

Interview with Julie Ferwerda

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Welcome to Just breed, the podcast focused on transforming the LGBTQ plus conversation and supporting you on your journey with your LGBTQ loved one. You are not alone.



Welcome to Just breathe parenting your LGBTQ teen. My name is Heather Hester and I am excited to be with you to transform the conversation around loving and raising an LGBTQ child wherever you are on this journey. Right now, in this moment in time, you are not alone.



I'm really happy to have Julie for Word with us today. And we are going to have a very very interesting conversation. very intriguing conversation. Julie has written a book called raising how amongst other books and articles, and she is an extraordinary researcher and just thought leader. And so, without further ado, this is Julie and we will jump right into our interview. Julie, thank you for being here today. Thank you, Heather. Can you tell us a little about your book raising how and what inspired you to research it and to write it?



Well, I'm raising hell actually. I wrote it about 10 years ago, and it's a book do you mind if I

show it real quick?



course I read ahead, okay.



You can see it there. It's a book that sets out to deconstruct the doctrine of hell scripturally historically, philosophically, and also So using Hebrew perspectives, and it's an interesting experience about how I wrote it, I have to say that I grew up in the church I was I had a variety of different church experiences growing up, I started in the Nazarene church. And then, you know, a lot of different types of churches like Bible churches and Baptist churches, and it depended on where I lived, and you know, which church at the, in the community I was in, I felt like, you know, could grow me and my family the most just like we all do. But I never really questioned the doctrine of Hell, I thought it was just like this agreed consensus since the beginning of the church, that everyone just knew it was true. And there was, you know, end of story and so there was never an alternative to even think, you know, could there be another side of the story, but for me, first of all, just tell you a little bit about my story and how I led up to being ready to received this message. As I said, I grew up in the church, however, I, you know, my start was in the Nazarene church and they were very help reaching and very, like lose your salvation, preaching. And every week I was like, terrified, I was going to hell. And you know, they told us when I was a child, you know, every, every Sunday, they said, if you went to bed with unconfessed sins, you would go to hell that night. And like, you know, every night I was like, too tired to confess all my sins, and so I knew I was doomed. But that and then the fact that I had an abusive father figure kind of led me to have this view of God as a terrorist really, and I spent most of my childhood just literally afraid of God and not really able to love God because of my fear. And through the years, a lot of things happen to me to lead me to be ready to receive a different message. And one of them started, I'll just kind of give you the highlights of these points. But one of them was was when I was about 16, I was I remember vividly driving in my car not thinking about anything. And a thought just came flooded my mind that I'm your father and I adopted you as my daughter and I will never give you give up on that contract I made with you, this is like you are now my family. And I will not give up on that. And that completely set me free from this fear that I'd had lingering of, you know, being lost or conditional salvation. And so that was a start and then I went through my 20s which I was not a very healthy person in my 20s. You know, I was doing all the right things. I was going to church, I was reading my Bible, I was a leader in church, I, you know, led Bible studies and I was involved in women's ministry and on the worship team in my

church in Florida and very, very invested. In my faith, but I remember as early as my 20s, feeling like a salesman who didn't believe in my own products and because of that I never really shared my faith with any outsiders. I went through the motions. I went to church every Sunday, but I knew nothing was really changing in my life, no matter how hard I worked at my faith, and it was a very discouraging and dark time in my life, you know, probably kind of that dark night of the soul or, you know, being in the wilderness where I just felt like my prayers returned empty, and I wasn't changing and love didn't feel my heart. So I went through a really awful high conflict, divorce in my early 30s. And at that point in time, for the first time I felt God's grace and that was when I really felt like something broke through and I started just experiencing God in a new way. I started you know, feeling God speaking To me a lot and throughout throughout my 30s, I guess you would say I started to see the flaws in, in the church model. And a lot of it stemmed from patriarchy and just how suppressed women were from having in the churches I went to for having a voice and feeling like first class citizens. You know, we were kind of just put on the back burner. And there were so many things. You know, I saw a lot of hypocrisy in the leadership and I also was pretty bored in church, I didn't ever really feel like I grew and again, I just came, it felt like a toilsome journey where I just kept coming up against the same walls. And I remember in 2008



