

Season 5 | Episode #7

Mary Tutterow

The Heart of the Caregiver

Crystal Keating:

This is the Joni and Friends Ministry Podcast and I'm your host, Crystal Keating. Each week we're bringing you encouraging conversations about finding hope through hardship and practical ways that you can include people living with disability in your church and community. As you listen, visit joniandfriends.org/podcast to access the resources we mention or to send me a message with your thoughts.

Whether it's your child, your spouse, your parent, or a friend, caregiving for someone who has exceptional needs in addition to your day-to-day responsibilities can become overwhelming, even painful. The person who is sick or disabled gets a lot of care and attention. But what about you? The one managing all the daily tasks of caregiving: feeding, bathing, paperwork, scheduling, transporting, advocating, and researching just to name a few. Well, joining us today is Mary Tutterow, author of *The Heart of the Caregiver* study series, to give us a glimpse into the life of a caregiver and share with us how peace is possible regardless of our circumstances.

Welcome to the podcast, Mary. It's so great to have you on the show today.

Mary Tutterow:

Thank you for inviting me.

Crystal Keating:

Well, we wanted to have this conversation for a couple of years, and now here we are connecting. So, Mary, I just would love to start our conversation by hearing about you and your life. How did you become a caregiver?

Mary Tutterow:

Well, I was at the height of my career, what I had gone to college for and what I scrambled to do, and that was a partner in an international marketing firm, and I was also a part-time local anchorwoman. Then along comes this little beautiful, incredible baby, but she was broken. She had a horrible seizure disorder where she was seizing hundreds and hundreds of times a day and had a kind of seizure disorder that the doctors told us if she lived to see her first birthday, that she would be profoundly challenged.

And it was literally a one minute I'm preparing to be a mom of a typical child in the next moment everything changed, and I had to leave my career and it just all started unfolding pretty fast.



Crystal Keating:

Wow. And were you a believer at the time that your first daughter was born? Her name's Mary Addison, right?

Mary Tutterow:

Yeah, that's correct. But we call her Hootie.

Crystal Keating:

Hootie. Okay. And was she your first child?

Mary Tutterow:

She was.

Crystal Keating:

Yeah.

Mary Tutterow:

I have had another son since then and everybody's doing well, but you know, Crystal, this was 30 years ago. And you know, I came home from the hospital fully prepared for this sweet child, you know, to die in my arms, my husband and I. And we didn't realize that that was only a small part of all the emotions and hurdles we were gonna have to face as caregivers. It was really something.

Crystal Keating:

Yes. And so, what was your spiritual life like at the time? You're bringing home your daughter and yet you're expecting maybe that she will not live past one years old.

Where were you at with the Lord? And, and how did God meet you in your own grief? Your life has radically changed.

Mary Tutterow:

Radically, and I'll say this, I was a churchgoer, but my church to me at that time was more like a country club. It's just what the people in my world did.

You go to church on Sunday, and you wear your nice clothes, and you meet people, and you don't let anybody know you're hurting, and the more perfect you can be, the better you get graded at church. I had no idea what it was really all about. I didn't understand it all. I was not a disciple of Jesus, let's put it that way.

So, in my own grief, as I was holding her in the very early months of her life, you know, like I say, every time I would go in, I would be rejoicing that she was still alive. And I was nursing her one night and just sobbing as she's seizing in my arms. Tears are running down my face all over her.



And I cried out for the first time in my life. How did Mary, the mother of Jesus, watch her child suffer and die, like, I'm watching my child suffer and die? So, I heard him speak to my heart for the very first time in my life. Let her suffering be for my glory. And I raced to the Bible and thought, who is this that's talking to me?

What? Wait a minute, hold on. And I just couldn't get enough. When I would open the Bible, I would read these things like the weak he chooses to shame the wise. And the last will be first, and the first will be last. And the meek will inherit the earth.

And you know that he is with those who are suffering. And just all these words are like, ugh, I've never heard this before. It was making so much sense to my shattering heart and my world that had completely fallen apart.

Crystal Keating:

And for the first time when you open the scripture and you can relate to it, I think that's, yeah when your heart is open to what God has. What a radical change from going and attending church and looking good on the outside while in the inside you're longing and yearning for comfort and security and answers and hope, really.

