her anything to help with the healing process, right? Like, she's still floating out there. Well, she's now in coaching and stuff, but like, for for a while, she was just floating like, Okay, I don't have worship team on Wednesday night. What am I supposed to do with myself? Right? And her husband, in their particular situation, he went off to an intensive. And so then she's, like, completely alone, because she's an empty nester, and so on and so forth. And it was like, it it took everything from her. And even I've heard so many pastors wives talk about like, my church was my community. And then leadership has instructed the church not to engage, or, quote, not bother them. They're trying to heal. And the misconception we have is that that we would heal by ourselves, like we're supposed to heal in community. So I think those are some other really common ways.

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11:36

It makes me so sad. Can I say it makes me so sad?

L

Lyschel 11:39


Yeah, that's me

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11:40

too, that the immediate jump to the marriage and helping make sure that the marriage stays intact, not understanding right now the marriage is shattered, but to put that above the individual who's just been wounded, that that's the priority, you know, we got to fix this breach


in your relationship so that the marriage survives, not looking at the person who's betrayed, and are they going to survive? What does that look like? How are they feeling? What's going on in their body, in their mind? How are they doing spiritually, all those things the individual, in a lot of cases, is not attended to, but the marriage is, the marriage is, oh, well, well, we gotta get you in marriage counseling, or come and meet with us and we'll talk through your marriage. And I like to say this isn't a marriage issue. It's something that happened to the marriage and is blown up the marriage. But it's not about the marriage. It's about choices of one individual that have impacted the other and ultimately impacts the marriage, but it's about the individuals. And I think sometimes our faith communities, we miss that.

 Lyschel 12:55

Yeah, I love that. When I learned that from you, I was like, That is such a golden nugget that it's an individual problem that impacted a marriage, not a marriage problem. It's impacting individuals

 13:10


that order matters, that's matter,

 Pam B. 13:15

and also the betraying person

 13:19

is is

 Pam B. 13:21

not getting the guidance and help they need because it's treated as if it's a just a sin problem or a faith problem. And I think, just like you said, the addiction or the behaviors help to destroy the faith, not the other way around. And a lot of times I hear faith communities where there is someone who does. They all desire the help they don't always get the help they really, really need. And they see a man progressing, going to group meetings, becoming accountable, and everyone's cheering and saying, yay. Yay for him. He's doing so well. And hey, look at how great he's doing. But nobody's doing that for the wife, and then they're encouraging the wife, just get back on the boat. Just get back in the boat and row, and her needs for safety and grief and restitution aren't being met, and it's just another way to further isolate her.

 14:30

Yeah, okay, so, oh, go ahead. Var,



14:34

I just was going to share my own personal experience with that. I don't share a lot about personal experience, but Pam, that's exactly what it was. I would see these wonderful men coming up and praying for my husband and standing with them and asking him how he was doing. And I felt like I was in the very back and no one was approaching. And they knew me. They knew me really well, but so Exactly. You that experience, and it felt so isolating, and I felt so missed, and I know all the women I have worked with that's a really common experience, so I'm really glad you brought that one up very



Lyschel 15:16

so I think this is such a great segue into the next question, because we we have the gift. I'm going to call it a gift. Even though it's a really hard gift to carry, we have the gift of knowing women's experiences and also walking a lot of these experiences ourselves. Personally. What I would love for us to be able to do is talk to those who are in these faith roles, these leaderships, these small group leaders, care pastors and Barb, I know for you and I this is a huge passion to be communicating with them through the trainings that we get to do with apps at so I would love to kind of sit with the question of, What should a care pastor, faith leader or community someone in your community do when meeting with a betrayed wife or the couple after discovery, like, how do we help coach them to say these are the things that that are helpful and are going to potentially bear a different type of fruit than maybe what They're seeing at this point, because I've definitely had conversations with pastors where they go, yeah, once there's, you know, an infidelity, there's a low recovery rate, right? And they've got, like, they'll make up stats and things like that about how they don't see it being very successful. So how can we encourage them to think otherwise?



