Toxic Relationships, Chronic Stress, and the Faith to Recover Transcript

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Opening Reflection on Lies and Truth

The enemy's never going to stop. So why would his ambassadors. So the first thing that we need to understand is I've got to reject that lie. But before I can even reject that lie, I've got to recognize that it's a lie.

So the first thing that I'm going to do is I'm going to step back and say, is this in line with biblical truth? Is this true? Is what I'm being accused of true?

And sometimes there's actually some nuances to it. There's parts that are true, parts that aren't true. And that's where we need to do the hard work in getting in there and say, Lord, show me.

Are there areas that are so there's some truth in here because guess what? Now you can take what the enemy meant for your harm and allow God to use it for your good in his glory.

So you get to now grow even when those lies are being chucked out. to Vitality Made Simple. The following production is for educational and entertainment purposes only.

If you need medical advice, call your doctor. Now let's go to vitality. Made simple. welcome to Vitality Made Simple. This is the podcast that equips you to feel better, look better, and to enjoy better relationships.

Podcast Introduction and Guest Welcome

You know, I talk all the time about life is about relationships. And normally we're looking at it from have metabolic health, get health pooping every day.

You know, getting staying active helps you have better relationships. But today we're taking a little different view. Today we have the world expert in narcissistic behavior.

Welcome Chris Reese. Thank you. Debbie, I so greatly appreciate I'm really honored to be here today. Well, it's an honor to have you. You have helped me so much.

You know, we we forget that what is happening in our lives affects us physically. And more and more research is pointing that direction. Many chronic inflammatory illnesses are tied very specifically with emotional issues.

And Chris talks a lot about narcissist narcissistic personality. And, so in my own life, for transparency, I have someone in my extended family that I consider to be my irregular person is someone that I love very dearly, but I have dealt very incorrectly with that relationship.

And and it was to my peril the way I was dealing with it until I found Chris is information. Chris is going to present this from a biblical standpoint.

So, you know, I know vitality made simples not a Christian podcast, but lots and lots of you are Christians. And regardless if you if you are a Christian, these are going to be strategies that you can use that are going to help you feel better and enjoy your life more.

So Chris, what opened your eyes to the devastating effects of of narcissistic behavior? Debbie that's actually a loaded question. And interestingly enough, I love what you do.

One of the things that started to open my eyes was some of the physical symptoms that I was going through in life I was seeking out. And now at that point, you know, traditional doctors trying to check out, is my thyroid the problem?

Why am I not pooping regularly? What's going on? Why am I stressed out all the time? And what I recognize is that my level of stress tolerance was so high that when someone would ask me, are you stressed?

Unless there was something absolutely catastrophic taking place, I'm like, no, I'm good, and I wasn't good. This just wasn't normal. It was normal for me, but it wasn't normal. Healthy behavior.

Chris Reese's Personal Journey with Narcissism

So one of the things that started to trigger that, it was that that constant, there was a there was health issues that were constantly taking place and that backed me up into what am I constantly stressed about.

And then this constant evaluation of, wow, there's always this very stressful dynamic that is going on within my relationships now. I wish I could say I had that one irregular person. For some reason.

The irregular person seemed to find me all the time, and I had a history of them throughout my life. So that began on this journey. After one major relationship that I had that I recognized.

Something's off here now. I know I got some stuff to own, but something is severely off and I went down this trail. Now, I probably took like ten steps ahead.

A friend of mine had recommended a book on sociopaths, and it unfortunately rang a little bit too true. Now, it wasn't entirely true. Now that's a pretty heavy label to give somebody, and I'm not a huge fan of labels, but sometimes it does help when you have this description of what's happening.

So I can give you an example like I fast forward, it took me about seven years to understand what my health issues actually were, and they were extreme adrenal issues along with thyroid problems.

When I finally got the diagnosis from a functional medicine doctor, I was ecstatic. Who on earth wants to be diagnosed with thyroid problems and with almost what they think they referred to at the time was stage four adrenal failure.

Who's going to be happy about that? But what I recognize is I was happy there was finally a label for it. There was finally something that I could recognize, and now I can backtrack in the traits and I can start to deal with the actual issues at hand.

And that's what I think starts to take place. We do take these these names in these labels just a little too far. I don't like what you said. I don't like how you looked at me.