Wow. Mary, you had an encounter with God. How was it that you continued to care for your daughter?

Because as you said, that was 30 years ago. You're still caring for her. What was it like through the seasons of your life to walk with the Lord and continue to love on her?

Mary Tutterow:

Well, it became apparent that God's word was so true in a way that makes no sense to this world. Because you know, Crystal, here's this little girl who can't talk, can't read the Bible, can't confess her sins, can't do any of the things I was taught a good Christian child does.

She can't, and she has no hope of really learning Bible stories or anything like that. Cognitively she can't and yet, God was using her brokenness to drive my husband and I to the foot of the cross and to help us understand his economy, his kingdom, his kind of love, what he can do with what this world says is broken or is suffering.

It opened us up to be able to receive the message of the cross and what crucifixion is all about and what laying down your life for someone else is all about. And we began to see that what we had been called to do for this sweet little child was what Jesus was called to do for humanity, was to step down from everything that, you know.

It's that wonderful Philippians 2 verse where he stepped down from glory and didn't consider himself equal with God but took on the role of a servant. And that's what had to happen with my husband and I. We both had to give up our careers. The way we were doing our life we were living for stuff, for money, for status, for approval. And we had to let go of all of that and begin living for love and realizing that we didn't have enough love to be able to do this on our own.



We had to receive the love of God for ourselves first in order to let his love flow through us, to love her, and all the other people in our lives were called to love. It was an absolute breakthrough in surrender and the beauty and freedom of letting go of the screaming lies of this world. And only this sweet little broken child could have done it.

And so, you know, this didn't happen overnight. But loving and serving her became a tremendous honor. As my husband would say, sitting at her bedside, in her deepest, scariest moments were the most holy places of our lives where heaven seemed to touch earth. Because there's nothing else but that to hang onto.

Crystal Keating:

That's right. And this is a life that you never imagine and never planned for. And yet God met you in such a powerful way and continues to. And you're so right that as we speak to many people who listen, life is so outside of what we're capable of doing on our own. We desperately need God to fill us with his love, his strength, his grace, his peace, because we can't do it. We cannot do this life without him. And that is what I'm hearing from you, which is why you can give to others. And your ministry, The Heart of the Caregiver, has really impacted so many caregivers who are often feeling isolated.

I think that's the theme through my almost 10 years at Joni and Friends is that a lot of families really struggle with being alone and feeling alone. And many don't believe the church understands what they're going through or what they need. So, Mary, could you speak directly to pastors and lay leaders about what caregivers are generally feeling and what could bring them the comfort and love of God? What would you say to them?

Mary Tutterow:

Well, if I may, I'd like to back up in that if I'm addressing pastors and lay leaders is our Lord tells us that it's the weakest members of the body that are the most essential. And so, when we build faith communities, so often you know, we plant a church and we look for the people who can help write the checks to help build a building and you know, those kind of things.

But it's like with our families, it's the one who needs the most love that's gonna bring forth the most love from the ones who surround them. And seeing people with disabilities, seeing the elderly with Alzheimer's, you know, seeing the people who are weak and rejected and vulnerable to this world as our primary and essential members.

That attitude shift is key because I find so many churches are terrified of starting a ministry for the elderly or disabled because they go, we don't have the staff, we don't have the training, we don't have the room, we don't have the funds, and you're going that isn't where their gifts come into play.

It's heart gifts that they call forth love from people in a way nobody else can, and it brings your foundation of love and community together. Oh, just far more powerfully than you can even imagine. So, I would ask pastors and leaders to shift their perspective to that of Jesus, where the least are absolutely essential to any faith family.



But then you asked me to share some wisdom. I think really the most important thing for caregivers is for you to recognize that they're there. It's easy to know about the person in the wheelchair. It's easy to know about the person who's in the hospital with cancer that's on your rounds. But it's not always easy to remember the people who are carrying the cross for those people that are really bearing burdens of taking on an additional life on top of their own. And that's the caregivers. And just simply in recognizing and touching them and saying, how are you, is something we never experienced in any of the churches we went to until we finally found our church home.

