

Transcript for the podcast “Worthy: Celebrating the Value of Women.”

Hosts: Elyse Fitzpatrick and Eric Schumacher

Episode 42 — Guest: Wade Mullen

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Elyse Fitzpatrick 00:06

Welcome to Worthy, a Christian podcast that celebrates the value of women. Each week, we'll bring you conversations with women and men, on the value of women in the church, home, and society. We won't always agree on everything, but we do agree that God is glorious, the Bible is true, and women are valuable, and respectful conversation on this topic is essential in our day. Welcome to another episode of Worthy. My name is Elyse Fitzpatrick, and I am here with my birthday boy.

Eric Schumacher 01:15

Yes

Elyse Fitzpatrick 01:16

But it won't be on his birthday when this actually airs.

Eric Schumacher 01:19

But they can still send me cash. Johnny, or the money kind.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 01:24

We'll get to that in a minute. We'll get to that. My co-author, co-host, Coco drinker, Eric Schumacher, and today's his happy birthday. How old are you today as we're recording, how old are you today, Eric? And don't lie.

Eric Schumacher 01:45

I'm 44 if I'm doing the math, right.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 01:49

Yes. 44, a mere babe in the woods?

Eric Schumacher 01:52

Yes. Half the age of my co-host. Thank you.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 01:57

Um, so we're happy that you're with us today. We're so encouraged by all of the feedback we're getting about the podcast. Just talking to pastor yesterday who told me that I just had no idea what was happening through this podcast for women, and how so many women are being encouraged by it. Women and men, pastors being encouraged by it. So hey, thanks for listening. If you like what you're hearing, maybe you could rate and review and subscribe to the podcast. And you could also stop perfect strangers on the street, if they're not wearing a mask and say, put on a mask and listen to this podcast. And that would be a good thing to do. Then getting back to the cash, the cash statement. We would love it if you would support us on Patreon. Eric and I have a monthly call with our Patreon supporters,

they can ask us any questions they want. And then we also have a bonus episode that they can listen to that secret stuff. And then we also have other content that we put up for our Patreon supporters. So hey, give up give up a cup of coffee once a month, and get on Patreon and help us do this. Because even though this is free to you, it's not free to us and and in this era of no longer having any gigs. Who knows how long this will keep going. So please help us.

Eric Schumacher 03:34

I've never had a gig.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 03:37

Yes you have, you've had gigs. You're like a music person.

Eric Schumacher 03:42

Oh, well, I've never done I've never done a music gig. And I've never done a book gig because we launched a book and then the world shut down. So, yeah, it's our fault.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 03:55

It is. I used to have gigs, but then they all gone now. They gone. Anyway, so welcome to all of our listeners, we pray that this is going to be a very helpful episode for you, because we've got a really important guest with us today, who I think is going to help you especially those of you who are wondering about institutional abuse, and how to how to suss out what's going on perhaps in a context where you are. So we'd like to welcome our guest today. Wade Mullen.

Wade Mullen 04:32

Thank you, Elise. Thank you, Eric. Good to be on with you, and Happy birthday, Eric.

Eric Schumacher 04:36

Thank you! Yeah, thanks for joining us.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 04:39

Wade is a, he's got a PhD, which means he's a certified smart guy. And he's a professor, researcher and advocate working to help those trapped in the confusion and captivity that mark abusive situations. His personal experiences and ongoing research enabled him to write with both care and expertise. Wade and his wife, Sarita live in Lancaster, Pennsylvania with their four kidlets. And we're really happy to have him on today to talk about a book that I just finished that he wrote that is going to be out. When is it released?

Wade Mullen 05:21

October 6.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 05:22

Okay. So by the time you hear this, the book will be out. And the book is entitled, "Something's Not Right: Decoding the Hidden Tactics of Abuse, and Freeing Yourself From Its Power". Something's not right. This is a really, really good book Wade. Thank you for writing it. And I was just telling Wade that

I'm about to give it to my son, who's been in some situations that this book is going to be very helpful to him. So what prompted you to write this book? Wade, and why now?