16:41

Well, I think first they have to think about, what is their job? What is their role? At that moment when someone comes and this has just happened, and Michelle, you and I know we are encouraging them to be first responders, to think of themselves as you know, this is a crisis. This is like the worst car accident you can imagine, and you're trying to at least find out what happened. But to be a first responder, to be present, to listen, to have empathy, it's not a time to give advice. It's a time to say, I can't even imagine what this is like for you. Oh, this is so hard. I am so glad that you told me. How can I help you right now? How are you doing right now? So think of the here and now kinds of questions, not the, how in the world, are we going to put your marriage back together? It's like, how are you individually right now? You are a wounded individual. If they're both there, they're both wounded individuals. Don't be a first responder, ask questions, show lots and lots of compassion and empathy, and don't feel like you have to fix it. You cannot fix it. It's not within your power to fix it, but you can be a safe person, to show up as that safe person who can care for them and love on them. And know, what are some resources? How do you refer someone who's going through this? And then another thing is, if you say something like, Well, let me know how it goes, or I want to see you once a week. And here, don't do those things. Just say, How can I follow up with you? What makes sense for you? That would be helpful. And here are some resources. I would like to check in with you again in a week or a couple weeks. Would that be okay? And then, if you say

you're going to do it, be sure you do it, because a lot of times I hear women say he said he would check in with me, and he never did, and I just felt so alone. So those are some of my first responses, Michelle, I know you have lots more, but be that first responder, that caring person who's showing up at the same in the accident. What are the the immediate needs and in your role, how can you help them find, you know, to get those immediate needs met?

L

Lyschel 19:14

Right? I think it's, I think you bring up such great analogies. You know, I'm always talking in pictures, but a first responder, an EMT does not show up to a traffic accident and begin to dissect the skid marks on the road and how the car was and what are weather conditions like that's that's not where he's at, right? An EMT, he or she is attending to the person that is an injured and trying to get as much of an assessment on current state as possible. And that's really what you're encouraging individuals to do, is to help get a current state of affairs like, where are we right now? So even the idea, like, I used that analogy of the broken plate, like, if you can imagine her. They're holding this thing that was so treasured, so special, and was supposed to be one thing and is now broken. Like, what would your current state of affair be with that, right? And vice versa with him, there's tons of guilt, there's probably tons of shame. And how are we responding in that? But trying to get a good moment in time, like, where are we and then how do we support you? Okay, but I'm going to throw a curveball at you for a second. What about those couples who show up they don't know what they need. They expect that the pastor knows what they need, and they just want him to fix it. I mean, I don't know if you've ever had a call like that where, but I am certainly Yes. She's like, I want the formula. Yeah. So how do you encourage somebody like that that's sitting in that place of being like, I can't fix this. I'm trying to give you something, but it's not satisfying. Yeah, I

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21:02

would just encourage that, that first responder person, to clearly state what they can do and what they can't do. Be really clear. You know, I am here to hear you and to care for you, and I want to pray with you and for you, and I have some ideas on places I can send you, but I'm not an expert on this, but I can be a good support and encourager for you. I can pray for you. I can refer you, but just make sure that they know what their role is and what they can do, and then they can clearly communicate that, you know, I'm trained in doing lots of things. I'm not trained in how to walk you through what's just happened to you in terms of the whole entire healing process, but I am able to be here with you, for you, and make suggestions in terms of where you can go to find appropriate help. So just be clear on what your limitations are. And I think the most people will understand that they may be frustrated I want to fix, and then you say, there is no fast fix for this. This is a big thing. This is a big wound. This is going to take a good amount of time. So you need more supports than just me.

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22:25

That's well said. Pam, you want to add anything.


