

Grit 'n' Grace — The Podcast

Episode #193: You Can Leave Your "Victim" Label Behind

Note: This is an unedited, machine-generated transcript that is about 80% accurate.

Cynthia, tell us the backstory of I choose victory. Why did you decide to write a book about moving from victim Victor?

Oh, gosh, you know, Amy, I think, in all honesty, I have shared my testimony and so much through through my years in ministry, and the Lord had really been showing me the power of our testimonies, right. And I mean, they, they're powerful. And, and I realized that all of us story, you know, and our history is his story if we give it to him. And there was a point though, in sharing, that I realized, okay, I have all these tools in my tool belt because of the things that I've lived through in life. But the Holy Spirit spirit started saying to me, yes, but it's time now, to focus on victory. It's time to teach people about victory, because you can spend so much time using your story and sharing your story that you forget. There's actually victory in your story, and how did you choose victory and you've got to, that's the important part of all of our journeys is how we choose victory over the things that want to write a victim's narrative for our life.

Well, that is so exciting for us to hear, because not only is this a time that we need that message, Cynthia, but Sherry and I have just done a real shift in our podcast. And we're really shifting to the same thing from mining the depths of the problem to really stepping into action and the solution. So we're excited to have you here today.

Oh, yeah, look, I mean, we could mind the depths of our problems until eternity comes right? Because we all have them. You know, everybody's got a challenge. Everybody has a struggle. But I think more than anything, everybody wants to live with the victorious mindset and wants to do whatever they need to do to change the way their day feels, you know?

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. I love that such a good point. Now, I am a high school English teacher, I have no red pen behind my ears, so no worrying. But I'd love to start with a few definitions just to make sure that we're all on the same page and that our listeners are on the same page. So, I'd love to have you just kind of share what do you mean by victim? What do you mean by poverty of mind is the phrase that kept showing up? And then Victor, could you kind of tease those out for us?

Sure. I mean, look, I think we can be there are the classic cases of a victim. You know, there are there are certain groups of people that or, you know, survivors that we would all consider a victim. I am a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. I was raped as a teenager, you know, I'm a cancer survivor, you know, went through a horribly abusive first marriage and divorce. Any of those categories. You could say, oh, okay, well, you know, women who are abused are victims you use Certainly would call children who were the victims of sexual abuse victims. Well, there are these obvious victim groups, but then there's also, you know, children in Africa who are starving, you know, you would consider them victims. Right. There are, you know, I think that there are racial groups, you know, certainly victim groups like Black Lives Matter there are there are me too and times up are intended, you know, for women who are sexually assaulted. There are lots of categories of victim group. And then I think there is just how you can feel a victim in your own mind you can feel a victim to words your family put on you labels that people have put on you, you know, that make you feel like less than you know that you are. So the reality is that, you know, in my journey, what I've realized is that there are all these different ways that you can feel like a victim. The reality is that most people don't choose to be victims, they really don't. And that's that's the sensitivity that I feel is really from the Holy Spirit for me, especially in the journey with this book that I've been given. Because it's easy to say you got to choose victory, you have to take responsibility for your journey you have to, but the reality is you also have to have to have the sensitivity that most people do not choose to be victims. They just don't know how to choose victory. Who,

right good grow.

Yes. That's that's where I think that was the first level of insight The Lord gave to me. And, and it's funny because he gave me that really, truly in excuse me turn that off, y'all. He gave me that in the last year. I turned my book in. And about six seven months ago when I turn this book in. I mean, all all heck broke out in my life. My thought my husband was done. diagnosed with thyroid cancer and the older half relative half brother, my relative who sexually abused my sister and I repeatedly as yours for children, we looked up and he had stolen our life story and made a movie about it that Apple intended to distribute as its first feature film release, and an Oscar contender. And all of a sudden now my sister and I are reliving years of sexual abuse that we, you know, had lived through, we're having to deal with reporters all over our doorstep, and learning the details of our sexual abuse. And then my mother was destroyed because she never knew the the details of it. And what happened to my four year old little sister was just heinous. And so I at one point, I looked at my husband and I said, you know, this has to be a joke. Like God's given me this book called I choose victory. And I have never felt like a bigger victim in my life. Like I you know, here I am, all these years later, I you know, I've walked in forgiveness for years I've been a Christian. I've been in ministry for years. I, I, you know, God's given me a position of leadership and it, and here I am. And that's when the Holy Spirit's started really showing me he said, Yes, because I really do need you to understand that people don't choose to be victims, they really