Wade Mullen 06:01

Oh, well, thank you, Elise, thank you for reading it. And I hope it's helpful to your son. Well, years of experience, in a very toxic, harmful, abusive environment, and years of research, looking at case after case of abuse led to the writing of this book, and I became over time, burdened not only for those, in my immediate sphere, not only burdened by some of what I had been going through, but also burdened by so many who are in churches throughout the country who are experiencing the exact opposite of what they ought to experience in a safe place. And so I wanted to help people understand how deception so easily makes its way into our churches and into our relationships, and how that deception breeds abuse and how relationships can become very harmful, harmful to people. And I just want to help them be able to understand the tactics of abuse that are so often hidden, so often beneath the surface, kind of lurking in the shadows, and help people describe those tactics, and then be able to call them out, not necessarily in a way that would incur risk, but in a way that would bring understanding and light and perhaps lead them to a safer place.

Eric Schumacher 07:46

So explain the title of your book, "Something's Not Right".

Wade Mullen 07:50

Because so often when you're in an abusive situation, you're not sure what's true. That's, that's part of the deception. It causes you to doubt your own sense of reality. And so sometimes you might just reach a point of clarity, where you are at least able to say something's not right. And, and that's a significant step. Because you're, you're reaching a point where you're perhaps identifying fear, that perhaps exists in this relationship, that isn't normal, that shouldn't be, or you're identifying some behaviors that are causing you harm. You're identifying ways in which you don't feel safe, or you feel trapped. And so it's, it's not something though, that you can quite articulate, like if someone came along and said, Tell me exactly, you know, what's what's happening, you might be at a loss for words, but you can at least say, you know, I'm not exactly sure what it is, but something's not right about this institution or this relationship that I'm in, what's happening. Something isn't right. And so I'm trying to meet people who are at that point.

Eric Schumacher 09:11

Hmm, that's good.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 09:13

That's really helpful. And I know that you talk I want to say candidly, and yet carefully, about situations that you, a situation in particular that you went through. You don't say who it's with very careful about that. But you're also very candid about the kinds of things that people say, when you're in a situation that would just be an abusive situation, like, let's say in an institution, and, and, you know, it's it's hard to think that there are loads of churches that are in themselves abusive with the leadership and how the people are, how the people are treated there. So thanks for doing that. And thank you for the careful way, thoughtful way that you wrote this book for the way that you really thought deeply about, okay,

what's going on here? What are the questions people should ask? What are the keys that they should think about? When they're trying to decide if what they're going through in let's say, an institution, if this is normal, if it's just them, if they're being overly sensitive, or if in fact, they're being abused? And I think there's so much confusion there, and particularly, let's say, on the Christian front, because a lot of times Christians will just say, well, you know, stop being such a pansy. You know, you're you might be suffering for Christ. But you know, that's all normal. So thanks so much again, for for the work that you did. So, Wade, what's your hope for this book? And how do you hope your story will impact readers?

Wade Mullen 11:07

Okay, you know, I hope, first and foremost that people will read it and understand that some of the apprehensions that they might have, some of what they suspect is wrong is actually valid. And so oftentimes, people are in an abusive situation, and they're made to think that something is wrong with them for thinking this way, or for raising concerns. And so they're left alone, often left confused. And so I hope this book will bring some affirmation to help people understand no, you're not irrational, you're not crazy, you're not seeing things, this really is something that ought to be brought into the light. And you don't deserve to live like this. So I hope that it brings affirmation. And then I hope it also brings a vocabulary that people can use to help tell themselves the story of what's happening to them, but also if they have the opportunity to tell somebody else. And I think when you can identify something, when you can describe it, when you can give it a name, then you begin to have some measure of power or over that.

Eric Schumacher 12:25

So could you maybe help us define what you mean by abuse? We usually think I think people think of sexual abuse or, you know, someone hitting someone, definitely a form of abuse. Does it go beyond that? What's what what goes into abuse?

