

Season 6 | Episode 13

# Finding God's Purpose in Relationships: Rachel and Caleb LeMaster's Christ-Centered Love Story

## Rachel & Caleb LeMaster

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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](https://joniandfriends.org/podcast) to access the resources we mention, or to [send me a message](#) with your thoughts.

In 2011, Rachel LeMaster was driving to work as a PT assistant when a truck T-boned her car, nearly crushing her vehicle, and almost taking her life. Miraculously, Rachel survived with the help of excellent medical care, a supportive community, and God's grace that gave her perseverance to push through. However, the accident left her with a severe traumatic brain injury, which disoriented her plans for the future.

Rachel was resilient, but she sometimes felt lost in knowing how to make sense of God's plan through her pain, and where her life was headed. As she continued to volunteer and serve and live out, her mission "to live is to give," she received a great blessing from the Lord. She met her sweetheart, Caleb, and after 10 months of courting, he proposed and she said yes.

Today, Stephanie and I get the privilege of sitting down with Rachel again, and we're joined by her husband, Caleb. Where we'll get to hear their love story and the ups and downs of caring for one another through the challenges of a brain injury.

Welcome to the podcast, Rachel and Caleb. It's so good to have you here in our presence once again.

Rachel LeMaster:

Thank you. It's an honor.



Caleb LeMaster:

It is definitely an honor to be here with my beautiful wife and I'm so glad to be able to tell this story and encourage in the best way that we can.

Crystal Keating:

Yeah, it's truly an encouragement. I can't wait to have your story unfold. So Rachel, for those who may have missed the podcast with your story, and I encourage you to [listen if you did miss it](#), but can you share a little bit about your life and the unique aspects of living with Turner syndrome, and also surviving a life changing accident that resulted in a traumatic brain injury?

Rachel LeMaster:

So, I was diagnosed with Turner syndrome at the age of 14, and that has left me with fertility issues, as well as a bunch of other things. I was, hit by a truck going 50 miles an hour, that caused a brain injury, severe traumatic brain injury, and that also deals with a whole another level of challenges.

Crystal Keating:

Right, and so one of the things that you had shared in our [previous conversation](#) was just how you really felt this call to want to share your story and be an encouragement to others. But you weren't really sure where to go, and you volunteered a lot of places. What were some of the things that you had done in between the accident and then meeting Caleb?

Rachel LeMaster:

I volunteered at the hospitals that saved my life, and my family had moved back to Colorado and friends from our old church took me in to work part time at a football organization. So I worked part time, and then that ended. It was only temporary. And then I started volunteering for the [Christian and Missionary Alliance](#). That's where Caleb comes in.

Stephanie Daniels:

Okay, so I know there's two sides to every story. So Caleb, could you just bring us up to speed? How did you and Rachel meet?

Caleb LeMaster:

So I'm just like Rachel, I'm originally from Colorado. Spent time in the military actually, but then I came back and went to college.

And after I graduated college I started applying for jobs around the Colorado area. I remember, distinctly that I applied for a couple of jobs and I went to interview for them and I just did a terrible time during the interview. Like I just couldn't even talk, I couldn't put together sentences, basic things that had to do with the job I just couldn't even explain.

And so I got done with that and I was like, you know Lord, what is going on? And the Lord told me, he's like, "Caleb, I stopped your mouth during that interview because I don't want you to work there. I have something else for you." And so lo and behold, like two or three days later, I get a call from the Alliance and they asked me in for an interview.

Crystal Keating:

Can you explain the Alliance? Because I think it's a really neat organization.

Caleb LeMaster:

Absolutely. So the, Christian Missionary Alliance is kind of a network of churches with a long history. They work in, kind of pooling resources together to send missionaries overseas.

And actually we had the honor of having Joni speak at one of our events at the Long Beach Convention Center. She came and spoke to our whole organizational gathering. Hearing her speak was a blessing.

And so, you know, when I did the interview with them, it was a breeze. You know, I answered all the questions and it was exactly what they wanted.

So I ended up getting the job. God just opened the door for me because he knew that I was going to meet Rachel there eventually.

About a month after I had started working. We had a company picnic. I was standing in line to get food, I'm surrounded by people that I didn't really know because I hadn't worked there for long enough. And a man leans over and says to me, "Do you see that girl over there at that table? She has an amazing life story and you need to hear her life story sometime."