But all they could see was, we're afraid of your child who has seizures. She's a liability. We don't have the insurance or the training or the whatever, and we can't help you. Which was just shocking to us. But just recognizing that the caregiver is there and how hard their job is. Those two mind shifts could just change the very nature of the church. And then obviously there are a whole lot of practical things you can do, like taking them communion regularly or taking them a weekly meal or finding someone who's willing to offer respite or just raising money for medical equipment that's not fully paid for by insurance. You know, there's all kinds of things like that. But I think the heart shifts are the most important.

Crystal Keating:

Very true. And, you know, we talk a lot about creating a culture change in churches, and you're so right. It starts with the heart. It starts with really looking at who was Jesus and what kind of people was he attracted to. Who did he come for? Well, he came for all of us. But specifically, it was those who aren't being seen, who aren't being noticed, maybe in the shadows that don't feel like they're included, and may God give all of us pastors and lay leaders and those in the church, eyes to see, but also the courage and grace to move toward families like yours. I think you're right. There's a fear there.

Mary Tutterow:

Yes. This is why I started teaching *The Heart of the Caregiver* at our church so many years ago. And it's grown and grown and grown. And our prayer has been that it would be a vehicle to help the church give caregivers exactly what they need, that it would be a tool in the hands of an already overwhelmed church to be able to, to say, you know, we offer *The Heart of the Caregiver* curriculum because we know you're out there and here's our way even before we try and build a disability ministry because there are so many people with such different needs.

I mean, are you starting it for two-year-olds? Or are you starting it for 30-year-olds? Are you starting it for people with cognitive challenges or people that really just need better accessibility? So, it's such a variety of needs. Start with the people who are taking care of those people. Because when a child with disabilities goes home into a family that's about to break up because of their disability, you need deep ministry into that crisis. And that crisis, that area of family ministry is only just now being understood and tapped into. I mean, the woman who calls me and says, this is no way to live. My husband can't remember my name. He's got Alzheimer's.

I'm really thinking I'm going to kill him and then kill myself. That requires intense ministry, to reach that person's heart and have them change their feeling and to realize what an honor it is to



be able to love and care for her husband through this time and to, you know, be a beacon of light and comfort. That's a big shift. Yes. But it's so important.

Crystal Keating:

We've talked about, you know, dignifying and death with dignity and it's, it's like no life with dignity. Let's teach and support people who are facing challenges that are beyond their abilities. They really are. We cannot do it alone.

That's why we have to do it in community, which was always Jesus's intention. So, I really appreciate and respect all of the training that you're doing. For you Mary, how has your church community been a help or maybe even a hindrance in your journey as a caregiver?

Mary Tutterow:

Well, in the beginning, it was quite a hindrance. We were in a denomination that just didn't understand what to do with this. And I, I understand. I, you know, I don't harbor hard feelings. It's one more category of people that need your help and support. But I kept being told, oh, this is wonderful. Yes, why don't you start this ministry in our church?

We were like, oh, that's like asking the person that's dying of cancer to start the cancer ministry. I can't. I'm drowning. I need help. But then I found a church. Well, we as a church family, by the grace of God, found a church that was willing to say, we don't know, but we're willing to try. And will you forgive us if it's messy? But we're willing to love you and enter into relationship with your family. From that grew, there were five families that had varying children of disabilities and now they minister to 600 families.

Crystal Keating:

Oh, my goodness.

Mary Tutterow:

I know. At the time, there was no Tim Tebow, Night to Shine. At the time I brought the Luke 14 banquet from a church I'd been to in Charlotte, North Carolina to this little church.

And we started thinking we'd get 25 families. We got 75 and now, like most of those things, it's turned into thousands of families that come to the Night to Shine events. Back then it was the Luke 14 banquets. And then like I said, they gave me a room and said here's some other parents that want what you have.

What have you found in Christ through this journey? And they just gave me the platform to be able to start teaching. And the teaching became such a gift to our family because both my husband and I teach and it's just such a gift to be able to share just like that scripture, share the comfort that God has given you with others, and watch that light bulb come on in other struggling families. Such a gift.