Wade Mullen 12:42

Yeah, I think it's the simplest definition of abuse. If you just look at the original meaning of the word and the Latin, it's simply means to use someone or something wrongly. And so you know, that can take a variety of forms. When we talk about interpersonal abuse, where an individual has been abused by another individual, that I see it as a process in which one person is objectified and targeted and isolated and trapped by another person, so that that abusive person can receive whatever it is that they're trying to get out of that person. I mean, so it's treating somebody as an object for your own benefit, in a way that does that person harm. So that can take a variety of forms. And it can exist in a variety of contexts. So there's educator abuse, there's therapist abuse, there's healthcare abuse, there's incest, there's all kinds of different types of abuse that are often categorized either by the type of injury, whether it's physical or emotional, or sexual, or it's categorized by the context of the relationship itself.

Eric Schumacher 14:05

Yeah. Could you illustrate maybe talk a little bit more about you the experience you had with abuse for our listeners?

Wade Mullen 14:11

Yeah. So I was in a church and had a just a wonderful experience serving people there. I think that some one of the things that happens as a community as a community, increases in health and trust is people begin to feel safe enough to share some of what has happened in their own lives. And so secrets that they've been forced to keep, like an abuse allegation. They find that there's another person who they can entrust that information to that can actually help them. And so that was something that my wife and I were experiencing is that as we were developing a healthy community with people around us, we were finding that there were more and more people who are coming to us with their stories. And which is a good thing. And we, in those moments decided we're going to do what's right, we're going to advocate, we're going to in cases where something needs to be reported, we're going to report that right away, we're going to bring this in into the light. And we discovered that when we did that, we then became a threat to the institution. And not just to the institution itself, but to lawyers who are helping the institution and so that you have systems that begin to work together to try to shut down these stories. And we see this happening time and time again. And so that's what we found ourselves in the middle of all of a sudden, trying to advocate for those who were being mistreated, while at the same time becoming the target of that ministry. And, and then having to make sense of all of that, like what's true. We were so confused, we're hearing so many different versions of things, what's true, and then also asking the question, what do we do we go to this person, and we're met with darkness, we go to this person, and we're not getting help. So you end up feeling trapped as well. And so those are the ingredients I think of trauma, feeling both confused. And, and held captive, and alone. And and so that was something that we went through. And it was, it was a very difficult period for for us.

Eric Schumacher 16:22

Yeah. Thanks for sharing that.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 16:23

Do you think that there's something intrinsic in, like, let's say Christianity, where, or let's say, let's say modern evangelicalism? Where people basically say, oh, you're just a snowflake. You know, get over yourself, this isn't any big deal. And then you start really questioning. Is this actually abuse? And, and I mean, you know, Jesus was abused, so get over yourself. You know, that kind of that kind of response. And then as a Christian, I think you get confused. It's like, this is wrong. But people are saying, I shouldn't say anything about it. You know, how would you speak to somebody who's maybe in a situation like that, and people are saying, you know, it tough luck, you're a snowflake Jesus suffered, you're gonna suffer, get over it? Why should we speak to abuse like that?

Wade Mullen 17:29

Well, I think one reason is, is because it's antithetical to who God is, you know, this isn't how God treats people. This isn't how God wants us to be treated. This isn't how Christ treated people when when he was on earth. And, and so I think we need to recognize that this is so far from who God wants us to be. And then people might say, Well, why don't you just deal with it? And what they're really saying is, why can't you just leave this alone? what they're asking you to do is to not cause any disruption. And then you have to ask the question, Well, why? Why is that? Why is silence preferred, especially if we're to be people of truth? And God is truth. Why are we, why are we afraid of the truth being known? And, and then I would say too that, so often, the person who's receiving that kind of message, oh, you're just making too much of a big deal of this. You just need to toughen up, you're being a snowflake. Often

that person is being misrepresented. And I just recently was, this was in a room and heard somebody in my opinion, mischaracterize protesters, as being people who just need to get something off their chest. Right. And so what that is communicating is that the individuals who are raising concerns or the individual who is saying, this isn't right, we should do something about this, are doing it for purely selfish reasons that it's about them. And it's their comfort, when the majority of the time the person who is saying, Hey, this is happening, this shouldn't be happening, we need to do something about it, is actually doing it for the good of other people. They don't want to see people go through what they've gone through. And so sadly, I just see those who, who are on the receiving end of that kind of language being misrepresented. And then that's being used to silence them.