And, just for the sake of conversation, this guy might have been called Peter. It turns out that Peter was a close family friend of the Bailey family.

Crystal Keating:

Was this a set up? Like do you think he was like trying to feed you, "hey check this girl out."

Caleb LeMaster:

I don't know I believe it was really the Holy Spirit because later on when we told him about that he's like I don't even remember meeting you in that line.



So I spent 45 minutes just talking with other people, and about that time people around Rachel's table left, so I'm like, you know, if he says she has such an amazing life story that I need to hear, I'll walk over and, you know, at least say hi to her. And so I come over and I sit down right across from her.

Rachel LeMaster:

And here's where it gets cool. So, with my broken neck, you can go back and [listen to the podcast](#) before. I was talking with a friend and my neck was turned. And I thought, this doesn't feel very good. So I looked straight ahead and there was Caleb sitting directly across from me.

I, being gregarious, said "Hi, I'm Rachel." I was thinking, that's a very handsome man. I want to get to know him. "Hi, I'm Rachel. I volunteer in the archives. What do you do?" And he said he was a IT person. To which the first thing that came out of my mouth was, "Well my computer will be broken by Monday."

Stephanie Daniels:

Uh oh! Oh ho ho!

Rachel LeMaster:

It was.

Stephanie Daniels:

That's so funny.

Crystal Keating:

Did you break it?

Rachel LeMaster:

I don't know, but for some reason that computer was broken and I needed to call down to the IT support. And Caleb answered and he came up and he was helping me fix it. Having a TBI, I don't have the best, sense of social pragmatics. So, I said, "You must be new here. Do you have a church you go to?" And, he said he was new and, I responded, "Well, here's my name and number. If you want to go see someone at church, just give me a call."



Stephanie Daniels:

That's amazing. I think this is just a tip for people that might be looking for a partner. You maybe need to be a little bit bold like Rachel here. Lose your filter and just be bold and say what you want and what you think, huh?

Rachel LeMaster:

So, I did, and the rest is history.

Crystal Keating:

Okay, but you gotta fill in the history here, cause we want all the deets.

Okay, Caleb, did you just think... oh, she's just being nice. She's being friendly. Or was there something there for you? Like, when did you guys actually start, you know, kind of dating?

Caleb LeMaster:

When she gave me her number, I couldn't quite tell whether she was being friendly or she was really interested. So a couple weeks later, I ended up...

Rachel LeMaster:

Long weeks later.

Caleb LeMaster:

I, I ended up going to, going to her church, but I went to the wrong session and so we never got to see each other. Then after that I ended up texting her and I said, "Do you like ice cream?"

Rachel LeMaster:

I responded immediately. "Yes, I do."

Caleb LeMaster:

We went out and had ice cream and we talked. We just got to know each other on the basics. After we had that ice cream date, I then asked her out to a more official date.



Then I started learning the real details of her story, you know, her family, all of her adopted siblings, her Turner syndrome and the issues that were involved with that, and her car accident as well.

Crystal Keating:

Did that scare you away?

Caleb LeMaster:

It didn't scare me away. Even though she had a long story of injuries, and traumatic things that had happened to her, what I clearly remember was that the biggest emotional moment for her was when she told me that she couldn't have children.

A lot of couples out there might be going through the issue of, they got married and they're not sure whether they can have children or not. For us, it was up front, it's not possible, it won't ever be possible.

You know, and that... that was shocking to me. But the thing that I realized is she was being so vulnerable in that moment. She was, basically saying, "Are you going to be willing to pursue a relationship with me knowing that having biological kids is just not going to be a possibility for us."

Rachel LeMaster:

I'm one of the kinds of people that, doesn't shy away from who I am, and I felt like if I'm gonna date someone, I need to be completely honest with him. I wanted to date for marriage and not date to just have a good time. The flings that this world can say are fun, they're just fleeting.

Crystal Keating:

So that transparency I think is a question that people with disabilities who are dating often wonder. Especially if they're online, maybe in person it's different. But like, how soon do I disclose, you know, some of the more challenging details about my life that are going to come up in marriage? How quickly should I reveal X, Y, and Z? Will I scare the person away? And it sounds like your heart was, I really like this guy, like, really like him, and so I just want to be real and honest.