P

Pam B. 22:31

I like analogies and picture stories too. And when you said about the first responder and what their job was, you know, if you show up to a car accident and somebody's leg is broken, your job is not to set the bone, but to limit further harm, right to to mobilize them, strap them down so that there's no further harm. And I do know that a lot of times we as the betrayed, we don't know what it is. And I, you know, I've heard people say, Well, you just need to pray. Pray, pray. And I said, if I get a broken leg, I'm in a car accident, and I get a broken leg, I'm going to pray. I'm going to the first thing I'm going to do is I'm going to pray to Jesus. But I know he wants me to go to the ER and get my legs set and have it x rayed, and have you know, and have it set and get a cast, and maybe do some some some rehab work around that, so I can walk well again. And yes, I'm going to pray. But there are, there are limits to to what a faith leader can do. And so I would encourage your faith leaders again, like you say, to know your limitations and to limit, try to help limit further harm and be a witness. Hold space for the pain and the grief, not just praying, but if you can be a really good listener without listening to fix that can go such a long way, it really can,

 24:08


and just show that compassion, that empathy, I really like, that you brought up so that you're not doing more harm, because that tends to be the experience that we Hear right is then when they go to their communities of faith, they end up leaving feeling worse than they did when they went, because they're missed or they're given bad advice or advice that doesn't match what just happened. So yeah, we don't want to add to the harm.

 Lyschel 24:39

Agreed get them to safety, yeah, yeah, that's what you're doing, right? You're getting them out of the middle of the road. You're stabilizing the leg, because laying in the middle of the road is not safe, and stabilizing the leg and getting them to people who can help them.

 24:53

Yeah, I love it. Yeah.

 Lyschel 24:57

Um, okay, so here's. Some of the suggestions I'm hearing come out in this conversation that we have not directly said, so I'm going to like state them. One, it's important for our our faith communities, to collect resources and places to refer people to. And so if you're not doing that, please consider investing a little bit of time in that. I know that there are so many websites that carry lists of resources on their websites, so it may just be a matter of you having that link accessible to your team, so that way they can make a good referral and reaching out to your local community as well, but also understanding, do people in your local community have this, this specialization and trainings to walk with people in betrayal and sex addiction, because that matters. That matters. The other thing I heard is us encouraging the idea of becoming trauma informed and trauma sensitive. Now, what I do know is that many pastoral care and individuals within church leadership have probably navigated some sense of trauma informed training, but



it's typically applied, and maybe something that's more obvious, I would say obvious traumas, right? Like I'm thinking about all of the destruction in North Carolina and Tennessee right now, like those people are coming in and they're understanding that those folks are in trauma, it's obvious that they're in trauma, but understanding, once you get that type of training, the value that it brings to your entire congregation, like an entire community of people around you, is Always being trauma informed and approaching people through that lens makes a huge difference in them feeling seen or unseen. So those would be my two things that I heard us in suggestions of what to do for those who are the practical list makers, there you go. So, okay, I have a I have another rogue. This one's rogue rogue. This was a question I actually had asked of me this morning, and I think we need to talk about it so we this might, this might roll into two episodes and we're going for it. Okay. What about Okay, so a lot of times the way that we present a couple ship is the woman is in pain. It's obvious, but she's being missed. There's lots of maybe there's anger. She's communicating all of that. But we also know that oftentimes couples can walk into a faith leaders office or space, and she seems very detached, but also very much a cheerleader, like she doesn't understand there's been impact for her. Yet.



27:52

What do you do there?



Lyschel 27:57

I'll hang up and listen. I Okay.