don't. It's just that they don't know how to choose victory. And now you're going to have to apply everything that I gave you to teach. And you're going to have to really live it out for yourself. And so it will, I mean, it's been even to getting to now to release day for the book. It has been the craziest journey of sensitivity in the Holy Spirit for me in that sense. So there's sort of that and then the second thing you asked about was poverty of the mind. It's a phrase I use because I really believe that when you live with a victim mentality for too long you develop it disease called poverty of the mind, poverty of the mind looks and sounds like a lot of things. It, it looks and sounds like, I can't do it. Nobody likes me, I'm too fat. I'm black. This always happens to black people. I'm a woman, this is this always happens to women. Things will never be equal. I can't get out of this, you know, financial mess I'm in it looks and sounds like all of these negative things that continue to put a nail in our coffin rather than drive us forward. And it's a choice, you know, poverty of the mind and my sense develops when you really made a choice to just stay there and wallow in your victimization. And I do think it's possible for all of us to experience varying levels to varying levels and degrees of poverty of the mind, at different points in our life. You know, based on different circumstances in our life. But the choice for victory is always there to be made. And, and it's a choice that no one can make for you. It's a choice that we can only make for ourselves. So, and then yeah, you asked, oh, man, I think you asked about victory. Hmm.

Wow. Well, victory for me, was rooted. Firstly, in my choice for Jesus Christ as my Savior. Because my choice to choose Jesus was the first bit of real hope that I had that there wasn't there was someone who loved me. There was someone who looked out for me and there was someone who had a better plan for my life. Now, my choice for Jesus played itself out in a lot of ways over the next decade of choosing him. And surrender was part of that choice because I think we can choose Christ you No. And I always say, I believe there are millions of Christians in our country, especially who are saved but not surrendered. Because when you surrender your life to Christ, and you live a lifestyle of Christ, all of a sudden, you begin to notice the fruit of what were promised in the Word of God. And I don't even think we can begin to access the promises of God fully, unless we fully surrender and commit ourselves to the process of killing our flesh daily. So, you know, victory looks like a lot of things. Victory is tangible looking, you know, when a person walks in a room and they've got a victorious mindset, you just see and feel all this positivity and all this power, you know, and you get drawn to them, and drawn to the light inside of them that gives them that strength. But it's also, you know, victory is also just that, that commitment to defeating that mindset. And look, I'm sure There are people out there who choose victory without having chosen Jesus. I just really don't know any of those people who do it really successfully. And I don't just mean material success. I mean success in the mind and in the heart. You know, because there, yeah, there's an abundance that comes out of the mind and the heart spiritually, you know, when when you realize that Jesus Christ is the strongest weapon you can wield in your life to fight your victimization.

So good. So good. Well, and it's interesting to hear you talk about the year after you submitted the book, I think most authors I know have said the same thing. You have to relive the lessons over again. So what you're telling us is that you can live in victory, but your circumstances can still be falling apart. And you know, and I believe it's true and yet even in my heart, there's this little fear, you know, like, well, then why would I walk into that? Like, what's the advantage of that? So, talk to us a little bit about the, the, the part that fear plays and victimization and how do we, how do we manage that? How do we overcome that fear so that we can walk in that victory?