was kind of this pivotal point for me. I was on a walk, this was in my 40s and I was on a walk, crying in the rain, it was raining and I was I was bawling my eyes out and I was saying, God, I just have to admit that I don't know how to love and I can't do it like I can't muster up love in my heart. And if you want me to be a loving person, you're just gonna have to put it in my heart because I can't do it. I need to be changed, I need to be filled, I want to feel something like I've never known what it feels like to be changed and, or to be born again or you know, to have a transformational experience. And in that time to my children were pretty young, and I had a daughter who was always questioning hell, she was my more spiritual child. And she would often come to me with those questions like How can this be fair that, you know God would send people to hell forever to burn like, how is that compatible with a loving God and I would give her all the usual platitudes that we learned in church. Oh, you know, we can't understand everything but God is loving and just and, you know, Justice has has to have a punishment for unbelief and you know, all the things that we're told and They don't even sound, you know. So, anyway, in 2008, also the same year that I was crying in the rain, I started researching Hebrew perspectives on the Bible with a friend. And for the first time, my eyes were open to many Bible errors, as well as how Western theology has been so misled in the way they interpret the Bible. Like they're completely missing the Hebrew perspectives, which are the people who wrote the Bible. And it got me really aware of the humility that we needed to approach our Bibles to

understand that we there's a lot we don't know and a lot of things we've been mistaken about. So at this time, my husband and I had pretty much stopped going to church, which a lot of people would warn against and say, that's a dangerous position to be in because, you know, you could get led astray but my husband and I are both very well educated, very spiritual, very independent thinkers and weren't really worried about getting spiritually off track, if any, we felt a lot of relief, not being in church with all the drama and, and problems for her. So during my studies, I was studying with a friend and I came across a verse in First Corinthians 15:22, and 23. And it says, as an Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive, but each in his own order. And I thought about that verse and I was like, you know, I've read through the Bible like, seven times, at least, because I used to lead women through the one year Bible every year and I'm like, why did I never see this verse? Like, right? What does it mean as an atom all die? So in Christ, all will be made alive. I mean, we're looking at the same all that died in Adam. And we're saying they that same all will be made alive in Christ. And so my husband and I, both were presented with the idea That hell might not be true at the same time, we were kind of nosing around on some websites and we're like, there's an alternative to this, like it's possible, but hell might not be true. And people are talking about this.



Oh my gosh.



And so he and I decided to go two different directions and research and come back together. And, you know, since like I said, we're both independent thinkers, and we didn't want to be swayed by the same thing. So he went one way and like, Did his research and I went another way and did my research. And a few weeks later, we came back together, and we were both. It didn't even take more than two weeks, we were both convinced that there was not a shred of evidence in favor of hell. And we had already found answers to most of our objections and questions. And it was so eye opening, and for the next year, I did research every day. I was a full time writer then and I was, you know, staying at home. And I just began researching Every single day, everything I could get my hands on to kind of unravel like this picture like what's going on here in our Bible? What's it trying to tell us? And how did this happen? And, you know, what can we make out of this? So we found, I found that there was no evidence of hell and tons of evidence to disprove hell. I'm almost done. So thanks for bearing with me here, but no



good is so interesting.



Anyway, we found that not only was held not true, but the Bible and the earliest church teachings and the Hebrew teachings indicated that God had a plan and an intention to save all people in a plan of ages. And as I looked into this, I discovered that there are verses all over the Bible that say this and I just never saw them through my old filters. So like, for instance, think of these verses and I'm not going to say where they are. I'm just going to kind of run through a few that we all know. Sure. The angel and announcing the birth of Christ. said, behold, I bring you a good tidings of great joy, which shall be for all the people. And I thought, how could it be good news for all the people if only a few people benefit? And then, you know, Jesus on the cross, if I be lifted up, I will draw all men to myself are all humans. What does that mean? Jesus was lifted up. All humans, all humans, and then Romans 518 the condemnation on all men resulted in the justification of life to all men. And I mean, there, you've got these, like three verses in the Bible, including that first one that quoted First Corinthians 1522 and 23. And then this Romans 518, they're saying the same all that died in Adam are the same, all that will be made alive in Christ. And there's not really a way around that. Mercy triumphs over judgment and then you know, one of my favorites to every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus as Lord to the glory of God the Father. I will just say that all this was a huge revelation. And you know not I found out that not only did God not intend to fry everyone over an endless barbecue who didn't leave, but that God had a plan in place since the foundation of the world to reconcile everyone, even before any of this began. And you know, it was it was so eye opening to me and so transformational that for the first time, love flooded into my heart for all people, and I felt born again for the first time like for an entire year I had so much peace and so much joy that I practically danced everywhere I went and I saw people through new eyes and I was no longer like categorizing them as good or bad or you know, deserving of hell or heaven like we subconsciously do from our beliefs, but every single person I met I was like, I am going to see you again someday. And I love you I know, people probably felt really weirded out because I just felt so joyful and so like connected to everyone and so safe for the first time. So, you know, I just discovered that God can no longer lose one of his children then lose a part of himself and you know, he's Jesus said that you parents know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more Our Father who is in heaven. So you know, you have to just think about what what is Jesus trying to tell us about the Heavenly Parent and so anyway, that that's kind of my my story of transformation and how I came to this understanding and how I wrote the book.