And it's just affirmed that this path we're on, though it remains difficult, it's just worth its weight in gold, in the kingdom, when you see the relief.



Crystal Keating:

Yes. Well, and you are planting seeds that started very small, but have really been flourishing and you're seeing a very fruitful ministry among much pain.

We did talk about isolation, but we also know that many caregivers feel a loss of identity. Who am I now, now that I'm not an anchorwoman, you know? Who am I? Who is Mary? So, I know they can also experience a loss of your dreams. You know, what they were hoping for, what they expected their future to look like.

So, Mary, how do you face the future as you lovingly care for your daughter? And if you ever have felt as though you were losing yourself, how did you find a sense of identity, purpose, and belonging?

Mary Tutterow:

Wow. Big, loaded question. We could just we could camp right here for quite a while. But I'll try and give you the 2-cent version.

And that is first of all, I learned to lower my expectations, and that sounds very trite. But expectations were just getting in the way because the expectations that I held for my life, for my marriage, for my child, for my typical child, for William, our son, as well as for Mary Addison, and the expectations this world has with, you know, you have to do life this way.

You have to get an education; you have to make money. You have to live in a nice home. You have to have to have to. That all flew out the window. And when I realized if it flew out the window for one of God's children, was I living according to these false expectations of what life was meant to look like?

And once I could let go of all those lies, I'd been told about what life was supposed to look like and follow the lead of my daughter who is just living to the truth of who God made her to be, I began to shift my own identity into, no, I don't have to do that. I don't have to. That is not who I am if a crisis can take it away. That's not the foundation of who I am. So, I went on a really deep dive with God about finding my true ID in him. I am who he says I am, and then I can welcome and accept each day as it comes. I sit and write and teach in front of a window, and there's a tree outside of my window that bears a fruit.

And it does it so easily from season to season. It drops all of its leaves and then they come back, and it bears fruit, and I realize it bears fruit that it doesn't even need to eat. It gives of itself constantly. It makes oxygen that it doesn't even need to breathe because God is that way.

We were all created to give of ourselves. That's what you know in nature we see it and it's what Jesus called us to do, was to give of ourselves to the point of destruction because you can't destroy who we really are. And as I just followed this thinking and praying and listening and reading deeper and deeper into his word, just when you begin to hit bedrock of who you are and how you are meant to live in Christ.



And it really does truly become unshakable foundation. And so, everything that was shaking okay, let it fall off. It's not foundational anyway.

Crystal Keating:

Very, very profound, very encouraging for anyone listening, no matter if you're a caregiver or not. Who has God said we are and who is he calling us to be? I love that, that we were created to give.

Mary Tutterow:

And the more you give, the more you have room to receive.

Crystal Keating:

Amen. And we have to receive that from the Lord. And that's where we remain in a place of dependency on God, saying again fill me so that I can give you away and myself away. May we really see when God meets us there. Well, can you talk about the process of starting over?

This is something that I read in your training series that really caught my attention. You take caregivers through a process of starting over and asking God to show them, hey, where have I gotten off track? You know, you talked about expectations. So, I can imagine that after a loved one receives a diagnosis, many hard decisions have to be made.

Who's gonna care for them? How am I gonna do this? And it's accompanied by a lot of emotions, such as fear, worry, and grief. So how do you help caregivers begin to heal, whether they've been caregiving for many years or just starting on their journey?

Mary Tutterow:

Well, it's a powerful moment when you ask them to recall that moment of diagnosis, whether it was about their child or about their mom, or about their spouse, or whoever.

And most people will agree that fear gripped the situation. And then you helped them see that there was a process, a series of questions that needed to be answered. And they were answered under the influence of fear. And they can begin to see that they have been letting fear drive their caregiving train instead of love.

And so then how do you get them back on letting love drive caregiving, letting God's love for them first? You can't love others well until you've received the love of God for yourself. That's how grace and forgiveness and patience and all those wonderful things come from is when you know it's been extended to you first.

Okay? So, the primary steps then become reconnecting people to God because, in the tight fist of fear, so many families have started to shake their fist at God. Why did you let this happen? What kind of God are you? How do you call yourself a loving God when I sit here day after day, watching so much suffering, and then I go to the hospital for a doctor's appointment?