Man, I mean, fear is everything, you know, and I think it's everything in terms of its strength as a, as a force against your life, because fear is literally the opposite of faith. So, I mean, you know, when you're walking in fear, you're not walking in faith. When you're thinking with fear, you're not thinking with faith, when you're looking at situations and your fear is playing out, you know, I have lack in my life, I will always have lack in my life. I, you know, I see this, this, this race, racial group, you know, it comes from, you know, a certain thing and you can never overcome that certain thing. That's fear. You know, it's, I was sexually abused as a child. So for years I was afraid of relationships and afraid to trust people. Well, that that was fear. So, you know, one of the biggest things I think that you have to overcome is that is fear and in your in your different war zones that you're battling in your life, and in your struggle to choose victory will be fear. Now, the interesting thing about fear and this is why I say my choice for for victory is always rooted in Jesus Christ is that you realize that when you have faith, you know that faith overcomes fear. You know, that we walk by faith, not by sight. You know what the Bible teaches you about faith over fear so you can begin to employ just some simple you know, just Hey, if you if you you know, if you're if you're in fear today, one of the Scriptures that saved my life in a season of intense people Oh my goodness, about eight years ago, I went through a battle with fear that was palpable. I just I don't know where it came from. But I literally every day I would get up and when I would feel attacked with fear, I would just speak the Word of God at it. God has not given me a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind. That scripture literally pulled me through a year in which I battled fear a number of times a day, then it diminished to maybe once a day, then all of a sudden it was a couple times a week, and then it was gone. And I realized somewhere on the journey of that year, that God had delivered me from fear because I employed the Word of God against something that was a demonic attack. It was a spiritual attack. And, you know, that's, I have a chapter in the book on spiritual warfare in battling in your in your spiritual war zone, because we've got To know about our weapons, we have to know that that you know, we're told in the Bible, you're not fighting against flesh and blood. Your fight is against spiritual powers and principalities. So if we understand that, then we realize, okay, we go to war in the spirit. And that looks different than the way we may go to war physically. Now, I do believe that sometimes we go to war, and we use our mouth, and we use the legal system, or you know, there are things that we employ, but I but God will kind of guide you through all of that.

And I love that you don't minimize the fight me, it's a war. I love that you acknowledge that.

Yeah, I'm about to start teaching the book screwtape letters to my AP English literature and composition class. So I mean, you are speaking my language right here and I've been so looking forward to it, especially in light of what's going on in the world right now. I think it's really going to bring down And it's gonna be very eye opening to them. But I think it's also going to bring them a certain amount of comfort to realize, Oh, wait, there is something going on here that we haven't necessarily been consciously aware of we are being opposed. Oh my gosh, Sherry, I could cry. I have to tell you. That book changed my life. Oh, yeah.

Yeah, it's, and I'll tell you, because I thought and this is what happens when you feel like a victim. And when you're in in spiritual warfare, I thought I was the only one in the world who felt attacked the way that I did. I thought I was the only one whose buttons got pushed in certain situations where all of a sudden I ended up emotionally really damaged and not being who I want it to be or not overcoming the way I want it to come. And then when I read CS Lewis's screwtape letters, all of a sudden I understood there's a very real enemy using the people and the situations in my life, oftentimes good people and even good situations. But he uses unwitting people to poke into you. And it's not about those people. It's about the damage what's damaged in you? What's what what wounds are opening you that you need to fortify with the strength of Christ. So that when that enemy comes in through whatever situation he's always used, he's no longer effective. And man that was, and then my husband had me read this present darkness. And that that was the that was really read these books also were they were important for me too, because it sort of took the screwtape letters and put them in a contemporary setting. And same message really. No, but wow, what a luck. What a lucky bunch of kids you have kids, you need to understand most teachers don't even they're not deep enough to understand the power that the screwtape letters is going to give you. I wish I had an English teacher that that got me there as a young Girl, because I don't eat like I, you know, I often say to young people, I didn't have anybody in my life when I was in high school and all through college, who understood these weapons and who was really deeply rooted in the knowledge of the Word of God to give me to give me a victory map. hasn't had

a hand to our kids. Really? Yeah. Yeah, I'll

play that little portion for my students if they give me any any complaining. Oh, yeah. Let's go ahead to number five. Okay.

So Cynthia, our listeners gave us some real hard life circumstances that they're going through and we would love for you to share some applications that you've learned from writing your books and Sherry, start us off with the first one.

Alright, so this listener asked, How do you support loved ones through their difficult times without falling into victimhood yourself?