I love that oh my gosh. And I just find it so fascinating because you know, truth be told I, you know, really did start reading kind of as a skeptic, which I think all of us do, especially those of us who are really, this was hammered home that you you step into So out of line, you are going to hell and see through 15 reasons a day. And in reading this, I had so many just, wow moments I love, you know, one of the things we were talking about before, was just the peace and the joy. And I think that is such a huge thing and being able to let go of this fear because that's what it is, right? And it's this fear that man, that religion that the institution has put upon us, not God. And so that's one thought I was, you know, having while you are while you're talking about this, and, and the other, you know, like I said before, this is going to take me weeks to process this. So, everybody Forgive me for, for being perhaps not as articulate as I usually am. But I'm still processing this so much, because it's so fascinating to me. But the other piece of that I really, really liked you have the whole chapter After on what God wants God gets. And kind of dispelling like the I think so many of us get to that place where we're like, well, there's so much evil in the world. What about all of these people who never learn about him? They're just going to hell. How's that fair? Right? How is how does evil fair or right or how do you how do you work that into this the plan that we've been taught right and and also kind of the piece of like questioning like, well is God really all that powerful if all this stuff happens is happening and I really really and I'm not going to do it justice here guys so you're gonna you know everybody's gonna have to read the book, but I love what you basically you go through the way this the Bible was originally written I love that you're going back to their original Hebrew texts and the original Greek And looking at what those words actually mean, and taking this to say, you know, this is all in God's plan, we are all his children. And we will all he will gather us all into his fold. Right? He will bring all of us to him. And there's something so comforting and knowing that there's a plan, right and that he has a plan and that all of these you know, I often will say, you know, when something difficult occurs or you look at things happen. Take right now, for example, we're in the middle of this Coronavirus pandemic. Right, right. I keep thinking there's a reason there's something positive, multiple beautiful positive things that will come from this right. Mm hmm. So I think that kind of goes to this. This whole thought I just,



yeah, well, and let me just say interjects there, too. That I have come across a lot of people who realized that God wasn't going to put anyone in hell forever. And a lot of people psychologically, struggle. A lot of people kind of lose their faith for a time over this because they realize that they've just been in a relationship with God out of fear and not out of love or the right suddenly it's safe to question and have objections about evil and

suffering, and they find themselves losing their faith. And I just want to say, you know, even if that happens, that's okay. because no one's going to pay some penalty. If anything, you're having a more authentic faith experience when you're able to articulate your objections to evil and suffering and certainly God is big enough to handle that. Like, I think any divine being would be surprised if we didn't question that. But I just want to say, you know, through my experience over the last 10 years, I've spent a lot of time Thinking about evil and suffering in light of a good God. And that's actually the topic of my next book. And there are some perspectives that are so helpful in wrapping your head around this. So I just encourage people to be patient and don't throw out the baby with the bathwater, like just sit with some of these tensions and paradoxes until you get further understanding.



I think that's that's very good advice. And that, I think, because our conditioning has been fear that when we let go of that, there's kind of that time, a space and time and it's different for everybody where you're kind of uncertain how you feel, and how you're supposed to approach this. When when Connor came out three years ago, we had already left the church because we were really frustrated with some, you know, kind of same thing, things that were going on. Just the drama, the politics. The nonsense the things, the dots that didn't connect. And I think this was all just, you know, part of the process. And I started questioning a lot, you know, when Connor came out and thinking, Okay, wait a second, you know, my God is love. And that was kind of for me that was my entrance into really questioning all these other pieces and, you know, coming to meeting you and coming to meeting, you know, other people and just continuing to questions. So, questioning is good. And, and I feel, you know, my relationship now with God is so much more authentic. And I don't have that, like, I'm so sorry. I didn't say I'm sorry. You know? Well, if you think about things I've done and I'm so sorry, I don't even know you know what, that whole thing where? Yeah, you know, it's Just so much more real and I feel like we can just be who we are. And that's what he wants us to do. And that's how you just connect with other humans right as being real?