28:03

Oh, I would not assume that she's just fine. You know, one thing that happens in trauma too is that we can kind of dissociate, we can go to fix it, mode, really, really quick, and jump over how we're feeling when there's trauma, sometimes it can take a while before the emotions or the impact really hit the individual. I remember when my mother died, you know, and it was sudden and all of this and and it probably took me two weeks before I really started to experience some of the emotions of grief, because I had to do all these other things. Partners can show up that way too. They're trying to find resources make sure their husband gets better, so the marriage can survive, and all those things so she's in that space, rather than really attending to what just happened to her. So if you see someone that looks like they're fine, just know that they're they're in that space of I have to fix it right now, or I'm doing what I need to do to get through this, but to to lean in and say, I can't even imagine what this is like for you. I see you working really hard, but I know there's, got to be some pain in there. Just acknowledge that it's there. But yeah, don't think she's fine. She's not, she's not, she's she's doing what strong people need to do, which is try to find an answer and solution. Because this can't happen. You know, this can't happen. That would be my thought process. This is not okay, and I'm going to find out how I can fix this, and then fall apart later.



29:47

Yep, great words. Very wise.

P

Pam B. 29:53

I think another thing I would say is, if they're not showing up at your office or making phone calls to don't. Assume it's not happening in your congregation. Yeah, there is so much stigma and shame and confusion and self isolation. I can fix this. I'll just deal with it on my own. Don't assume it's not happening. If it's not coming across your desk, know that this is happening because of the prevalence of technology and everything that we know, the availability that this, this is, this is happening in your congregation, and you just may not be seeing it, so please be aware that it's out there.

L

Lyschel 30:40

Yeah, and I mean, that's part of the even the sadness that I shared that story about the pastor's wife earlier, who the sadness that comes with it is that the church is watching how they're handling that, right, and so and the the the client even said, she said, It makes me so sad, because I know that there are other people suffering and struggling in our community, but the way that they've addressed this, which was excommunication. You know what I'm saying? Like, yeah, fired, removing her from things she was like, I don't I don't know that I would ever be brave enough to step forward and and ask for help. So take that into consideration when thinking about how we're we're navigating some of these things, especially the ones that are more high profile



31:29

situations. So

L

Lyschel 31:32

thanks. Yeah, and I also, so I'll add this. I think you guys did a great job with my Rogue question about the couple, the woman who's the ready to be the cheerleader. The other thing is, you can't force her into anything yet, like you're going to need again be a paramedic. Meet her right where she is. Um, just because she's walking down the side of the street and her head is bleeding does not mean that she is willingly going to get into the ambulance. You may have to walk a mile with her before she realizes that this is a problem so, and that is okay, like, I want to be able to normalize that. Like, I think sometimes when we do get this knowledge and we realize, Oh my gosh, there's help and care for her, then we want to, like, rush them in there. Well, it's, it's kind of like, you know, I remember back in the day, I'm a kid of the everybody goes to college era, and it was like, you know, all these classmates I had that are sitting in these classes who do not want to be at college, they could care less about college. And it was like, we're pushing them in there just because we know that's the right thing to do, but I don't know that it's the best thing to do, right? We kind of have to wait until we meet that person in the place that they're at before they can take that next step and really benefit from being in those spaces. So if she's resistant, don't take that personal. Just know that it it may come in time, right? Just like Barb's saying about your mother is like, if somebody was like, day two was,

like, you really should get in a grief group even, like, good to know, but I have 9000 logistics to handle to, you know, bury my mother. I don't have capacity to do a grief group right now, but eventually, yeah, right, we may have that capacity, or that longing for that so



33:19

awesome, yeah, maybe just, I'm going to tag on just a little bit here that where I see that happen a lot with partners is, is moms of young children. They have to take care of the kids. They have to keep the family together. I'm going to make this work. And this is so this is what I where I'm at, and this is what needs to happen for him, so that, yeah, all of this doesn't blow yeah, that's, that's the, you know, life space that I see that with partners,



Pam B. 33:48

totally agree, yeah. And in an ideal body of Christ, all, all our sisters in faith would come together and say, What can I do? Do you want me to fold the laundry? Do you want me to run the kids to run the kids to soccer? Can I go grocery shopping for you? Can I we have a member of our community, the name of her blog is not a casserole widow. And you know, nobody brings us a casserole. And grief really is real, and it can be debilitating, this journey of betrayal from the partner, the person that you trusted most in the world, can be exhausting, confusing, decimating. And if the faith community could come together and just help her with the day to day tasks for a little bit, that could be such a huge blessing for her.