So you must be a narcissist. These are labels. We're just throwing around far too casually. But there are times when we have all of these behaviors that are coming at us fast and furious, and it really brings some level of peace to have some label to actually consider it.

And that can begin to start you on your, your path. Okay. So I started to go down a little bit of a rabbit trail. So that was a bit of my journey. It was that was part of my journey in terms of understanding what this behavior is.

And then I started to see it everywhere. And I don't mean I saw it everywhere, as in, wow, I'm thinking about buying a white Honda Accord. And now I start to see it.

No, I'm seeing it because it is everywhere. And then fast forward. I was actually in the fitness industry for about 24 years, and one of the things that I wanted to do is to actually help people on a deeper level mentally, emotionally, spiritually.

God called me out of that industry when I went back to school, got my degree in counseling, got my degree in theology, and what I started to recognize is that there were so many people, regardless of what they came to me with, whether it was toxic thinking, just wanting to have a better faith in God, discovering their purpose, it doesn't

make a difference.

It all came down to one common theme. I'm telling you, Debbie, this common theme is going to blow your mind. A toxic mother. It all came back to a toxic mother.

They didn't realize it. I didn't realize it until we started to unpack it. And no, I'm not talking about now. I'm starting to project all of their issues onto their mother.

That's not what I'm saying. But as it began to unfold, there were so many issues that they had within that relationship that now affected other areas of their lives.

So that drove me even deeper into understanding narcissism, borderline personality disorder, sociopathy, and all those different characteristics. And then everybody just started to come out of the woodwork.

What about my husband? What about my daughter? What about my friend? What about my this and this? Despite how many times I said, Lord, don't send me, I don't want to be hanging out on this topic.

I believe that this is this is where he's landed me. And I like to be able to unpack this from a biblical standpoint, because this isn't just about labeling people, it's about you finding freedom.

Whether or not you can escape and not only freedom from them, but freedom that Christ died for you to have. He did not die and go to the cross so that we can continue to live in bondage to relationships now.

And that's what makes you so different. Chris. When I first found you and started following you on YouTube, Instagram Everywhere contacted you to be on the podcast.

Your book was about to come out and boy this this is really a must read for everybody because everybody has somebody in their life who's an irregular person.

And and when you have those relationships that you leave in your exhausted and, and, and you're thinking, oh, I should have said this, I should have said this, why do I why do I have this lingering pain in my left breast when I always leave that place?

Biblical Boundaries and Submission

You know, you've got to pay attention to these things because you can't eat enough healthy food or, you know, walk enough times around the block. Now to undo this.

God find us body, soul, and spirit. Chris's information comes at it from biblically. So Chris, thank you for that because, you know, growing up as a good person and probably I'm very disposition, disposition only optimistic.

I'm on the happy side of the mountain. I always have been. That drives a lot of people crazy. That drives me crazy person. Very crazy. But. So that makes you try harder.

So please speak to these things that we've believed, you know, turn the other cheek. Honor your father and mother. Say, for the people dealing with the narcissistic spouse that you know, this submissive wife, submit whatever, deal with these maybe false belief systems.

Yeah. So here, here, it's it's never just one sided. And it often reminds me of how the enemy operates. Right? He comes in with lies that are founded and grounded in some truth and so does the narcissist.

So fear is a flat out lie. You know, our radar would be up for long enough to say, okay, this isn't right, but things are said. Things are done that allow you to now question yourself.

So when we look at just submit, well, now we're dealing with a narcissist. So what do we do? Do we not submit

when we're talking about, you know, Jesus's command to love others?

Well, okay, I'm dealing with the toxic person. So therefore that goes out the window. We tend to swing the pendulum from one side to the other when the harder part is not finding the balance, it's finding the application.

So what principle applies in what situation? And that's where so many I can't even just say Christians, but Christians and other people like it's like we decide that I've been hurt for so long or I've been hurt so badly that now I'm going to put up this wall, that nobody's ever going to hurt me again.

But guess what? That changes you now as a person. Yes, you're keeping the bad out, but no longer is the good coming in either. So let's take, for example, when we get to the the biblical command to submit.

All right. So we're married to a toxic spouse, a narcissist, and we're called to just submit. The first thing that we really need to understand is what does submission actually look like?