Well, sadly, if you think about it, Hell is like the most limiting thing we could believe because it keeps us from having true authentic questions and thinking for ourselves. Like, everything is decided you, you don't question or toe the line, or, you know, if you're doomed. And I feel like any divine being who would create this universe would want us to be filled with questions and want us to be able to safely ask those questions and not feel

like we're paying a price. And so it's really just restoring your reason when you realize hell isn't true. rooting for yourself for the first time and be true to your questions.



And that's so liberating, huh? To know that you can can do that, that it's not only okay, but it's good.



Yeah.



And and unnecessary. Yeah. Um, so I want to keep keep moving on because I know we have I have some, we have some really great things to talk about. And this kind of is a good follow up here because you've used phrases like spiritual terrorism and spiritual abuse, to describe the effect of teaching the concept of hell to our children. Can you break that down into potential outcomes and why?



Well, going back to my story, I'm my own Case in point, you know, growing up in the Nazarene church, having the fear hanging over my head every week that I was going to lose my salvation or everyday really, and the terrible fear of God and all the psychological torment that went with that I was absolutely traumatized as a child, and I even had Add psychosomatic, you know, symptoms, I had nausea and terrible stomach, you know, disorder over this, like every day I felt like I was gonna just be sick all the time and I had terrible anxiety, I had separation anxiety, I had all kinds of trauma over this. And I think, you know, churches and families are using hell as a spiritual abuse weapon over the least of these which are our children. And I don't know if people are really aware of this, but you can look into the works of a lot of psychotherapists and also, quantum and bile you know, quantum scientists and biologists that from the age of two to six is called a theta stage with our children and it's when their minds are being programmed. And that's where, you know, as adults, we have all these tapes that are playing in our head subconsciously, that we don't even understand why we do what we do. from ages two to six, we're programming our children and the ways they think about life and God and their culture and their family. And we're deep programming them to believe in a God that is worse than

the worst parent that they could imagine. And that is spiritual abuse and spiritual terrorism. And I just want to point out, you know, a couple of verses in Jeremiah were once in Jeremiah 19, five, and God's talking about the high places that were built to bail to, quote, to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to bail. A thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it ever enter my mind. And then again in Jeremiah 30 to 35 it says they built high places for bail in the valley of Benham which by the way, that's gahanna or hell in home testament. to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Maalik, though I never commanded nor did it enter my mind that they should do such a decent testable thing and make Judas in. So here we have God talking about hell and how the people had envisioned this place to burn their sons and daughters to Moloch. And God said, what a detestable thing. How could they even conceive of that? And I just want to show you a book here too. I love the work of Boyd Purcell. He is he has a doctorate in maybe I don't know what his doctorates and maybe theology but he wrote this book called spiritual terrorism. Mm hmm. And it's spiritual abuse from the womb to the tomb. And I think he has a website also called Christian Christianity without insanity. So he he really delves into a lot of this psychological and you know, the the angle of the spiritual abuse and I highly recommend his work. So



as awesome and we'll definitely link that into the show notes. So



You all will have access to do your own homework here and to kind of look some of these things up yourself and, and get questions answered that you might have. But I think that it is so interesting to me because you listed off all of the, you know, things that you were feeling are so common in our kids right now and and have been for generations, but I think, you know, now that we just have to have access to more information and access to so much more we're realizing right, how much do you think about the anxiety, the, the depression, the inability to be able to process emotion because it's so scary, because it's, they just get frozen and they don't know how to do all of these turning into physical ailments, which that's just the next step. Right? Yeah, you have all these, you know, anxiety, depression. That all moves into physical stuff, and not Different ways. And so I think that that I really wanted to point that out because I think that that it, it connects to, you know, my audience as well. Because, you know, we're all trying to connect the dots, right? Like where's this coming from? And and I know there's a very diverse audience of people who are listening to this, which I love and I appreciate. And I think to a certain degree, you know, this is this is information that we've all had given to us. Again, two

ranging degrees of intensity. And our kids here, and our kids, I think the thing that as adults we have to remember is that when we were kids, the it came to us through, you know, our parents, our Sunday school or church or friends or wherever, right? Our kids now have that plus, the internet, plus social media plus all this stuff coming at them at all. You know, all the time where they're getting this kind of information they're getting these scary messages they're getting that is just so difficult for them to process. I really like being able to use phrases like that, because it is so accurate to, you know, your experience, my experience, so many people out there have had this experience and what it boils down to is teaching the concept of hell to our kids is damaging, and we can do something about that now. Right, you know, we don't want them to wait till they're in their 40s Mm hmm.



