**51: For When the Church Has Told Us to Be Quiet**

This is Be Known, and I’m Kerrah Fabacher. You’re listening to episode 51. We were made for relationship, but so often our relationships are broken. And when our relationships are broken, *we* are broken. One of our deepest human desires is to be known, but we often have lost ourselves along the way. This is a podcast to help you get your relationships back to a place of wholeness. A place of authentic connection, where you feel truly known.

So come on in and sit a while. Let’s exchange fear for love and finally see what good relationships are made of. And let’s see what kind of healing happens here.

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For many years of my life, I was named the “sensitive” one, the one who was too emotionally expressive, the one who shouldn’t be so emotionally expressive. If I felt any emotions that were uncomfortable, like sadness or anger or fear or annoyance, and \*gasp\* God forbid actually show those emotions on my face or express them out loud with my actual mouth, I was being “too” emotional.

I even remember a former person I worked with told my supervisor she was “tired of me and my emotions.”

I will say, I am an Enneagram 4, and we are those who can be the deeper feelers. But that doesn’t even matter, honestly, in the context of this conversation today.

I’ve got way too many stories to count, but I’ve learned that so many have a similar experience. Maybe they weren’t allowed to be mad as a kid, only happy and joyful and thankful. Maybe they were scolded for expressing any of the “bad” emotions, they were called.

And so often, for some reason, those of us who grew up in the Christian church, believing *that* faith, were told this the most. It pains me to say this, but man, it’s true for many, many people.

Don’t be mad! You need to forgive. The Bible says don’t be angry.

Don’t be sad! You’ve got nothing to be depressed about! Your life is great.

You should count your blessings.

Don’t be afraid. We aren’t supposed to be afraid. We are supposed to trust God.

Don’t doubt God! That’s a sin. You never question him. That’s not okay.

You can’t be angry with God.

You can’t be confused about what you believe.

You can’t grieve.

You can’t be suicidal.

You can’t hate yourself. You are a masterpiece of God, and he doesn’t make junk.

You can’t express you frustrations with the leaders. You are a woman. Be quiet.

You can’t show our church members how upset you are. You are on staff and you represent us. You’ve got to put your game face on and be strong and joyful because people are watching you. You are an example to them.

Cheating husbands are protected by the “confidentiality” of church leaders, and wives who try to express their feelings and hurt are told to forgive. To stay with their husband, to keep supporting and submitting, to move forward. Instead of being allowed to mourn and feel angry and betrayed and even be able to consider divorce.

Abuse is covered up.

Neglect, too.

People over-spiritualize serious issues like depression and anxiety, and even trauma. Saying if you just had enough faith, those things would fade away. If you read your bible more. If you got up every day at a ridiculous time to spend an hour in prayer and scripture every morning (even though you completely hate mornings).

What is happening is sadly still happening. You’d think we’d have evolved by now. That the church, of all people, would be able to empathize and allow people to be vulnerable, to be honest, to share how they’re really doing without judgment. But no, many times, it’s the opposite.

I do believe some churches are growing in this because their leadership is beginning to value it. But I’ve been in churches where it still happened, even

when leaders claimed to value emotional and mental health, who said there was space to feel and express emotions, that those emotions were even God-given. It still happened. I (or others) still tried to use my voice to express how I felt about something, what I needed, or even what I knew God was asking of me, and I was shot down. Dismissed.

My friend, this issue is one I hope to talk a lot more about at some point, and I’m having to honestly walk through my own healing journey in therapy to work through this. So right now? We are scratching the surface.

We are simply becoming more aware of and acknowledging that those who say they follow Jesus are often the ones who shut us down most when we are trying to simply feel what we feel. When we are trying to express what we feel.

And that is a serious problem.

And honestly, many have left the church altogether because of insensitive and even judgmental behaviors by other believers and leaders in the church. Sometimes people in their own family.

The church is uncomfortable with pain. Which is super ironic because the founding fathers of the faith were pretty much all greatly persecuted and martyred. They knew pain very well. Oh, and not to mention a Savior we serve who felt a wide range of comfortable and uncomfortable emotions, and who was well- acquainted with grief and pain.

I have no clue why this is. Why the church has silenced us. Has told us to sit down or be quiet when we have something uncomfortable to say. Whether it’s about us personally, something we are struggling with, or about the body of Christ in some capacity. They’ve told us to just believe and have faith and trust and read our bibles and smile and make sure no one knows how much pain we’re in.

And gosh, the negative repercussions of this are as far as the east is from the west. People are hurt. They close up and put up walls and stop trusting other believers or church leadership. They stop telling safe others about their emotions and experiences and thoughts and needs. They learn to hold it all in, to put on a pretty face. Because that’s what they were told.