34:38

Gosh, yeah, absolutely,



34:42

I'm all about a good casserole. Yeah, just for the record,



34:48

I'm all about someone else cooking my meals. Yeah.



Lyschel 35:00

Alright, so here's a little bit of a different spin in this conversation. Let's talk to the women who've experienced some of this, or lots of this, lots of myths in their faith community. What if they reach a brick wall or a dead end with getting support from their faith community, what does



35:00

 35:23


she do? So I'll jump in on this one. Being in community is so important, if your community isn't prepared or aware enough, for whatever reason, can't meet you where you are, make sure you find a community. So we can do that through finding a support group, an online support group, or in person, some way of connecting with other people. But you can also do that by going to another community of faith, where you can just sit and soak it up. And again, I'm going to share that. That's what I did, my community of faith. They were wonderful for my husband, that I was like invisible, and so we went to a different church for a good amount of time, where we could just be and receive. And this place also had support systems in place, and we dove into those support systems. And then later on, when we were a lot better, we went back to that original church to see, can they meet us where we're at now? And they couldn't. So we didn't stay there very long, but go to a place where your needs are going to be met, and it may be the need of just being able to sit in a space and worship or receive without worrying about, what are the people around me thinking about, what's going on in my life, to be anonymous, even in a community that's still going to love you, still connect with you, but figure out what it is that you need and and Jesus is going to meet you there, regardless of what building you're in, what group you're in, he's with you. So let him direct you to a safe place where you can start to heal and and be present with Jesus as you worship. That made all the difference for me. What?

 Pam B. 37:32

What would you say to someone? Because I did suggest that, not as eloquently as you though Barb and as detailed and she said to me, and I heard grief. Here I heard but I feel like I'm betraying my faith. If I go to another church, am I? Am I betraying my faith? Am I giving up on my faith? How would you respond to that?

 38:00

Oh, goodness, I think I would, I would ask, Is Is your faith in the church community, or is your faith in the father? Is your faith in Jesus? And so if you're going some place to try to have a better chance of being able to be connected and to feel safe and heard and seen. Jesus is going with you there. He's not staying in that building and saying, okay, by now, he is in you. He is with you. So it's not a betrayal of the faith. Maybe you feel betrayed by the faith. We can feel betrayed by God when this happens to us, but we aren't betraying the father when we go to some place to try to be able to connect with him better. So he's coming with you. You're not leaving him behind.

 Pam B. 38:58

That's beautiful. Thank you very

 39:05


interested. Real good. You should.

 Lyschel 39:07

You should be a teacher or something,

 39:08


something.

 Lyschel 39:16

All right, Pam, you got any more questions that have bubbled up for you? I uh, or Barb, anything we missed that you're like, hey, I'll make sure I talk about this.

 39:37

I think maybe connected to this, I'm betraying my faith. That it is a common experience to question your faith when you go through trauma, to wonder, Where was God or how could he allow this, and to have those kinds of. Questions, and sometimes in some faith communities, that's frowned upon. You know you can't question, but I want you to know he is big enough to handle your confusion, your disappointment, feeling betrayed by him, and he understands that, and he's right there with you through it as you process it with him. But if you talk to him about it and get angry at him, or whatever it is you need to do, he is big enough loves you, enough that he is there for you. He is the safest place to go. To be honest about how you're feeling and what's going on and what faith questions you have. He's not going anywhere. He is with you. So, so yeah, for a lot of partners, this is a time of questioning things they never questioned before, and that can be a really good thing long term, because you can find that your faith deepens or changes a little bit. It's more present, it's more real, as we go to him to ask him these hard questions. So I just wanted to throw that in that you may feel betrayed by him, but he's the safest person to talk to, or to kind of ignore him for a little while if he made too but he's still there. He's not going