Well, also, one thing I didn't mention is that I'm also an ER nurse and I have spent a lot of time in the ER triaging, suicidal and depression patients and it's interesting to me how many times the topic of hell comes up when you are working with people of color? psychological problems. So and you know, these are adults who it's back to that programming they had as a child and it's just interesting. How significant hell looms in people's minds and consciousnesses throughout their lifespan.



Oh, my goodness, that is interesting and not surprising, either. Right? Right. It makes so so much sense. So I kind of want to move on to our next topic, because I moved into it a little bit, and then I backed out of it. But, you know, like I said, most of my listeners are parents of kids who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. And you've talked a lot about the flaws of the current godparent prototype. In other words, you know this fear based parenting that we've been talking about just being fear based living, but fear based parenting, I'd really like to spend a little time on how parenting from this perspective is even more harmful for these vulnerable kids so important?



Well, okay, so think about, you know what we've been talking about how we're using the doctrine of hell to rein in our kids and to make sure that their souls are saved and they're, you know, not in danger of, of ultimate eternal loss. And now one of our children realizes they're queer, and they're in the church. And now the spiritual terrorism and trauma is tenfold. That child never truly feels accepted, you know, they're free, frequently

marginalized or shamed by their peers, their families, their church. They believe that they're inherently flawed by no choice of their own. They have to severely reject their own sexual identity and their future happiness, you know, with a loving partner because there's a part of them that God and their parents and their families say is unacceptable and unlovable. That's Suicide statistics for queer children are kind of like off the charts and we should be listening to this. I looked up the website called The Trevor Project and they had my favorites statistics on there. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among people ages 10 to 24 LGB youth seriously contemplate suicide at almost three times the rate of heterosexual youth LGB, TN, you know, we can add the other letters. Yes, they're almost five times as likely to have attempted suicide compared to heterosexual youth. I mean, think about that five times as likely when it's already the second cause of suicide. And, lastly, that the LGB youth who come from highly rejecting families are 8.4 times as likely to have attempted suicide as LGB peers who reported no or low levels of family rejection, so Clearly, we just see, you know, this horrible effect that we're having on our children just rejecting everything about like, their innate identity. And I know a lot of people will balk about that. They'll say, no, it's a choice. And I used to buy into that kind of philosophy myself until I became a nurse. And also until I've worked with a lot of, of people that say, from some early age, like it just one day they woke up and they're like, I'm not attracted to the opposite sex. And, you know, they weren't trying to change anything. In fact, one of my very best friends raised both of her children in a Christian home. She raised them the same way she raised them with all the values and just like probably like you, one of her children came out in high school, and, you know, nobody was more shocked than she was, but thankfully, we've we've kind of made this journey together and she was able to fully love and support her daughter. It's definitely Something as parents that we need to be paying attention to, is the spiritual and mental health of our children through what this is doing to them. If they're, you know, if they come out as queer,



absolutely the effect like you said, the effect is tenfold. And I think that's probably on the low end. I mean, I I've thought about all of you know, obviously all of this so much. So with Connor, we were surprised. But we, you know, from day one, have been affirming and supportive and just kind of like, we've got to figure this out. We're going to figure this out. He's still dead attempt suicide. He still did have extraordinary mental health struggles, shame, self loathing, extraordinary, extraordinary things that he went through. And I think oh my goodness, this isn't you know, my kid who We have embraced him and loved him and supported him. And you know, his younger siblings just think he just walks on water. And, you know, and even, you know, most of his close friends in high school, I mean, thank goodness, you know, he's in college now. And that's a totally different atmosphere. Although right now he's home. But



are they all



recess, as everybody is right now? But it is, as I thought about this so much and really, you know, educated myself and I'm so glad you brought up the travel project because they're one of my favorite resources and they're just so good at what they do and what they're doing. Thinking about the fear based parenting. The what this mean this is hard on a kid who is typically developing right, let alone So, thank you for for Sharing on that because that just was one of the things that really struck me and and in your book and and things that we've discussed and I really wanted to share that with my audience. So kind of moving on, you give a ton of examples in your book of how God is always looking for the good and all of us, which I love and that he's not keeping a checklist. There's not some like Santa Claus that right? It is not the guess exactly, which I love. So I have a million questions about this, but I narrowed it down to three, can you give just one or two of your favorite examples of this, of how God is always looking for the good, and just Why? It makes so much more sense to focus on this as opposed to terror of how the nonexistence,