Eric Schumacher 19:30

So you've in your, in your research for the book and in your experiences. you've discovered a pattern of tactics that are used both to abuse people and to cover up that abuse. Fill us in on what sort of things abusers do, what their tactics are, and what our listeners should be looking for.

Wade Mullen 19:52

Yeah, so you could separate the tactics into two large groups or buckets. One large category would be assertive tactics or proactive tactics. So, in an abuse situation, we might refer to those as grooming behaviors. But it's not just a grooming behaviors. And I talked about some other, what I would refer to as assertive tactics that might be used in order to isolate and control somebody. So there's assertive tactics, and then there's defensive tactics. And so the ways in which somebody when they're exposed, or when they're confronted the ways in which they use language to try to escape penalty, how they try to get out of the situation that they now find themselves in. And so you have two different groups of tactics. And so the book is kind of split in half, where you have the first few chapters, describing what I would call assertive or proactive tactics, then the last few chapters are describing some of the more defensive tactics, how organizations and individuals try to escape accountability once they're confronted, or once an allegation is brought to the surface. And so there's a pattern. The pattern consists of dozens of various tactics. And so it takes a while to walk through each one. But the idea is that, depending on the situation, depending on the audience, the abusive person will adjust their approach adjust their tactic on the basis of the situation, on the basis of who they're speaking to. So for example, often a person who enters into an abusive relationship doesn't know that they're entering into that kind of relationship initially. It's often a relationship that's characterized by niceness and charm. And the abusive person, if that person is really abusive, will see that other individual as a object, and perhaps as somebody that they want to control, and one of the ways that they might start to coerce that person is through using charm. So I talked about these different types of charms, like giving gifts, doing favors for the other person, flattering that person, and embedded in these nice behaviors are deceptions. And that other person is being charmed. And then along kind of while that's happening, then that abusive person tends to also dismantle the target's inner life and external life. And so it's, it's a very disorienting experience, because you might be on the receiving end of all of this charm, all of this niceness, but at the same time, you're being disrespected. Perhaps you're, an example that I give in the book is, and I think often children experience is you're on the receiving end of a lot of nicknames, or jokes. And so that person might give you a nickname without your consent, and maybe it bothers you, but you don't have the ability to stand up for yourself. And if you do say something, perhaps that person then comes back and says, well, you know, you're making too much of this, or can't you take a joke, or

I'm only picking on you, because I like you, right? And what's actually what's actually happening, though, is that person's sense of identity, and that person's sense of self respect, is slowly being eroded away. And over time, the person who actually finds themselves in an abusive relationship often will look up one day and realize that they are surrounded by walls, and they don't know how they got there. And I use the metaphor of entering into a garden that an abusive person has created through charm and through niceness. And you think this is a trusting and safe person and you settle down into this garden and what you don't know is that below that flowery surface, there's a pit that's been dug. One day, you're dropped into that pit and you realize, okay, now I'm trapped. And I've been dismantled, you know, I've had my identity eroded away by this person, I don't feel like I can stand up for myself. Then I also have a whole chapter on the ways in which an abusive person will also cut you off from external help from therapists, or from legal recourse maybe, or from people in the media, or even from sources of knowledge and education. And so you find yourself in this pit, and those are all what I call assertive tactics, because they're often the things that are used to trap people, to control people. And then once you find yourself in this place, you might begin to try to get out of that and begin to confront the person, if it's safe to do that, or maybe other people see your situation and they begin to speak truth into it. And then you'll find that that abusive person, who's laid that trap, who has dug that pit, who has caused this, is also prepared to use a variety of other tactics to defend themselves. And so the whole second chapter of the book is walking people through this pattern of defense.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 25:39

So you talk a lot about impression management. And how people employ that. And I think that as Christians, one of the things that we have heard a lot is, well, you don't you don't want to air any dirty laundry in front of the watching world, because, you know, it's Christ's Church. And so we have to in a sense, manage the impression that the church gives to the world, therefore, we should never say anything, or bring up anything that might tarnish the church's reputation. So talk a little bit about impression management, and then talk a little bit about, you know, why it's important, even in the church to talk about these things.