Is it just falling under abuse or is it just doing whatever somebody tells you to do? Is it just my husband? Is it all people? So we really have to understand, number one, what submission looks like.

Number two, God never called us to submit to sin. So if this narcissistic spouse is now in sin and they're requiring that you submit to that, no, no, I do not need to submit to that.

However, if they're talking to you in a way that you don't appreciate or they're kind of half twisting lies and and now you're thinking, okay, well, since you're not leading well, I don't need to submit.

That's where we start to walk into some dangerous territory, because even Scripture tells us, wives, you know, these unbelieving husbands could be won over by your conduct.

So we have to walk that fine line. Now, this goes for men as well. You know, a lot of times, I'll, I'll deal with men who've got narcissistic wives and they think, well, I don't need to provide for her anymore.

I don't need to lead her anymore. I don't need to be that godly husband. In fact, many of them go and betray the marriage, and they feel justified in that behavior.

And that's not what the Bible is calling us to do. So we have to recognize that there is an element to owning our part. And I hate to say it, that's the part that most people, most Christians, don't want to hear because they've been so hurt.

They've been so broken and wounded and taken advantage of for so long that that wall goes up and they say no more. But what happens now is the enemy comes in and he's got those lies that are founded and grounded in some truth.

You don't need to submit anymore, girl. You got to take care of yourself. And now what happens is we start to stray from the biblical commands and the principles that would actually bring us blessings so it can get very distorted very quickly.

But isn't that how Satan works? That's exactly how Satan works. So, Chris, tell our listeners what narcissistic behavior looks like. You talk in your book about it sort of being a spectrum.

Yes. Yeah.

Narcissistic Traits and Childhood Roots

So we can't just be so blind as to say you're a narcissist. Most people don't have NPD, narcissistic personality disorder. That is a diagnosable personality disorder.

There's far fewer people than we think that actually have full blown NPD, but even that's on a spectrum. So let's bring this down to kind of everyday life.

The people that we're dealing with usually have very high narcissistic tendencies. Now we can backtrack even further and go back to that whole accountability thing.

We all can have narcissistic tendencies. It's just number one. What's the impact number two, what's the intent? So how long does these patterns go on?

Because I'll be honest with you, Deb, every once in a while I'm a little selfish. Every once in a while I can throw out a passive aggressive comment that doesn't automatically make somebody a narcissist.

Now I will come back. I will recognize the error of my ways and repent for it. And that's where you're going to start to notice the difference between people who are making mistake and people who are walking in narcissistic traits.

So there's not only a actually a spectrum of it. So I could have now a a mild version, or I could have a very extreme version. There are different types of narcissist.

Some are bold, some are obvious, some are quiet, some are actually helpful or spiritual or even deeply wounded. And they disguise themselves so well. And that's why so many people end up missing the signs until they're already emotionally entangled.

So what causes people to develop those personality traits? Well, narcissistic behavior doesn't just appear out of nowhere, right? It's often rooted in childhood experiences that shape how a person learns how to cope and connect.

Yeah. So it shapes how they actually get their needs met. Now, I don't there going to be some codependence out there. They're going to use this as an excuse for harm.

And it's not. It's just an understanding the origin can actually help us to make sense of the behavior. So a lot of times what happens in childhood. Now let me kind of backtrack a little bit.

In childhood we're all narcissistic, right? It's all about us me me me. What's that famous two year old mine, mine, mine. Right. So that that stuff gets worked out of us through proper parenting.

So what happens in childhood with these narcissistic people is, number one, they either suffer severe emotional neglect or some inconsistent nurturing.

You know, the parent is kind of vacillating. One day they're praising you, the next day they're insulting you, the next day they're ignoring you. So a lot of narcissistic adults, we're not truly seen as children.

They may have had parents who were present, parents who provided, but their emotional needs were ignored. So they learned early that if no one else is going to meet my needs, I'll make myself the center so that I'll never feel powerless again.

So that's one way. Another way is parenting that over praises with no accountability or the complete opposite is the high criticism with no support. So we've got two opposites.

We've got the over praising with no accountability. Timmy can do absolutely no wrong. He's so perfect. He's so precious. Yeah, Timmy just committed six crimes.