I can give you a couple of examples. And the first one is so simple. It's right in front of you, you're a parent and you love your children, and you're always looking for the good in them. And even when your kids are acting out, and your friends are like, Oh, you know, rolling their eyes, and it's like, I can't believe she's not dealing with those kids. Well, as the parent like you, you know, this child and you love this child, you would give your life for it, and you're always wanting to see the best in your child. And so, you know, if I'm a reflection or a fractal of God, I'm doing the same thing that God's doing with his children. And the second example that I would give you, which I explained in my book, or offer in my book is that there's nothing that a child can do that a loving parent wouldn't forgive or want to reconcile. And a perfect example of this is Kent Whitaker, who I met him at a writers conference many years ago before he became Famous he was trying to get a story out there. And he ended up writing a book called murder by family. And he tells you a story about how a gunman came to his doorstep one night and after he had been out to dinner with his family and killed his, one of his two sons and his wife, and he was injured almost fatally and he was in the hospital. And while he was in the hospital, the still small voice came to him and said, Will you forgive your gunman? Will you forgive the person that did this to you that killed your son and your wife and tried to kill you? And he had this

huge battle within him. But ultimately, he just realized how could I not forgive the killer or the assassin when God has so graciously forgiven me for everything and so he forgave the killer and then later found out it was his own son. It was his other son. And his other son had had a lot of psychological problems from the time he was little but Obviously the family didn't realize To what extent and hear God was asking Him to forgive his own son for murder. And that's the heart of a parent, like, always knowing. There's reasons behind why people do things. But ultimately, we want the best and, you know, for our children, and through that situation, Kant was able to find a restored relationship with a son. You know, his son, I'm sure got help and was in prison and everything, but at the end of it, because he forgave his son, they were restored in their relationship, and that's what God is after with all of his children.



I love I've loved that story. And I find that I mean, I think so extraordinary for a couple of reasons. I mean, first of all, that he was able to grant forgiveness, even before because you think of the the devastation, the heartbreak, the mourning, the grief, I mean, everything he had to have been going through and it's From healing, right, and and then to find out that it was his other Son, Holy cow, I mean was extraordinary. I just think that's such an extraordinary story and an extraordinary message. Well, I'm so glad that you share that



you can give the parallel there to the, it was the other son of God that killed Jesus. So, you know, gee, we're all sons of God. And, you know, we would have been probably right there looking on with a proof in with approval based on just what's in the heart of man. So God endured this also with people, you know, the other son killing one of his sons, so and he forgave.



Anyway, right, ultimate example of that.



And the other example that I love that you gave and I, I have to share it because I read it for the first time, in a very different way than I've always read it which is the story of the

prodigal son which always irritated me. Truth be told, I actually this wasn't my least favorite stories in the Bible because I just thought it was it annoyed me and I mean, why? totally honest. I, I don't know if it was though I think part of it is I remember to have been a dinnertime a table discussion when I was growing up, and my brother was quite wayward. And my father would always talk about this and, and I being the oldest and hearing it through my own filter at the time, you know, oldest teenager, very different expectations. And thinking, well, this is just not fair. Like this isn't right, you know, like, I I'm doing all the right things and I'm being a good girl and and he, you know, gets to go, be, you know, knucklehead and then everything's okay. Right. And I think that's like the filter that I always read the story through, and then kind of just shelved it and As I read it through your, you know, as you were talking about in your book, I was like, Ah, well, now I totally appreciate this story. And I really understand what the story is saying what it's teaching us. Right? I thank you for sharing that, you know, all of you probably think I'm nuts for that being my experience, but then there we are. There's another little piece of me.



Well, I mean, that's what the older brother felt like in the story, too. So you were in good company.



Right? Yeah, I always kind of there was always part of me that was like, identify with him. And that's not right and identify with him, but I couldn't figure out why. You know,



what's info though, is it's kind of holographic because at some point, you realize that in your pride, you were the prodigal son as well as the brother. So you're both of the people in the story. And you're both in need of the same grace.



So. Right, right, exactly. Well, it I definitely feel like the other brother 30 years later.