Wade Mullen 26:34

Yeah, I think we do have an unhealthy preoccupation with how other people view us. And that can extend to an entire institution where the leaders at the top or the people who are part of that church or organization, put so much value on how the public is viewing them. And so perhaps they see themselves as special, or they see themselves as great, and they want other people to, to mirror that image. And so they get to work at managing the impressions others are forming of them. And, and it's an exhausting work. It, it's, it's seen in, it's most clearly seen when that institution is confronted, and they're called to give an account for their behavior, then you see them get to work and managing the impressions others are forming of them. And impression management is a theory that was most clearly advanced by a Canadian sociologist named Erving Goffman, who in 1959, wrote a book called, "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life". And he argued that as individuals, we're either presenting a front stage version of ourselves, that is inconsistent with what is happening behind the curtain. And so we all as we go throughout our days have this image that we're presenting that other people can see. But then there's a there's a curtain and there's a backstage version. And there's a sense in which that is normal and innocent and there's nothing wrong with that. But when that curtain is used to hide secrets that ought not to be hidden, when that curtain is used to keep people from understanding information

that they ought to have access to, or when it's used to put up a front so that a corrupt person can continue to exercise power over people, you know, then that impression management has taken a very dark and deceptive turn. And so that's my concern is looking at how abusive individuals and organizations are deceptively managing the impressions others are forming of them.

Eric Schumacher 29:00

So let's say a person is in a church or an organization, they're beginning to realize that this is an abusive situation and that they're being misused and abused in this situation. You're in a situation where this is, you know, this is happening from someone who has authority over you. They have control in the organization. You know, that there's a lot of people who respect them. And then, you know, just listening to all these tactics, it could feel like, you know, an overwhelming and impossible situation to address what would you recommend as sort of first steps, the path to follow when you understand you're being abused?

Wade Mullen 29:47

Yeah, I want to echo that it often is overwhelming. Even if you reach a point where you realize, oh, wow, this is what's been happening to me. That is, that can be very overwhelming. I think it's important to find somebody who can hear your story. Somebody who is trauma informed, somebody who is competent, I really, you know, encourage people to reach out to professional therapist. And to share your story with somebody who can disentangle all of the webs of deceit, and perhaps offer you some perspective and help you make sense of the situation that you're in. Sometimes people don't have access to that, or they don't feel safe doing that, or they're not ready to do that. And so one thing that I encourage is somebody to just do an inventory, you know, write a letter that contains the information that you might want to say to a therapist, or write a letter that contains what you would want to say to your boss, or whoever it might be. And what you're doing is you're asking the question, what's true, and you're taking an inventory of that. And that can be very hard, that can be very painful, it depends on the situation. But I think at some point, what needs to happen for somebody to move from this place of not being aware of what their situation is, and the kind of harm that it's causing them to becoming increasingly aware of that. And so that takes time. And it often takes support from other people to help you do that.

Eric Schumacher 31:35

So thinking about that support that's needed, let's say, you don't necessarily feel like you've been abused. But you're starting to recognize that the organization you're in, leaders are abusing other people. And you want to be an advocate. What are the first steps there?

Wade Mullen 31:58

Well, you know, every situation is different. And so it, you know, it's one thing that I say is that there's not a blueprint, there's not a key, there's not a roadmap. The approach to getting help, the approach to advocating for other people needs to be highly contextualized. So you have to do the work of making sense of the situation. And so, in some of my courses, I talked about the value of what's called sense making. And so if you're going to bring wisdom to a situation, you first have to be able to make sense of it. And so if you're an advocate, then you're doing that work of trying to collect information, you're collecting data, so to speak. And you might have an opportunity to speak to the person who is being

victimized, and you might hear from them. And there might be a way for you to help that person or help connect that person to somebody who can provide the support that's needed. Or if you recognize that there's an ongoing pattern of deception within the leadership, and you can commit to confronting that when you face it when you're in the room, and you hear somebody misrepresent somebody else, or you hear that abusive leader claim something that you know isn't true, you can resolve to say, you know, I'm going to, I'm going to call this out, and that might make me a target, but, but I'm going to confront the lies with truth. And I would say that sometimes, you know, I've done this where you don't know exactly what is wrong, and what needs to be done or what needs to be said in that moment. But you can perhaps say, you know, something doesn't seem right, something seems off. And I'm not exactly sure what it is, but I feel like I just need you to know that something isn't sitting well with me.