Were you nervous about sharing anything? Did you have any sense, like... you know what, I think, like, Caleb might walk away, or, what was that like for you?



Rachel LeMaster:

Trust in God. You know, if this isn't the right person for me, you know, it's not gonna happen. I just felt like I needed to be open and honest, and as you can tell from my great pick-up line that, I'm not a very shy person.

So, I just let it all, spill out, and said, take it or leave it, cause I can't change who I am, and I'm not in this to change you. So, don't be in it to change me. This is who I am. That's who you are. Are we compatible?

Crystal Keating:

No, Rachel, I think what you're saying is so valuable. To be vulnerable with somebody, to be real and honest, evokes a vulnerability in the other person.

And I think that is the best place to start in a relationship that is potentially lifelong is to be very transparent with the other person. But Caleb, I'm just wondering for you, hearing that news was something you certainly had to process and strongly consider.

Caleb LeMaster:

Yeah, so, I come from a large family, so I have siblings who have, multiple kids. So we, between the two of us, Rachel and I actually have over thirty nieces and nephews.

So, coming from such a large family it was in my mind that I'm gonna have kids and be like my siblings. But I remember God kind of whisper something in my ear.

"You're going to have a different story than, what all your siblings have."

And so fast forward, six months or a year later. I meet Rachel. I was prepared ahead of time, I think to be ready to take on that challenge of not being the same as all of my siblings or all my peer group.

One of the things that did initially attract me to her was that vulnerability.

Stephanie Daniels:

That is so precious. My husband and I have a little thing that we laugh about all the time, just saying that when you're dating somebody, you're dating their representative. You know? They, they have a mask on and it's not 100 percent them, and then when you get married, it's like, okay, you never would have done that, or said that when we were dating. But now that we're married, it's no holds barred. But I feel like you just, in the beginning, you guys got to that place of vulnerability and transparency, and I think that's really beautiful.

So you feel like that's when you knew Caleb, "I think she's something special and I love her."?



Caleb LeMaster:

So that's when I, knew I wanted to pursue her. After that initial date, we went out to dinner a couple times and got to know each other more. But at some point I decided that she needed to experience how my family is.

So my family is not a, a city family. They're a family that grew up in a rural setting, and cows, and horses, and farm country, you know.

Crystal Keating:

Are you from Colorado? Or were you in Colorado?

Caleb LeMaster:

We were originally from Colorado, so northern Colorado is where my parents raised us.

Crystal Keating:

Were you on a ranch?

Caleb LeMaster:

We were in what I would call farm country.

Crystal Keating:

Okay.

Caleb LeMaster:

My dad did farming for a time. Both my parents were veterinarians and they took care of cattle and horses, and they did vet work for small animals, dogs and cats.

It was more of an agricultural kind of life, that is how we grew up. And so, I wanted to make sure before I fell in love with her is like, is this girl going to be able to, to stick with me if we're living out in a rural place at some point in our lives.





Crystal Keating:

Did you make her, like, muck the corral or something as a test?

Rachel LeMaster:

No! Okay,

Caleb LeMaster:

So, I took her on a trip, to see my brother who lives in the western slope of Colorado, in ranch country. He raised cattle a mud on your boots kind of a place.

He had a guest bedroom for Rachel to stay in and I could sleep on the floor. So I'm like, okay, let's just get in the car and go visit him so you can see some of my family. We pull up to my brother's house, and, he had just finished, butchering a cow. And so there is a table full of bloody cow bones.

Rachel LeMaster:

There's blood. There's cow bones. And I am thinking, "What in the world have I gotten myself into? I really like this man. What did I get myself into?"

Caleb LeMaster:

So we spent the, we spent a night there and it was... it was a rough night and, she didn't get a lot of sleep. And the next day we drove back and we had really deep conversations about, you know, what are your intentions? And, after that experience, are you ready to bail and never talk to me again? Or do you want to continue pursuing this further? You know, those kinds of conversations that you have on a long six-hour road trip.

And so we got back to the Springs and I, dropped her off at her parents and went back to my little single bedroom apartment. And it was really at that, point when I'm like, you know, I put her to the test and she passed. She decided she didn't want to break up with me, and so, I decided right then and there, this is probably the girl for me, yeah.