So I'm grateful.



really grateful. Oh my gosh, you talk about the six characteristics of a loving parent in as well. Can you share those with us because I love this so much? Sure.



Well, first of all characteristics that we're trying to understand, you know, Jesus said you earthly parents know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more your heavenly Father so what we're looking for here is if we feel like we're good, earthly parents, what are we trying to compare to God if God's so much better than we are? So, as you're, you know, thinking about the characteristics of loving parents, you think this is just a drop in the ocean compared to how God feels about us as His children. The first one is loving parents only intend good for their children. And I want to just say here too, that if you take the idea of hell as the destination for man, you know most of mankind who didn't believe in this lifetime, that's a very punishing view of a parent of a heavenly parent. And throughout the New Testament, the Greek word for punishment is Colossus. And Colossus actually is a word that means pruning or correction. And it's not the idea of punishment the way we view it. So all of the things that happened to us that seem, you know, difficult or what we might think of as punishing are actually all for correction and that's what loving parents do. We only intend good for our children when we spank them for running out into the street. We want them to learn that that's not a safe or you know, becoming thing to do. There's going to be a consequence for that because we're trying to save their lives. So the second one is loving parents make sure that the punishment fits the crime and I had never really thought about about this but you know, if we have 70 years, on average on this earth that we can make mistakes and you know, totally miss the boat, which is kind of silly because God is the one that takes credit for blindness. And so you know, ultimately we're drawn to God. But let's just say for a second that it's our freewill and you know, we're supposed to just figure it out. Is it really fair to have, you know, endless time millions, billions of years in a fiery furnace for 70 years of making mistakes and just not getting it right. So that's not the punishment fitting the crime. The third one is loving parents understand that there are factors behind disobedience and when you've got a child and they're they're doing anything that other people maybe don't agree with you, as the parent know that that child has factors for why they're acting out or making the decisions they are or doing something that doesn't conform to the social norms. You have Have the history with this child. And so you're always their defender, you're always their advocate because you know the story behind the story that others aren't privy to. And that's really how it is with our relationship with God. God knows us intimately more than even our parents do and knows why we do what we do. So that's, you know, just a really important factor in good parenting. The fifth one is that loving parents demonstrate

fair and consistent character. And do you know that I talked about this in the book that if you have some parents and say they have four children, and three of them are obedient and doing all the things they should be doing? But there's that one child that is just wayward or, you know, not living up to the standards of the family? How would it be if the parents locked that child in the basement and tortured them? You know, how would the other children in the household view that those parents they would know? Not see consistent character if the children upstairs are being included in the family and loved and nurtured and cared for, but they know that there's this other child being kept in the basement being tortured. That is psychologically, completely unacceptable to the happiness of the children upstairs. And this kind of thing actually actually happens. You know, there, there was a book that came out a long time ago, maybe 20 years ago, a child called it and it was by Dave pelzer. And he has a series about this, but there actually are parents that do this where they'll, they'll sequester one child and make that child, the object of abuse and isolation and all forms of mistreatment. And we would look at that and we say, that is completely messed up like those parents need help and why would we ascribe to God the same kind of behavior?



Right, right.



Then just the last one was is that loving parents ultimately longing to be restored in relationship and you know, you can ask 100 parents whose child is wayward or rebellious or doing whatever and there's not one parent that would ever say, I don't care about them anymore. I don't care if they ever you know, come home they're like the prodigal sons parent they're always scanning the horizon for that that child to come home and to be restored. So those are the the characteristics of loving parents and we can know without a doubt that God so much more with us so



I love that thank you for sharing that. I think it just gives the overriding theme and all of that you know, obviously as love knew you you had said this to me when we talked a couple of weeks ago but i think it's it's stayed in my mind and I i want to share it with everybody hears when you're making decisions, whether it's about parenting or about Whatever it might be, is your decision moving you toward love or toward fear? And I think that that was so powerful to me and I, it's so simple, right, but it's so just beautiful. And as

parents, you know, as we make a million decisions every day with our kids, right and a lot of murders split second decisions, this is an easy way to just okay, is this a loving decision? Or is this one that's going to instill fear? Or is this one that's going to you know, we all we all do like the split second like as you kind of make that decision, like how am I going to handle this because oftentimes we don't have hours to mull over how to Yeah, different things that happen right. So I think this is an easy litmus test right to use is yes, love or fear, love or fear over fear. So thank you. Thank you. Just want to I want to kind of move on to my my last question, because we are moving on to an hour here. Holy cow. You talked and I came up with an email or in your book, but you, you talked about the transformation from the cold chrysalis and which I obviously love because that is my logo. It, you know came from a place that I think when I originally came up with it, it had very deep meaning for me and it's just kind of evolved over time. It signifies really this transformation from darkness to light and beauty and the work and the effort it takes to achieve that transformation and an awakening to the truth. And I loved how you use this analogy as an as our awakening to our connectedness with God and each other. Can you talk a little bit about that?