I see even more suffering. I go to therapy appointments with my child. I see even more suffering. What kind of a God are you? Okay, and then the church hasn't pursued them at all. So, they've begun to turn their back on their faith and on God. So, reconnecting them with putting their hand back in the hand of Jesus, getting them back in the Word, getting them to realize if they give God their beginnings, he can redeem everything that's been done in fear and rewrite the story from a trajectory of love. And it can change just everything. It changes who we understand ourselves to be. It changes who we finally remember God truly is not who we think he is. And it shifts our perspective. And then you begin to see the influence of love, not only allow taking the anvil off your own chest, but renewing all these other relationships that were getting lost in this downward spiral of caregiving because love is pulling you back up out of the pit.

You know? And that's what compassion is, is when you've let God do the hard work on you and bring you back up out of the pit. Now you can go get down in the pit with other people. But you get in with the ladder out. You know how to get out of the pit and bring them out too. And so that's what we try and offer. That's how we try to help other caregivers heal. And that's like so many of the leaders of our small groups are people who've done our classes and masterclasses and retreats and things. And they've done the hard work and now they wanna go help other caregivers.

Crystal Keating:

And, you know, I feel very emotional as you're talking because of the pervasiveness of fear that can easily creep in and as you said, direct our decisions. If anyone's listening today and they know that that is how they've been living and feel chained and paralyzed by fear, I wanna encourage you to obviously pray, but then explore the resources that Mary has on their website. What's your website?

Mary Tutterow:

It's theheartofthecaregiver.com.

Crystal Keating:

Okay. theheartofthecaregiver.com. And where there's so many resources where you can get connected with support groups and with the training series and the Bible studies and free downloads. There is so much there that although it focuses on caregiving, it really focuses on your heart and your relationship with God.

Well, let's talk a little bit about self-care. I kind of like that term and I kind of don't. But I understand the purpose of it, and I think in the Christian community there's kind of a spectrum of how we think about self-care.

You know, I think some rejected as, oh, that's being so selfish and indulgent and then there's a healthy idea of like really stewardship like you said. How can you go down to the pit to help someone else if you haven't received from God? So, a lot of caregivers feel guilty for taking time out for themselves, even though they may be drowning in the motions and responsibilities of caring for their loved ones.



Or maybe they feel like self-care takes too much effort and the rewards won't be worth it. So, Mary, how important is it for caregivers to have support and time away? Is there a better word for self-care by the way?

Mary Tutterow:
Well, I call it inner healing.

Crystal Keating:
Okay. I like that.

Mary Tutterow:
Yeah. Because it's not about support and time away.

Because what if you're someone that truly cannot ever get time away? That's not the root of self-care and support. You know what if you live in Alaska, and you're snowed in? I have had so many people attend my groups who are families in North Dakota that are snowed in, or a single mom with a child with disabilities who's snowed in. Where's their support coming from? Well, it's, it's this inner healing and it's this free connection with God, and it's this realization of who you are and why you've been called to do this work. And it's the shift in perspective. And so, if you go to a support group that is just a support group, no, that's not worth your time away because you come out of those things so often, so much more toxic than you were before.

You've connected with other people, but you go, holy cow, and I thought I had it bad, you know, kind of thing. And you're more burdened than before. But if you go to a group where what you're working on is your heart connection with God and the truth of his word for you, and reconnecting to that source that can fill you with this powerful strength that comes from someplace supernatural, then you will immediately begin to know that it's worth it. As a matter of fact, you'll say, I cannot do this job without it. It no longer is a selfish thing. It is truly love your neighbor as yourself. This is essential to my being a whole human being.

I have been missing this part of myself. So yes, a lot of caregivers do feel guilty, and that's the hardest thing is to get them to come to that very first session. But once they're there and they realize this isn't about listening to everybody here just complain about what's wrong, and my going, gosh, yeah me too.