Crystal Keating:

Okay, so, fast forward to engagement. Let's hear your engagement story.



Caleb LeMaster:

In high school, my church youth group would do backpacking trips up in the Colorado mountains. And there was one place in particular that had this beautiful, cascading waterfall. And I had decided, even before I had met Rachel, that this is where I want to propose to my wife.

I planned this out with her parents. I'm going to tell her that I'm, we're driving to church today, but we're not actually going to drive to church. We're going to drive up and up into, the Colorado mountains, and I'm going to take her. On this hike up to this waterfall. So we're on our way to church and right as we're driving by church, she's like, "No, that's that's the turn. Slow down!" And I just keep going right past the church. And I'm like, "Oh, was that it?" I was like...

Crystal Keating:

Okay. Did you have any idea that anything was gonna go down Rachel?

Rachel LeMaster:

Zero.

Crystal Keating:

Okay. Oh, good job, Caleb.

Rachel LeMaster:

He and my mom got together and they had packed a hiking outfit for me. So I changed into that, but it's a three, four mile hike up to this place where he proposed, and very isolated area. And, no restrooms, and I had to go... behind a tree.

So, guys, make sure there's a restroom near your ladies when you propose to them.

Crystal Keating:

Small tip.

Caleb LeMaster:

Yeah, so I, I took her up to this waterfall and I wrote her a letter that I read to her, and I proposed to her there. And we had to hike all the way back down, and drive all the way home and, you know, she was just completely covered in mud, and you had mosquito bites, but I had never seen her smiling, so broadly as when we got back to her parent's house and she showed her mom the ring. And all that, so.



Rachel LeMaster:

"My computer will be broken by Monday" can lead to good things.

Crystal Keating:

What a great story. Okay, so let's fast forward to when you guys are married and you're living together. I'm really curious to know of the implications, Caleb, for um, working with Rachel considering her traumatic brain injury, her TBI. Like how did that play out? I mean, in our previous conversation she sort of talked about the executive functioning part, you know being a place of opportunity where like loading the dishes, you know has a sequence to it.

What places did you have to work out? Because the reality is every marriage has to work through how to love and serve one another, right? That's the pattern of Scripture. It's knowing one another. That is love, right? Is to know someone intimately. God knows us, we know one another. And to love each other anyway.

So, what was that like for you guys?

Caleb LeMaster:

One of the challenges that I went through with learning Rachel was to understand the different facets of how her traumatic brain injury had affected her. So, for instance, with her Turner syndrome that she was born with, Turner girls are renowned for being very verbal. So when her accident happened, some of the areas of her brain that were verbal ended up getting damaged. The effects of the TBI and the Turner syndrome worked together. God really blended her whole life story to become somebody that God knew I would be a good husband to. Rachel has such, verbal strengths.

She uses those verbal skills that she has to kind of bring out stories out of me, which I normally would not tell anybody or talk about. And so one of the big adjustments that I've had to go through being married to her is, things that I didn't necessarily want to tell people, that I didn't necessarily want to talk about, that I would just naturally keep secret within me, are now being displayed to many different people and I'm having to be more open and vulnerable, much more than I would be married to anybody else who had a different personality.

Rachel LeMaster:

And Caleb's personality is very IT oriented, very tech savvy and, he's very good at finances and, I'm not very good at math. I'm not very good at all the things that Caleb is good at. He completes me, and I complete him.



Caleb LeMaster:

Especially in the year leading up to when I met Rachel, God left several breadcrumbs in my life that kind of were getting me ready to meet Rachel. If I hadn't gone through some of those experiences before I had even met her, I think that it would have been too much. But, in the year prior to that, the things that God took me through, really prepared me mentally so when I met her I realized, God is calling me to pursue this woman. And I think this is the woman for me. She's not the typical wife that I was expecting in my mind. But, she's who I need. She compliments me.

As Rachel mentioned, her TBI caused, the loss of a lot of the organization and the details. I love to organize things. I love to put details together and even though I don't like to do a lot of talking, I love to take care of the executive functions as Rachel says. And so, when I met her the light went off, we compliment each other.

My strengths are her weaknesses, and her strengths are my weaknesses. And I think by being together, we can be more effective for the kingdom of God, because as a team, we're complimenting each other.