I feel like the, you know, this is talked about really by all of the really spiritual, awake people but The there's probably no better analogy of the transformation process than Caterpillar, Caterpillar to butterfly. And I just want to say what I was saying about the spiritually mature people. Our entire the entire point of our journey here is transformation. And it's going from that place in life. Richard Rohr, he's one of my favorite authors. He describes it as religion for the two halves of life, you know, the first half, you're building a strong container and you can do that through religion or whatever. And you know, some people think of it as your ego, your identity, you're trying to, you know, you're being shaped and formed by your, your authority figures in your life, what is the proper way to conduct myself here so that I can be a loving person, you know, what are my morals and my worldview and this is where you know a child just going through the motions. It's again, that theta stage where they're learning how to live in the world successfully and all That should be leading us to a place where ultimately we come into what's called the second half of life religion. And that is leaving your container and realizing that all the rules don't serve you anymore unless your heart latches on to you know this transformation and you allow God in the spirit to completely like transform you so that your motives are being a good person and being a loving person and the caterpillar to butterfly is, is just a beautiful idea of this where you know, the caterpillar is slogging around, along on the ground in the mud and the dirt and not much vision there. You know, they're just like trying to run by and what happens, you know, something from within. Whatever it is tells the caterpillar it's time to go into the dark and the caterpillar does

what it's been programmed to do. It makes a cocoon and in the darkness and the stillness, something happens that the Caterpillar has no control over and that is transformation. And this is where all the lessons learned through Caterpillar life, you know, come in and actually change that. That Caterpillar into a different species. And this is you know, basically what Jesus was talking about. We translated eternal life but it's actually Etonian life and the verses the word Jesus is talking about getting connected to the vine coming into God and life is all about this is that transformation from Caterpillar to butterfly, where one day the the caterpillar wakes up, but it's not a caterpillar anymore. And suddenly, guess what, it's not on the ground anymore. It's flying. And it's, you know, sampling nectar and flying in the skies and drifting on the wind and it has this incredible perspective back over its life. And so everything that we experience here is about our transformation. It's it's just a really beautiful like Love that you picked that it's, it's such a beautiful symbol of what we're here to do. And, you know we we can look at mistakes differently and mistakes ultimately lead us into be we learn more through mistakes than anything and they ultimately lead us into becoming a healthier, wiser and loving adult hopefully if we've been given the right tools. So anyway, within transformation, I'll just say this in you know, as the last thing is, the entire point of union life is unlearning the separateness that we've been taught throughout our first half of life religion where God is out there and separate and we're separate from others. And true transformation comes when we uncover our butterfly. And we know that we were never separate. And I came to realize somewhere along the way that the word sin actually is means the perception of separation and all the unlovely behaviors that go along with that. So when we are putting off The life of sin. What it means is we're uncovering that butterfly self that knows that we're divine sparks. And I think it's Second Peter says that we are divine image bearers. And that's what Jesus and the prophets and everyone came to tell us is, we are connected, we're not separate, and we are on the inside, with God looking out, you know, there's no there's no other. So it's very empowering. And I think as we approach parenting, we want to teach our children this incredibly transformative worldview so that they understand that there's no separation and that will just bring really good fruit into their lives. self acceptance, and as well as everything especially, you know, with children that may deviate from our, our culture, so



are our subcultures. That's I think it's a really, really lovely way to end because that's ultimately what we want, right? To teach our children just to love And I love themselves and to love others and see this as All right. Yeah, just a select few but right all and that's really is good news. It's very good news. Thank you so, so much for being with me today. just fascinating. And, you know, for all my listeners out there, I will post all of this in the show notes and lots of links to Julie's works. And, you know, as always, you can email

questions to Julie, just thank you. Thank you so much. Thank



you very much. I really enjoyed being here.



Thank you so much for joining me today. Check out the show notes for all of the resources we mentioned. And if you like this podcast, please take a minute to subscribe rate and review on Apple podcasts or Spotify. And as always, please share with anyone who needs to know that they are not alone. alone. Until next time