This is about, we're not staying here anymore. We're gonna start climbing this ladder out of the hole. And once they get their feet on that first rung, they go, yes, I can do this. And it is not selfish and indulgent. They realize I owe this to the person I'm caring for. I owe this to myself. I owe this to all the other relationships in my life to do this work. So many elderly caregivers have driven away children and friends and people because they've let fear and anger and resentment, and all these things make them prickly people and then the person they were caring for dies and they're alone. But what we're seeing is a transition from that to I am a better me than I was when I went into this. And my relationships with my other children are deeper and I have better friendships. I have more to contribute to my church. I belong. I'm not out there isolated. My heart is reconnected.



Crystal Keating:

Yeah. You know, the other day I was thinking about keeping our hearts soft, keeping our hearts soft to the Lord. And we really need others to help us walk through that because left to ourselves, we will get prickly. I love that word. Our hearts can get hard. I love what you're saying. It's about inner healing and God ministering to the pieces that are missing in our heart.

So even that is a different perspective. You know, you do so much great training for caregivers, and you talk about five steps to transformation, a path for making a change when feeling overwhelmed and overcome by the sacrifice often required in caregiving. So, what encouragement do you share in your small groups in this aspect to help align their thoughts with God's truth?

Mary Tutterow:

First of all, let me say please to your listeners, go to the website and download the five steps to transformation and then as well the five steps on the path to peace. They're worksheets that you can do at home, and they are so helpful. They're not very kind, but they get right at it of what the problem is.

So that's a big deal. But you know, affirmation is such a powerful exercise. And what we tend to do when we're isolated, and we are hopeless, and we're disconnected is it's so easy to affirm the negative. I am not capable of this. I'm so inadequate. You know, God has forgotten us. Our friends have forgotten us.

You replay the pity party over and over and over in your head. But once you start reading what God's word has to say about it and these things that we talk about in *The Heart of the Caregiver* and *The Peaceful Caregiver*, if you start just saying those things to yourself on a daily basis. What if you could say, no matter how hard this seems, I've been created by God for such a time as this? He has not abandoned me. He's here with me to help me realize who I truly am, not who I thought I was. And he's here to help me see others as they truly are not as I judge them to be.

I choose to be at peace and to trust him to lead me, and to lead us to green pastures and still waters. You know, what if every day you said things like that, affirmation? I think that's one of the biggest power pills that we offer caregivers, is start playing God's track about who you are and who this person is that you care for because they are God's beloved child too.

And he's not abandoned them either. And they're still on this earth because there's a reason for them to be here. And when you can begin to not only honor your own calling to do the very calling of Jesus, to love and care for people who are hurting and rejected and forgotten and suffering, but also to honor the ministry of the person that you're caring for. Don't miss a minute of what God wants to teach you through caring for them. You know, it's very, very powerful because you're two people who've come to the end of yourselves. And all you've got is God. And what a sanctified, powerful, incredible time when two people are together, and whether they're saying it in words or not, they're both crying out for God.

Crystal Keating:



And those are not the affirmations that I'm familiar with. You know, in the therapeutic world, I often rejected them, cause I thought, I just feel like people are lying to themselves by saying. But these are affirmations about God who is true, and he is faithful.

Cuz I can imagine that some caregivers feel that the sacrifice feels like a death to them. It is a death to them. So how much more do we need God's truth to speak life into us and to give that breath of, okay, I can do today because of how God sees the person I'm caring for, how God views me, where he will meet me in the midst of this? And that's such an encouragement.

Well, Mary, we talked about the five steps to transformation. So, let's talk about the five steps to peace. We began this conversation saying that peace is possible regardless of our circumstances. So how can those who are listening today start on the pathway to acceptance and peacefulness?

Mary Tutterow:

Well, first of all, our definition of peace, you know, a lot of people think peace is what happens in the hammock beside a stream in the mountains with the birds chirping. But yeah, maybe. But shalom means a cosmic order ordained by God. So, if we are God's workmanship and we've been trying to make our life about something else besides what he created us to do, we're swimming upstream and we're never gonna have peace. In other words, am I in line with what God has planned for my life? And no matter how difficult it is, I can be at peace just like Jesus walking to the cross because I know it's God's will for my life.