What are we doing here? Right? Or we've got the high criticism with no support. That highly critical parent that that criticizes but doesn't show exactly how to correct it.

So over praising or over criticizing. And then the last thing that happens in childhood is unsafe attachments and

then a lack of healthy boundaries. So if a child grows up in a household where there are no boundaries, where chaos, parental ification, favoritism, control, all these things are taking place, they don't learn healthy relationship patterns.

So what happens is now they step into adulthood, they only can do what they saw modeled. So they're either manipulating, they are scheming, they're lying, or they're just outright grandiose and just bulldozing people.

Again, not an excuse for the behavior, but it helps us to understand that it's often a wounded strategy. Now, it does help to understand because these are people, that we love and we want relationships with.

I mean, there are people dealing with, obviously, coworkers that, you know, are abusive or even, you know, pastors or, you know, people that they can get away from.

But in a lot of cases, Chris, it's it's people that that you love and you want a relationship with. As a clinician for 40 years, you know, I've had this what I call my front row seat.

So, you know, people just tell you everything. And so, you know, I started seeing these patterns before I even realized in my own extended family what was going on.

And there seemed to be a pattern of, oh, if I can just say the right thing, if I can just do something better.

Word Curses and Identity Attacks

Because people often would tell me things that like word curses that that their irregular person would put on them, you are just this, or you are this, or you never do this to speak about those word curses and how people should properly handle those.

Oh yes. Yeah. So you're right. You know, sometimes as Christians, we think that it's it's most Christlike just to endure under abuse. And that's what love looks like.

That's not love that's enabling. And narcissists don't just attack your behavior. They attack your identity. And they will speak what we could refer to as word curses, which are basically statements meant to shape how you see yourself.

They're meant to limit your confidence. They're meant to keep you under their control. So if we go back to this again, it's all manipulation. So when we refer to a word curse, it is often any spoken lie that is going to contradict to God says that you are.

And that's where we really run into some dangers. Because if you don't know what God says about you, like you will be more susceptible to come under that curse, that lie.

So I share this with people all the time. If I'm walking down the street and one of my neighbors is standing outside, just flailing her hands and pointing at me, going, you are the ugliest purple alien I have ever seen, I'm going to look at her, and I'm going to then pray for her because something's off.

Because I am not purple. I am not an alien. And I know that for a fact. But if she started throwing out something that maybe I struggled with, you know you are.

You are short and you're this and and maybe I struggle with my height so. Oh now oh maybe I am short y'all. Maybe I do have these issues. Now we start to internalize.

And because I'm now not secure in who I am. So on one hand, yes, they're actually speaking these curses. On the other hand, the issue sometimes lies more in what you're believing. Yeah.

So they'll they'll say words like, you're too sensitive. Nobody's ever going to put up with you. You're the problem.

You're unlovable. You know, God told me that.

And then they'll give their instructions. If we don't understand what God truly says about us, then we're not going to be able to combat these. We're not going to be able to just walk away and say, okay, I'm going to pray for you.

Because for them, these aren't just insults. They're meant to be identity assaults. because forgiveness can be instant, but access has to be earned. Well, that's powerful words.

I want to backtrack a little bit. Chris, I really appreciate your insights into dual responsibility in these situations. So what kind of person, is an easy target for a narcissist?

Unfortunately. And here's where I want to be able to put some disclaimers out there. This is not your fault. Just because you may be an easy target, it doesn't make that your fault.

But they do tend to target people who are rescuers, who are fixers, who have very, very strong empathy, and definitely ones who are uncertain in who they are in Christ.

Now, don't get me wrong. So don't hear what I'm not saying. They love Christians. Narcissists love Christians, lukewarm ones that aren't sure who they truly are in Christ.

So those are the kind of people that are really going to get targeted. A lot of times we think that narcissists target weak people.

Who Narcissists Target and Why

They have a tendency to target strong people and then weaken them over time. Wow. Because what happens is they are weak. Remember, they're not strong.

So you know, that whole opposites attract kind of thing. You know what? Where I'm lacking, I'm now going to search, you know, my my husband and I, we have very different personalities.

We have some similarities, but we have some differences. And they make for a very cool package. Right. So he's got strengths in certain areas and I have strengths in other areas.