 Lyschel 41:28

anywhere, yeah, when you talk about that, the story that has been so profound for me in understanding God's his his commitment, but also his just understanding of question has been the story of Gideon, like you want to talk about someone who questioned lots of things, like, that's what he was doing through the whole process. So if you go back and you watch if you read that story through that lens, but then also watch how God consistently met him in those questions, right? Or even in the rebuttals like, Whoa, I don't know how to do this. And he's going, that's why I'm here, Gideon, I'm here to teach you like it's just such a beautiful opportunity for us to see God's character and what he does with us in our places of fear unknown. I remember writing in my Bible when I was reading that one time about how I noticed that God was nurturing him to courage. That's what he was doing. He was nurturing him to courage each time he would put something out, Gideon, right, the fleece and all of this stuff. It's like, Did God have to wet the fleece? No, not for an instant. He could have been like, I'm God, and this is what I do, and you do what I say. But he didn't. He 100% showed up over this

ridiculous request in order for Gideon to keep choosing to walk with the Lord and to then take him to where he took him, which was to conquer, right? It's just powerful. So you said something else, and my brain just lost it. You talked about Gideon, and then, oh, I know what I was going to mention. I think that something that is also kind of important to add into this, because, you know when I'm whenever I talk to partners about what's going on for them, I oftentimes will draw all these squiggly lines in different colors, and it just ends up looking like this big ball of whatever. But each of the colors represent different things that are floating around for them right now, right? So there's church hurt, there's marital hurt, there's personal like reprimand. We're so disappointed with ourselves. Why can't I get my life together? All the things, lots and lots of stuff always going and you know, I think that one of the things that has been such a place of awareness for me, but also a place that required healing was that I did allow those in my faith community to represent God's character when it came to how I was going to be taken care of. And that was a miss, right? Because I had in an all true honesty and transparency. I've I've had significant wounds by men in my life. So then I find men in the church who appear to be safe, and I go, Oh, okay, they're going to show up different from men in my life who've hurt me. And so I go, and I do the thing that I think I'm supposed to do, which is be vulnerable and forthcoming with whatever, and then there's no response. Or I'm there's various responses, but they're not healthy responses. They're, well, that's maybe that's something you need to go handle somewhere else, or that's not really our job, etc. So I'm, like, dismissed. Right? And I realized for a while there, I carried all of those responses around with me, as if that was the way God was responding to me. And that wasn't true, but it felt true, right? And so I think that is another piece to this. When we talk about the spiritual crisis, or we're in a faith crisis, and trying to figure it all out is another one of those places to deconstruct it, like, how am I, what is, what is my perception of God, and where did that perception come from? Right? So I just want to throw that in there, as women are considering this, like it's one of those, one of those strings, one of those colored strings and the big ball of all the things. So

P

Pam B. 45:43


if I can fork off of that, because yes, and once you get on this journey, the word safety keeps coming up, and you start to learn more and tease apart. What does that word mean? How many different aspects and facets of safety are there. There's also this submission to authority in the church, and seeing pastors and pastors wives and other leaders in the church as authorities that have the authority to tell you what to do, and if you do make the decision that you need to find an alternative for a little while, or you're going to leave, and those people sort of come after you, where have you been? Where are you going? Or sometimes you have kids in youth programs that you don't want to disrupt, and they're getting what they need. How? How can we respond to someone who, even they perceive themselves as an authority over your life and over your decisions? How can we sort of stand up for our own authority and agency and autonomy to make those decisions? Do? Hmm,

i

47:03

I've worked with so many partners where that was an issue, some authority was telling them what to do, and so as we chatted and came up with options, probably the most common one that seemed to be helpful was I know that you care about me, so this is talking to the authority person. I know that you care about me, and this is coming out of that care, but that's really not where I'm at right now, and so I'm going to be making some good, sound decisions for myself.


I'm sure I'll make mistakes, and I thank you for your care, but I'm not in a place to do that right now. So say, Yes, I know that you're doing this out of care. I'm assuming you're doing this out of care. Thank you for that, but this is what I'm going to do.