So, peace is possible because it is a gift that God is constantly giving us. He's constantly welcoming us to line up with him and his plans for our life. And peace is a choice. Peace is a choice. It's within your power to choose to have peace. Whether they're bombs going off all around you or someone you love is dying, or you've got a skin rash that's making you go crazy itching. It is a gift that God is always extending. You don't have to let what's happening, get in your head and trigger all of your unfinished business because that's what's happening when peace is stolen. It's not usually because of the person that you're caring for is physical or emotional or suffering state.

It's because you are letting it trigger. I wasn't expecting this. This isn't how I planned my life to be. You are letting it trigger your unfinished business and the work that you need to still do. And I love to say it brings out the worst in us, but yay and hallelujah. Because now that's been brought to the surface, and you can deal with it and get rid of it for good. So, the five steps on the path to peace are all about being aware of this little voice that's called the father of lies, that's been telling you things that aren't true, and you've believed them, even if they're things that came down from your beloved Aunt Gracie who said she was the goddess of truth.

You know, if they aren't God's truth, they're not necessarily true. Okay. And we do a lot of work on that. What have you believed about yourself and other people that you thought was truth, but it's not? And we really open people's eyes to see, wow, how did I start thinking that about myself or about my situation?



And then it's learning how to quiet your mind and to realize I can have thoughts, but I don't have to have drama around those thoughts. You know, are you the kind of person that if you dump over your cup of coffee during a seminar and you're sitting on the front row, are you completely unglued by all these people saw me do it?

I'm so humiliated and mortified. You know, they're never gonna want me to come back, I'm such a klutz. And this woman sitting next to me probably thinks I'm this, that, and the other. Or are you, the kind of person who can just say, I have spilled my coffee. I need to get up and look for a towel, I'll wipe it up.

I'll get back to the conference, with no self-loathing and hatred and worry and fear and all those other things. Right? And that's what those of us who are caregivers so often do. We just, not only do we do this hard work of caregiving, but we're self-flagellating the whole time. You need to be able to stop those thoughts of beating yourself up and just do the work.

That's where God can give you joy and peace. And, and in order to do that, you've got to empty yourself. That's the third step on the path to peace. You've got to let go of old expectations and old stories and stop playing them over and over again in your head. It's like the new wineskins. You can't pour new wine into old wineskins.

So, let's leave room for that new thing that God is gonna do and then learning to listen. Who are you listening to? Are you listening to your gossipy neighbor, the media, you know your other friend who's a caregiver that just wines and cries the whole time? Or are you listening to the word of God? Are you doing like the Mary and Martha thing?

What was the one thing that was needed to do? Mary's doing it. The most important thing. She's sitting at the feet of Jesus listening to him instead of being so busy cuz caregivers go, I'm too busy. I can't do that. I can't quiet myself and sit still and listen. Well, it's still gonna be the hardest work you've ever done if you don't.

Yeah, and then how all those things change your prayer life from just listing problems in agony before the Lord versus quieting yourself, listening, and welcoming the guidance of the Holy Spirit instead of your ego and your mind that's been guiding you all along so that you can live differently by listening to the Spirit.

And it's possible. It happened for me. It didn't happen in a day, but he is faithful to do this, and we go through all the scripture, what he promises, and all of these different steps. And when you begin to know it and affirm it and act it, peace truly is possible. And loving and caring for even the most difficult people can become one of the most rewarding things you'll ever do in your life.

Crystal Keating:

Well, Mary, it's been so encouraging having you on the podcast today, especially as you talk about God's power in transforming us and giving us that peace as we press into him. Just for our listeners, again, for more information, you can go to theheartofthecaregiver.com for all of the training series and to join a support group.

Mary, thank you so much for speaking with us today. What a blessing you are.

Mary Tutterow:

Oh, thank you so much for what you do too. Joni and Friends has been a part of my life and our life as a family for a long time, so thank you.

Crystal Keating:

Our pleasure.

Thank you for listening today. For more episodes, find us wherever you get your podcasts, and be sure to subscribe. We'd also love it if you would tell a friend. And for more encouragement, follow Joni and Friends on Instagram, Facebook, or YouTube, and visit our website at joniandfriends.org/podcast.

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