The same thing is true. Like a lot of times we think if we're a giver, then we just assume we actually end up projecting our strengths onto others. If I'm a good person, if I look at it this way, they must look at it that way.

And then, well, wait a minute, they're not looking at it that way. So let me explain it to them. Let me explain it to them again and again and again. And we think that our explaining is a problem, right?

When in reality is they're not that person. But we're projecting onto them what we are. So if we're givers, guess what? We're going to attract takers.

Oh wow, that's a hard pill to swallow for a lot of people. They think, oh, I'm a giver. I'm going to attract other givers. And yes, that would be true if that's a big if, tiny word, big impact.

If you have the ability to see clearly, you have discernment and you're able to set boundaries, then you start to attract other givers into your life.

Otherwise you're going to be targeted by takers. So now if I'm a strong person, I'm the type that is like, okay, everything's falling apart. I will pull this together.

Oh, you don't know how to do that. Let me help you. Oh, you don't have enough money. Let me step in. These are the rescuers. These are the people that will not let life fall apart.

So the narcissist is like, this is great. They're going to pick up where I leave off. And trust me, they leave off pretty early. Oh, that's just so interesting.

It makes me think back of, you know, husbands that my friends have because that's not a relationship that I've, you know, had to deal with. But you totally see these super nice women.

They get tangled up with somebody who seems so nice and so giving and so attentive and everything at first. Yes. And then it's like, boom. Yep. Everything changed.

I pulled you into my web. Now we're good. And some of it is intentional. Some will actually set out with that intent. I am going to play this facade, I'm going to play this game and I'm going to pull you in.

And as soon as this happens, this changes. Many of them don't even realize they're doing it. It's it's such an ingrained demonic pattern within them that that's why when you call it out, they they honestly don't even see it.

Not does not make it right for somebody listening. It does not make it okay that they don't realize it. But sometimes. And that's where the strength and the rescuing and all that stuff now go from a strength to a weakness.

It's not your job to make sure that these people understand what's taking place. It's not your job to change them, fix them, control them, coddle them.

Any of that stuff at some point, you have to guard your heart and start to steward well what God has given to you because your identity, your life, your everything can now get lost in this toxic relationship.

Yes. And your health? Yes. Absolutely. Your health. And I sort of think, Chris, that a lot of, narcissists, when somebody's sick that they're actually targeting, they become nicer.

I mean, I've seen that among patients, like maybe one spouse, their identity is almost in being sick because then they're their abusive spouse is nicer to them.

I don't know, is that, interesting? Observe that. I mean, just, you know, I would say I have not really observed that. Yes, especially the illness. Yeah, I can see definitely where that could now get distorted.

And this is again, why we go back to what we're talking about at the top of our time together. We got to own our part. Do you see? So if a spouse is doing that now, playing the victim now kind of being more of the I'm sick, that's a form of manipulation to now on top of that, we can actually begin to make ourselves sick by declaring all that kind of sickness and disease to enter into our lives.

But let's kind of digress for a little bit.

Gray Rock, Shade, and Healthy Detachment

I've rarely seen that long term because a narcissist will step in and yes, they will be the rescuer. Oh, I'm going to come in. I'm going to be the one to take care of you.

And I got you. And this is wonderful. And it's usually just an image. It's for the outside world. It's really not for the benefit of that person. And if that illness goes on too long, you're going to start to see the cracks in that mask.

Yeah. And you're seeing the people coming to you for help. So, you know, that's that's interesting in my clinical experience. Now as I help people with get health, I'm starting to say, okay, what emotional issues do you need to deal with.

You know, you know, read this book, read that book, you know, deal, deal with what's going on because it's affecting everything too. It reminds me of when Jesus was healing the man crippled from birth.

And Jesus said, do you want to be? Well, you know, and so, I mean, his identity was going to change that crippled man. If he was, well, he was not going to be a beggar anymore.

He was not going to be having people, you know, bring him things and do things for him, feel sorry for him. So that probably is similar to someone that you see that says, okay, I'm ready to learn some different strategies and not be in bondage.

I mean, your book is called Breaking the Narcissist Grip and it is a form of bondage. It is, it is. And you can actually break that grip even if you can't leave.