 Pam B. 47:56

It's respectful, it's loving, it's acknowledging, it's empathetic,

 48:01


yeah, it's all the things, but it's also saying thank you, but no, thank you. Yes, that's not what I need. That's not what I'm going to do. So, yeah, stepping into your own self to be able to make wise decisions for yourself.

 Pam B. 48:18


And that can feel that can feel aggressive if what you're used to feeling is sort of submissive, and I don't mean that in a negative way, but submitting to authority where it does make sense, but in this situation, it does not make sense because they don't have the knowledge they're not the authority, and So that can feel uncomfortable and too bold and aggressive, but I just want to encourage our listeners that that's just being assertive.

 48:49


Yeah, that's you being who you were created to be and using the voice that you've been given.

 Lyschel 48:58

I imagine we've just had several listeners, rewind, write it down. What she just say, I can write that down. Pretty I appreciate your

 Pam B. 49:14

that should become a meme. Sounds great, awesome.

 Lyschel 49:20

All right. Well, for the sake of time, I in. I know that we're over a little bit, but what hope, ladies, what hope can we leave for our listeners today? I'm

 49:32

just thinking about this as we were chatting, and so I pulled out to find it periods. So it's Philippians. Philippians one and verse six. And I'm certain that God who began the good work within you will continue his work until it's finally finished. And the day when Christ Jesus returns. And what gives me hope there is there's tons of room here for time and process, and that it's not that I have to have the answer right now and it has to be the right answer, and then everything will be all better, but that the father is working in us, even through something he would never, ever desire for us. He didn't bring this to you. He didn't ordain that you have this experience, but he's with you through it, and he's not in a hurry. Maybe I am, but he has promised that He is going to finish this working. So for me, that's the hope. I don't have to figure it all out. I don't have to have the specific timeline. I know that my father promises he's going to be with me, and he is going to work with me and work it out in whatever way that's going to be good for me and that honors him. He promises that. So for me, that's the hope. He's there. He's not abandoning he's not the train. He is with me, and he's finishing. He's not going to give up on



51:21

beautiful I



Lyschel 51:22

would I had pulled out Deuteronomy, 31 eight, so similar vein of thought in the in that scripture, reads, The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you. He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid and do not be discouraged. And when I used to read that scripture, I'd always get caught up in the shame of being afraid and discouraged. I'd be like, Oh, cried. I'm missing it because I'm already doing those things. But really, what it's doing is it's extending a level of promise to us, right? And if we can walk in an understanding of that promise, that he is true to his word and that he's not going to leave us or forsake us. And I think that feels so applicable in the various ways that we, you know, walked through this topic today of, do I stay at this church? Do I go somewhere else? Do I Do I receive the the words that are being given to me by people that may or may not understand the whole story, but resting in the knowledge that the Lord has not left you for one second, not one second. And so no matter where you go, right wherever your feet land, he's with you. And so what that can that truth can do is begin to remove the fear and the discouragement.



52:43

Yeah, so good, awesome. Oh, good.



Pam B. 52:50

The hope that I would leave our listeners is that by our submission to God and His Word, He has given us authority. And we have, we do have our own personal authority to make those decisions for ourselves, and that you can make those choices for yourself, to seek out the kind of support that will nourish you and encourage you and protect you from further harm and use it. Use that authority.





53:30

Well, Said. Pam,



Lyschel 53:32

well, thank you. Thank you, Dr Barbara Stephens, for being here with us today. So we hope listeners, we hope that we've been a bright spot in your recovery journey, you can help us by donating or leaving a five star, five star review or positive rating on whatever platform you listen to us. You can also be a good friend and pass on podcast episodes and share with even your faith community, if you feel led to do that, we really appreciate you. We're so thankful for the way that you support us in your comments and your feedback and encouragement. So thanks again for listening, and we'll see you soon. Bye. Bye.