Stephanie Daniels:

I like that. As a team, you're complimenting one another. I love, how you can just see how the Lord prepares you for, the relationship he's putting you into. Earlier you guys talked about, before you even got started on this journey, and in your moments of being vulnerable you talked about infertility. Can you kind of talk about how, now that you've been married eight years, how do you find purpose beyond parenting?

I know that there's people out here listening that may not be parents, they may have struggled themselves with infertility. How would you encourage somebody who may be trying to find purpose beyond that place?

Rachel LeMaster:

So, with our culture, especially Christian culture, women are to raise up their kids. So dealing with infertility, having friends that have kids and stuff, yes there is loss, yes there is grief that, no, I can't have kids, but it's just knowing that this is the circumstances that God has put me in, and he knows me. And he knows my story. And he knows my husband. And he knows he's put us together as a team.

We can glorify God through more than just raising kids. We can glorify him by helping others in the church with babysitting, or being the best auntie, or the best finkle. We're called to serve in what God's given us.



Stephanie Daniels:

I think that's really powerful. That's something my husband and I have talked about because we've struggled with infertility, and are still believing the Lord for children, but there's always times that we can pray for families that are expecting. When we have friends that come up and say, we're pregnant, you know, you always kind of get that little twinge in your heart, but you know, we take the time to just agree with them for just blessing and favor over their lives and their children. So I love that there's ways that we can sow into others and give back, like you said, living is giving, but we can give to others even in our place of lack, and I think that God blesses that.

But I love that you two are really striving to bring the Lord glory in your life and in your marriage. It's really beautiful.

Rachel LeMaster:

I feel like he's brought us together. We are one. We should act in accordance to his design, and glorify him with the tools he's given us, with how he's created us.

Infertility is very hard, as you were saying. You know, there's the baby announcements and there's the longing of wanting to be a life-giver. But you can be a life-giver in more than just one way. Like being on this podcast is life-giving. Sharing your story is life-giving. And encouragement to others. And sitting with other in their trials is a way to glorify God. So, there is hope beyond your circumstances.

Stephanie Daniels:

That was really, really rich. Thank you for sharing that, Rachel. For couples who are listening today, would you like to share a few words of encouragement in what has kept your commitment and love honoring to God and a blessing to one another?

Rachel LeMaster:

I would say focus on being best spouse to your partner. Being the best complementor to your partner. Praying together and seeking the Lord. Walking through the ups and downs of what marriage is. You're doing it as a team. You're doing it together. You're no longer alone. There's someone else who's going through it with you. It's not just about your own circumstance. You're one now. You can move on together as one. United. Just hold fast to God.

My main encouragement is point back to Jesus. What does the Bible say? What does God say?

Stephanie Daniels:

And what about you, Caleb?



Caleb LeMaster:

So the thing that comes to my mind is actually some advice that our pastor gave us. When we went through premarital counseling with him, he said one thing that we both have really made the mantra of our marriage. He said, "there's really only one problem in marriage, it's selfishness."

Fights and disagreements come in every marriage, but when you step back and you look at it, you realize, "Wow, you know, that... that was a problem because I was being selfish today." Or, you know, vice versa.

So, as we've gone through the last eight years, we've just seen time and time again that when you set your own needs and desires aside and you say, "I'm not going to be selfish. I'm going to do what my spouse needs in this case," marriage just works so much better.

And ultimately you have to trust in the Lord, because there's times when you set something aside and it's not just setting it aside for a season, but in some cases, you have to set it aside realizing that, never in my entire life will I get that.

And when you're willing to let those things aside and you base your trust in the Lord, you realize, you know, even though I gave up something, the Lord is going to bless us in the end.

It's a beautiful relationship when you set yourself aside and you really focus on what is it that my wife needs today and not what I want.

Stephanie Daniels:

That's great. You guys, this has been such a rich conversation hearing from you two. And, I can just really see what the Lord was doing when he put the two of you together. It's so beautiful and your marriage is really a picture of him. And so thank you so much for your time today and for sharing with us here on the podcast. What a blessing you guys have been.

Rachel LeMaster:

It's an honor and a privilege.

Caleb LeMaster:

Thank you for having us.

Crystal Keating:

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