Mm hmm. Wow. Well, you have to employ some some Tools. First of all, you know, it's funny, I was just teaching on this the other day, one of the things I believe you really have to do is learn to set boundaries for yourself, you've got to, because, you know, we're supposed to be influencing them in the direction of victory. But victimization is such a powerful thing. And it writes such powerful narratives, that if you don't, if you're not fortified, in the Word of God, it's very, very, very easy to find yourself slipping into a place where maybe, maybe you don't notice a big change. But you begin to feel the subtle changes and those subtle changes are really an attack on your faith. So you've got to set I think boundaries and limitations around how you're dealing with the people in your life that are kind of stuck in that place of victimization. You know, that would be the first thing. Now you asked me something else. And I'm looking here No, because

that's great. that's a that's a great we talk a lot about boundaries and on this episode and I'm already thinking of some things we can unpack during our follow up conversation. So

great. I'm great. Yeah, I did this whole I got a, I did this whole list of I don't know if that's blocking me where I wanted to, because I wanted to kind of share something with you. Ah, okay. One of the other things I've learned, I have this little list of things really that answer that question, because I get asked it. One of the things you might do is to avoid labeling, right, because labels aren't generally helpful, especially when important when you're telling a person Hey, you're being a victim, you know, you're acting like a victim. They automatically interpret that as this negative kind of brush off. So it's a charged label, and it may be best depending on You're dealing with to avoid referring to them as a victim, but you might try to use different words. So like, you know, and with a real level of compassion, you might bring up specific behaviors that you see, like complaining. You know, I noticed you're complaining a lot about this. Is it because you feel like this? Is it because of this, you know, you might bring up whether or not they're shifting blame. Victims love to shift blame. Blame is a big like, you know, thing for victims. Because most victims have a lot of people to blame. And they have a lot of reasons to blame. So, but within that, there's always something you can own and be personally responsible for. So you may try to, you know, bring up that if you see that they're shifting blame, which kind of goes hand in hand with not accepting responsibility. You know, we want to be able to accept responsibility. You know, you No matter what's going on, the reality is that at a certain point, I could have, I needed to accept responsibility to trust, a good man that God brought in my life, who became a good friend who, even though in my mind, I was locked in a certain place because of what I had been a victim of his behavior didn't evidence that so you I began to accept responsibility to even have faith and trust God with this man that came into my life who's been my husband now and you know, for for 15 1415 years,

you know, um, you might also recognize that sometimes they feel trapped or powerless. And you may ask them, What do you feel trapped in in this situation? What do you feel powerless over what do you feel isn't making a difference? So there are just you know, those things that I think make it possible to begin a conversation with someone who may be struggling with victimization and allow them to express their feelings in a way that's positive, and put it back on them so that they understand the solutions on them. Instead of saying you're being a victim, and most victims, they'll only get angry with that because they don't really their answer probably is, but I am a victim. Right? I am a victim and I feel like a victim and I hate you. You're insensitive, you know, so it's about offering help with finding solutions, but offering the help that encourages them to find the solutions

for their love it very, very practical. Thank you so much.

I hope that answered the next question. Do you Sherry? I

Yeah, why don't you go ahead and do number seven.

Okay. So our second scenario was from what someone who said My boss is a poor communicator and at times a bully. I've met with him individually and and discuss these issues, but he said Still interrupting and read, I enjoy my work, but he wears me out. I'm totally drained after my work, how can I gain victory in this unchanging situation?