Eric Schumacher 33:50

I think that's really important. I like what you said about resolving to call things out, I think it's very easy to get into networks, or organizations where you sort of have a good old boys' club atmosphere, and you kind of overlook each other's faults and each have each other's backs. And suddenly you find yourself in a situation where you're like, oh, man, this isn't right. But I know the expectation is, is we kind of just go along with whatever, whatever the other one's doing. And as soon as, truth tellers are often not welcome in those kind of circles, because they threaten the whole structure.

Wade Mullen 34:36

Yes, yep. And that's a revealing moment. And so that's one of the reasons why it's important to speak truth when you encounter deception, because that moment will reveal character. Right? So character is revealed when we're confronting and when we go through crisis, and so that becomes a critical moment, and sometimes I think we're scared, we're afraid to speak truth for that reason, because you know, okay, there's no turning back from this. This is either going to go well, or it's not going to go well. And if it doesn't go well, then yeah.

Eric Schumacher 35:11

And I would just encourage folks who are listening, particularly in church contexts where maybe you've just become an elder and joined the elder team at a church, or you've just received a staff position, or a women's ministry leader or an associate pastor, and you, you're so excited to get there, you know, you've been looking forward to serving this way. And then all of a sudden, you're seeing these red flags and things that don't feel right. The longer you go on ignoring that, the harder it is to speak to it. And I think establishing yourself as a truth teller, right up front. It might have painful consequences, but I think there'll be less harm, and you'll have less regret over staying silent. So one more on that in terms of being in an abusive organization, let's say that you're a church leader, you're listening to this. And all of a sudden you realizing that's me. I use these tactics to control people to protect my reputation. And I've been abusing people. What are their first steps? What path should they take?

Wade Mullen 36:31

Wow. Well, you know, I guess first, it depends on the type of abuse, if there's criminal abuse, and you know, hopefully that person will turn themselves into the police. If there's an abuse of other people that hasn't been acknowledged, and people have been injured, and often people have been harmed, and they've been spit out of the organization. Then I would say that that person comes to a place of

recognizing, I contributed to the harm that other people have experienced, that they would make that right and do whatever it takes to make that right. And it's reaching a point, I think of submission, submitting yourself to accountability, confessing what you know to be wrong, but also being open to having other people speak into your life and say, here's, how maybe you got here. Here's the extent of the damage that you're causing Be willing to have another person speak into that. Sometimes there's a need to remove yourself from a position of power and recognizing that perhaps, that's not a good place for you to be in. If you've been abusing that power, then I don't think that's a position that you want to be in currently. So there are there are then actions that I think can be taken. So again, every situation is different. But if a person has reached that point, then that's a great thing. Because hopefully, if that person is sincere, that they will bring an end to that abuse, and sometimes, [inaudible] is what we don't see often, but I often think to myself, well, one way for light to shine, is for the abusive person, the abusive leader, the abusive organization, to shine it on themselves, rather than waiting for light to be shed on them and to confess and to acknowledge this and then to take appropriate action.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 38:38

We've seen a lot I think, lately, let's say in the last five years of institutions, pastors in particular, who have been sat down or had to leave ministry or whatever, for for being abusive, and so in one in one sense, I'm thankful for the work the Lord is doing. In another sense, though, you know, I'm so concerned for the people who get chomped up in the middle of those things, you know, when you and I know you've gone through that Wade, where you know, you were personally chewed up in an organization, and I know that you know, you walked through that with your wife, can you talk a little bit about what that experience was like for you personally? You know, how did you make it through that, because as people who have experienced that, it's very it's very destructive, personally, to find out people who you thought were your friends, people who you respected would act this way towards you. So what was the experience like for you, and then also, what word of hope then can you give to our listeners who are saying, that's exactly how I feel? I don't think I'm ever going to go to church again, or ever trust anybody in leadership again.