But seriously, that is a recipe for disaster and much more serious issues in all areas of one’s life.

It doesn’t make any sense to me.

Why would a people who claim to know and love and serve Jesus do this? Why would they make us be quiet? When they serve a God who was extremely emotionally expressive, yes, even with the “uncomfortable” emotions, we call them. The emotions we’d prefer not to feel. He felt those. He was angry at times and jealous and grieved. Broken-hearted. A Jesus who did the same on earth. He felt everything we felt, loneliness, grief, pain, exhaustion, fear, distress, anger. A Holy Spirit who grieves and groans. Y’all. We are made in the very image of this God.

We are made to feel.

All the feelings.

Not just happiness and gratitude and joy and peace and hope and faith.

And if we pretend we don’t feel the rest, then we are a fraud. Covering up a whole part of ourselves that God wants us to express to Him, and to others when necessary and not in hurtful ways, of course.

I don’t know your story, but I’ve heard (and lived) this story so many times it breaks me. And I know it breaks you, too.

Maybe you’re the one who silenced someone else.

Or maybe you’re the one who was silenced.

If the former, gosh, I hope you’ll take a hard look at your actions and how they may have really hurt another person. I hope you’ll be brave and apologize and attune to the emotional needs of the people around you. I hope you’ll see how this is a vital component of loving your neighbor as yourself.

And for those of us who’ve been silenced because of some spiritual reason, I want you to hear me say, I’m sorry. I’m sorry that person didn’t listen to you when you told them your depression was getting much worse. I’m sorry that person didn’t advocate for you or listen to you when you shared how your spouse betrayed you. I’m sorry your pastor told you you only could show joy instead of allowing you to express the grief of losing your loved one. I’m sorry your mom or dad told you to stop being angry. To be thankful or patient instead. I’m sorry you were told you were too sensitive.

And that because of all of that, you began to believe your voice, you experience, your story, your feelings, and your thoughts didn’t matter.

But they do, dear friend.

They matter.

They’re valid.

And you have permission to feel them.

And to express them in healthy ways.

And those feelings and experiences deeply matter to God, too.

He’s not silencing you. Unless he just wants you to listen for a bit:). He’s not going to make you become this walled up, inauthentic version of yourself just to “rejoice and again I say rejoice.”

He knows we cannot heal what we conceal. And he wants all of it out in the open. Honest. raw. everything. He wants it all.

Because when you show him your fear, doubt, anger, heartache and pain, he gently hears you, and then begins healing it all. Sometimes quickly. Sometimes over a long period of time.

If you don’t feel safe anymore talking with another person of faith in your life for whatever reason, it’s high time for you to begin processing through that, and find your voice again in the church. To share your true and honest feelings again. To share your story and thoughts and doubts and all of it.

Because it’s helping no one to get a counterfeit version of you. They need and want the real thing, despite what you’ve been told.

That real thing could be the very thing that help brings healing to another person who doesn’t always feel like butterflies and rainbows. It can connect you with others who feel pain and anger and sadness and anxiety, too. (Which, P.S., is all of us).

We need to stop being silent. And we need to be brave and vulnerable.

It’s my prayer that the church as a whole would *see* this issue and do better. Listening with empathy is something we all need more of right now. And wouldn’t it be nice if that came from the ones walking in the Way, just like us? Yeh, that’s my prayer. That people would stop with the hyper-religious BS and legalistic nonsense, and simply *see* one another. Listen to one another.

As Christ sees us.

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Thanks for sitting a while with me. I trust that becoming aware of how you listen without judgment to your fellow believers in pain and acknowledge when you’ve been silenced, too will help you take a step toward wholeness so you can finally see what good relationships are made of.

I’m excited to share a new resource I’ve helped create along with the staff at Full Life Christian Counseling, where I counsel. We have come together to provide a collection of Advent readings that will help you find your way back home, back to your center, Jesus Christ, during this Christmas season. Life has been really hard lately. And maybe you’re one who has been hurt by the church like we talked about today. I want to invite you to listen to these readings, and find hope, faith, joy, peace, and love again, especially when those things feel far away. Each week, a new reading will drop into your inbox during the month of December, and in line with the liturgical Advent calendar. And the you’ll get the final reading on Christmas Day. We pray it is a beautiful, gentle, and centering time of devotion, prayer, and meditation for you. You can sign up for yours now at [fulllifecc.com/advent-readings](http://fulllifecc.com/advent-readings).

To finish up, the transcript for this episode is on the podcast page on my website, [kerrahfabacher.com](http://kerrahfabacher.com).

A big thanks to my friend Robert Hargrove for creating the music for the show, and fellow hope\*writer, Alana Dawson, for being a great editor.

Until next time friend, I’ll see you soon.