Well, first thing that that hits me there is wisdom. Right? And one of the things I have found is that and this is, you know if this is going to give you one of those dumb moments, but the deeper my knowledge is rooted in the Word of God, the greater my wisdom is, and I think there's no reason there's no lack of good reason on God's heart as to why Solomon wrote all those beautiful books about acquiring wisdom, acquiring wisdom, you know, get wisdom, it's more precious than silver and gold. So the first word that hits me for her is aside from patience, and and because it's going to require a lot of patience because dealing with a person who's really, I mean, sinful or rooted in something requires your patience, but She would want to sit and ask God for wisdom as to why this man does this. You know, there's usually a reason why people engage in the behaviors they engage in, especially when those behaviors are negative. You know, like, I don't know, if she's asked him, Hey, have you ever? Do you realize that you interrupt people a lot? You know if she's ever said it over coffee in a nice way, but that may be, you know, a question that's safe to ask or not safe to ask. But I think really, and truly, she might also, you know, when he's doing what he's doing, try to find the 10 second window where he listens to her, you know, there, even if it's, hey, I have a question and she gets her question out before he jumps in and starts interrupting. If she can find that window, she could offer him some encouragement and validation for listening to her that invokes a response in him that says, Oh, I want to be encouraged more, I want to be validated more. So it's going to require some real, I think, you

know, walking on some twisty windy roads to figure out how to get into what makes him this way. I often think bullies are bullies because of things that happened to them as little as little child, a little boy, in his case, his little children. Maybe he had a parent who bullied him or didn't listen, you know, maybe he grew up in a household where he felt overlooked and invalidated. I think if she sits down and begins to make a list of all the reasons why he may be this broken person, God will begin to give her wisdom as to how to proceed and how to deal with it. If this man were her son, or her child, she would probably take a different approach in figuring out how to train him and break this habit. off of him, right? But because he's a grown person, and he's in a position of authority, it may be pushing into buttons and brokenness inside of her. I personally have a very difficult time dealing with men who I perceived to be in positions of authority, whose voices get very dominant or loud, who interrupt me. And that's because of my abuse issues. And that's because I was raped as a teenage girl. So once I identified that, I, I've been able to deal with men like that in business or what have you in a completely different way. Because I first of all, remember, this person cannot victimize you, this person is not abusing you, no matter what this person's voice sounds like or what their actions are. It's not your problem. It's their issue. And so I kind of get myself to that place, and then I then I can deal with them in a different way and recognize that that a lot of a lot of bosses are just little children,

you know. So that's

so helpful as a way to look at his issues and our own issues in these situations too. So, yeah, that the at what closing words, do you have to motivate our listeners who are moving from victim to Victor?

Hmm? Well, I think a couple of things that hit me is you got to remember that having a victim mentality, you know, or having a really honest victims narrative that is a part of your life doesn't excuse your bad behavior today. It just doesn't it no matter what you're going through, everybody else is not your punching bag. That's not dealing with the problem, first of all, second of all, at some point, life is no longer to blame for your situation. You know, and I say that with all sensitivity. You know, my father passed away in the year in 1999 going into 2000. And my dad was in his late 70s at the time, so my father lived through racism and segregation in the south. And my father became the first black man to own banks at one point was the wealthiest black man in America, built a real estate Empire, then went with my mom into Texas and started buying white banks and savings and loans at a time when blacks couldn't even sit at, you know, intermingled on the buses there or drink out of the same water fountains. Well, my dad did this by disguising himself as a chauffeur and a janitor, and my mother whose face is white, would sometimes pretend to be the owners of these banks, and he would often use this other guy to pretend to be the owners of these things. When the when all of this came out in the state of Texas in the in the early 60s, you know, everything went haywire. And my father and my uncle, his business partner, ended indicted on some really bad bank charges. It was a big race case. And it ended up changing banking laws in America forever. On my father's deathbed, when I asked my

dad about my life and about being a woman of color and all these different things, my father said to me, honey, never choose to be a victim. He said, because let me tell you something, life is going to harm everybody in some kind of way. He said, Sure. Some people may think I got a really bad hand. Some other people may think that you know them having a child born handicap. It was worse him than I got, he said, doesn't really matter. He said, the things that victimize you give them 20 minutes, cry, greed, get it out of your system, but after 20 years, you're a fool. Because you've got to take the hand that life has given you and you've got to play it as best you can. And he said, life is not fair. Jesus Christ said in this world, you will have tribulation, but he also Said Fear not thrive, overcome the world. So you've got to look in your victimizing circumstances, you need to look for the overcoming, that Jesus wants to give you. And you need to look for the overcomer in you, because of that, there is something that you can take responsibility for today in your situation to choose victory.