Wade Mullen 40:14

Yeah, yeah. No, I think I'm still learning all the ways in which that experience affected me and affected us. And so I think, it's something you don't really graduate from. And I'm still learning. And still, every time I look back on that experience, to learning more about the impact that it had on me, and learning more about, you know, what caused that impact. And so, and so for me, yeah, I mean, there was enormous amount of stress, you know, there were nightmares, there were impacts on my health, going to the doctor, not knowing what was wrong, doctor not knowing what was wrong. So there's a physiological response to this. And it was, for me a period of time of waking up to all of those effects, and, then beginning to advocate for myself and my family, and reaching a point of saying, you know, this can't continue. And, and that was a difficult place to be at, because almost in every situation, too, that I've come across, where people in some type of leadership capacity within a church, when they're calling out abuses that they see around them, they're at the same time experiencing healthy relationships, and they want to be a part of that. And they've grown to appreciate loving relationships with others. And so you want to preserve that. And, and, and it was hard for us to walk away from something that we knew we had to walk away with, even to maintain our own integrity, we knew we had to walk away from to maintain our own health, but also we were walking away from people we had

grown to love, and that and that was really difficult. So I think one thing that I learned through that you can't change a system very easily. And sometimes we think that if we just stay in this place, that we can be the change, we can create the change. And, and I think that's a pressure that sometimes people put on themselves that they don't need to be putting on themselves. And you don't need to be within that institution to enact change, you can do that from without, which is what we ended up doing. And then I would say too, that, for me, I reached a point where I had the opportunity to tell my story to somebody else, for the first time in a long time. And I think many of us have untold stories. And for me the opportunity that my wife and I had to tell our story in an unrushed way to some older friends of ours, who were able to, to listen and then respond with understanding and affirmation and compassion and a righteous anger. That was a completely freeing moment for us. And then there was a moment in time in which I decided to just do an inventory of all the things that were happening, all that I had experienced that had made me angry, and there was a leader who was telling me that you know, you're just angry, where did this root of bitterness begin in you, and I'm hearing these messages and wondering, maybe there is something wrong with me. And so I decided to do this inventory one night, and just wrote the words I was angry when... I was angry when... sentence after sentence filled the seven to eight pages and hours later into the night. I realized I have every right to be angry and there is so much wrong and this is bad and everybody ought to be upset. And for me it wasn't about forgetting what had to happen. It was freedom in that night came from remembering what had happened, which was very difficult. And and then that inventory worked for me, and this is personal to me, and it may not be what someone else might experience. But for me, it led to a forgiveness that was that I was surprised by I ended that inventory work with the words I forgive you. And I wasn't expecting that. It just was what came out of me at the time. But it was a very freeing moment. And it was freeing in a way that not only helped me move forward personally but also helped me move forward for the good of the organization and for the good of others. That's when I really started to act on behalf of other people. So I had done the inventory work. I knew what was true. I had forgiven the person who was behind much of this. And then I felt so much freedom and clarity to move forward, confronting the lies in bringing truth into the open.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 45:19

Well, Wade, thank you. Thank you so much for sharing with us today and with our listeners. Once again, Worthy friends, the name of the book is, "Something's Not Right: Decoding the Hidden Tactics of Abuse and Freeing Yourself From its Power" by Wade Mullen. It's a Tyndale release. And Wade, if people want to get in touch with you, is there a website or any way that they can reach you?

Wade Mullen 45:52

Yeah, I do have a website, Wadettmullen.com. And then I am on social media. I'm on Twitter. I'm most active on Twitter. I also have an Instagram and Facebook page, although I'm not on there too often. But people can reach me through those avenues.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 46:12

Thank you for sharing your day with us. Wade, we really appreciate it. We appreciate the work that you have courageously set out to do as a lover of truth. And so we're thankful for that. And Worthy listeners, please, if this podcast means anything to you, would you share it and tell your friends about it. We want to be people who are truth tellers. And part of what that means is that sometimes we have to walk bravely into the light. And I just want to quote, I just want to close with one quote that you have in the

book from Elie Wiesel, which is just the most amazing quote that that you have. Elie Wiesel of course, is a Holocaust survivor. And he said, "I swore never to be silent whenever or wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented." And amen to that. So, let us all speak truth with as bravely as we can into our context. Thank you, Wade, for being with us today.

Eric Schumacher 47:41

Yeah, thank you.

Wade Mullen 47:42

Thank you Elise, for having me.