And we go to those extremes, we think, okay, this person is this, how do I go? No contact. We've got such a spectrum in between. And it's usually in that, in between where God's doing such a work within us, you know, pulling out all of the old lies, all of the old dysfunctions and the mis beliefs and the toxic patterns that we have of our own before he will ever even release us.

So it's sometimes it's not about the release, it's really about the breaking of the bondage, like you said. Yeah, it's sanctification. So you talk about gray rock in the book.

Explain to our listeners what gray Rock means. Well, gray Rock is really just more of like a flat affect. You don't affect me, am I? It's not a pattern that I do just to say it.

It's definitely a tactic that is taught in the psychological world in terms of how to deal with these people. And I get the concept in terms of, you know, you can't allow them to continue to trigger you emotionally because you're basically taking the bait, and now you're getting pulled into that toxic ring and you're playing their game on their playground.

And what do you think's going to happen? So the gray rocking is more of a an emotional detachment. Unfortunately, where it starts to go sideways is where you a lot of spouses will overuse it in marriage.

So again we go back to what we were talking about. At the top of our time is there's going to be nuances and there's going to be very specifics that God will require of you in your particular situation.

There's no hard and fast rule, and especially when it comes to the marital covenant. So we can go back to now, second Timothy three one through five and it talks about in the last days there will be lovers of God, lovers of pleasure, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, boastful, disobedient, insolent to parents, you know, the list goes on.

And at the end. What these words avoid such people so we can apply that and go, okay, those type of people I need to kind of pull away from. But what do we do in the marital covenant?

I can't just walk away if there's no biblical release there. And especially if God is saying, no, no, hold on, I'm going to be doing a work within here.

So now what a lot of them will do is they'll they'll flip over to the gray rock. Okay, fine. I'll just be like, short and dismissive. And what we're doing is we're building up those walls.

So what I want to warn somebody of is to be very careful that, yes, you want to guard your heart emotionally, but we don't want to put up such strong walls that even God can't get through.

And that's what gray rocking can do sometimes. Well, and I think that's what's so good about your book, because you do make it so clear what our responsibilities are.

It's not our responsibility to change somebody else, right? And in the case of an extended family member, you don't want to gray rock forever. You don't want to break all those bonds.

But then how do we live? So something else there's an acronym in your book, shade. Please explain that to our

listeners. Well, a lot of times when we start to get into.

Resources, Book, and Closing Remarks

Being very jaded, we want to be very careful as to how we are now responding. And the person that we are actually being. So here's what a lot of people don't understand.

When you start to go down this road, if you're careful, if you're purposeful, it becomes so much less about them and all about you. What God is doing in you, what God is doing through you, and what God is going to do for you.

But the enemy is over here going, remember what they did to you? Remember? Oh, don't let them back in. Oh, I know you said you forgave, but don't forget about this.

And we start to walk this very jaded line. And before you know it, you are now becoming somebody that the enemy is proud of, not God. Yeah. No, that's that's fantastic.

I wanted our listeners to really hear that because this books about growth, it's about living a life of authenticity that you don't have any regrets for.

Yeah. So tell our listeners about all of the resources on your website that you offer and how to find you. Absolutely. So if you go to Chris Rock star com, that's Chris with a K Chris for the C.

And you'll find online courses. You'll find valuable free resources. You'll also find my new book Breaking the Narcissist Script. It is actually a Christian's guide to cutting the strings of manipulation, setting boundaries that stick, and reclaiming your life from takers so you can find that on the website.

Or if Amazon is easier to find that there as well. Now it's a great book. And thank you. It's a it's an easy read. I like the font. I like the, quotation boxes.

I like the QR codes. I'm just, you know, it's just easy to read and, so, so thank you for your time. I really thank you. And thank you for, just the elimination of truth.

We all want to live a life that, honors God. And, because the girls love God, love people, and have better relationships. And you're helping people do that, Chris.

And thank you, listeners. Please subscribe. Please share. I think this is a podcast you can share with a lot of people. I expect a lot of comments. I've been very, open in my life today.

We're now in 146 countries and almost 60, 500 cities. Because your sharing, join Chris on Instagram, join me on Instagram and just go out and have a great day.

Blessings. Until next time. joining us on Vitality Make Simple podcast. Be sure to visit Doctor Debbie osler.com for our courses and resources designed to help you feel better, look better, and enjoy better relationships.

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